Solution Design Document
for Aurora Public Schools

Pre"para"ed: A Training Program for Paraprofessionals in Special Education Classrooms

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Project Overview

Aurora Public Schools (APS) is the sixth largest school district in Colorado and serves a diverse community of more than 40,000 students. The mission of APS is to provide a world-class education system that prepares all students for bright and successful futures as local and global citizens. In addition to teachers and administrators, paraprofessionals play a vital role in this education system. Paraprofessionals help organize and prepare teaching materials each day. They may review IEPs and 504 plans to ensure that progress is being made toward goals, and they also help set up the classroom for productivity. One of the most important responsibilities of a paraprofessional is to assist the special education teacher in the classroom. However, the ability to successfully meet these responsibilities can be challenging due to a lack of effective training, preparation, and guidance for paraprofessionals that are hired to support students with different abilities.

Our solution design document will outline an effective hybrid training program for paraprofessionals within Aurora Public Schools that are assigned roles within the Special Education (SPED) learning environment. This program will address a variety of learning and skills gaps, which include:

- A lack of specialized training on effective strategies and techniques for supporting special education students
- A lack of training and hands-on experience with learning theories, classroom management, and safety procedures
- A lack of clarity around the paraprofessional role in the APS district
- An unfamiliarity with APS's curriculum, policies, and campuses

Once paraprofessionals have completed this program, they will be better prepared to confidently explain and apply the practices necessary to effectively take on the role of paraprofessional at their respective campuses.

Summary of Analysis

In order to better understand our learners and their unique needs, our instructional design team analyzed a variety of data and information related to paraprofessionals. Our team reviewed official job descriptions and salary tables from Aurora Public Schools. We reviewed articles from reputable news sources and organizations that detailed demographic information, job challenges, learning gaps, and motivations of paraprofessionals around the country. In addition, members of our team had several discussions with paras, who work in school districts in the Denver metro area, about their experiences.

Through our research and investigation, we discovered that roughly 87% of paraprofessionals are women. The average age of a paraprofessional is 43 years old, and the median age is 44 years old. Paraprofessionals tend to be more diverse (racially and ethnically) than the licensed teacher workforce, and about one-fifth of paras speak a non-English language at home. When it comes to education levels, approximately 74% of paraprofessionals do not have a bachelor's degree. Paraprofessionals are compensated with hourly wages, and their compensation is substantially lower when compared to licensed teacher salaries. According to an EducationWeek Research Center survey conducted in May 2022, paraprofessionals say they make about $19 an hour and about one-third say they work two or more jobs. In terms of professional development (PD), the EdWeek survey noted that 42% of paraprofessionals say they receive too little PD for their jobs, 13% said they received no PD in the past year, and more than half said they received 10 hours or less of training.

In spite of these job challenges, paraprofessionals are not necessarily on a trajectory to become classroom teachers. A majority say they're satisfied with their jobs and don't plan on leaving in the near future. One of the biggest reasons paraprofessionals give for entering this profession is their enthusiasm for working with kids. Many are also drawn to the flexible schedule, while others have chosen the para profession to be closer to their children who attend school where they work or in the same district.

Based on our research and analysis, we identified key characteristics of our target learners and created the following two learner personas.*

- **Jaquelyn** is a 32-year-old single mother who recently discovered a love for supporting children in education after COVID made schools go remote and she helped her daughter navigate all of her school work. In addition to her love of working with children, Jaquelyn wants to be a para so that she and her daughter can have similar schedules and spend more time together. Jaquelyn was recently hired by Aurora Public Schools as a paraprofessional in special education classrooms. Although she's excited about her new role, Jaquelyn is also apprehensive about her lack of experience and training in education. Due to the low compensation of paraprofessionals, Jaquelyn works a second part-time job to make ends meet.
- **Donna** is 55 years old and has roughly 20 years of experience working as a paraprofessional in multiple states. She loves her work and can't imagine doing anything else. Donna recently accepted a paraeducator position with Aurora Public Schools and moved with her long-time partner from Texas to Colorado. In her new school, Donna will be working with small groups of special education students to provide them with extra guidance and support. She is excited about her new responsibilities and wants to learn more about how she can effectively meet the needs of students of all abilities.

Our team considered the key characteristics of our learners while designing an effective learning solution. We determined that a hybrid program — consisting of a combination of e-learning and in-person training — would best meet their needs for the following reasons:

- Although our learners live locally, online training will give them the most **flexibility to complete the modules** based on their own unique schedules and commitments.
- Because our learners have varying levels of experience and education, an online learning format will also allow them to **progress at their own pace** and **engage more with lessons and materials** that may be more relevant to their needs and interests.
- The in-person training portion of our program will provide our learners with **valuable hands-on training and professional development** they say has been lacking.
- Additionally, in-person training will give our learners the **opportunity to put their skills and knowledge into practice**, better preparing them for their roles as paraprofessionals in special education classrooms.

*See Appendix A to view the complete learner persona descriptions for Jaquelyn and Donna.

Instructional Design Model

Because we are designing a modern learning solution, our team determined that using one single instructional design model, implemented with rigidity, would not result in the best learning experience. For this reason, we used the **ADDIE Instructional Design Model** as our guiding framework while incorporating aspects of **Design Thinking** (in particular empathy) to develop our learning solution.

The **ADDIE** model (an acronym for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, and Evaluation) was originally designed in the 1970s as a systematic approach to developing training programs, but has since evolved to accommodate different educational subjects and settings. The **Design Thinking** framework is an iterative, solutions-based approach that focuses on understanding the learners' needs. We believe that incorporating both frameworks into our design process will ensure that the most impactful and holistic learning solution is created to address the required learning objectives.

Our design process, using the ADDIE and Design Thinking frameworks, is outlined below.

PHASE 1

[ADDIE] Analysis: Understand the learners' experiences and identify any gaps that need to be filled during the course.

[Design Thinking] Empathize: Gain insight into learners' needs in order to understand their experiences, motivations, and learning needs.

[Design Thinking] Define: Sharpen key questions.

- During this phase, we will gain a deeper understanding of the paraprofessional experience (e.g., job responsibilities, education levels, experience working with students, motivations, goals, frustrations, etc.) through research, interviews, and analysis.

- Learners will take a "Get To Know You" survey. This survey will include questions about their professional experience, familiarity using online resources, and their preferred learning methods.

PHASE 2

[ADDIE] Design: Use the information and analysis from the first phase to create learning outcomes and potential learning solutions that target specific supports needed by our targeted learners.

[Design Thinking] Ideate: Brainstorm and collaborate to create meaningful learning solutions.

- Questions to ask during this phase: What skills are needed by the para to work in a successful SPED classroom? What training will they need additionally to support students with different learning needs?

PHASE 3

[ADDIE] Development: Start creating the course materials and resources needed for our hybrid training program based on the solutions from the previous phase.

[Design Thinking] Prototype: Build representations of one or more ideas.

PHASE 4

[ADDIE] Implementation: Distribute the course to learners and give them the opportunity to view and participate in the course and learning opportunities.

[Design Thinking] Test, Part 1: Test ideas.

- Instructor-led training, e-learning, and in-person peer-to-peer mentoring are potential solution types. There is sponsorship for an onboarding program like this, but there are no dedicated FTEs for this program. Resource utilization will need to be efficient and lean.

- These different trainings are available to all of the learners in the course. If they have the opportunity to participate in the e-learning and in-person portions of the training, they will be given support from their instructor based on their access and needs.

PHASE 5

[ADDIE] Evaluation: Once the course is completed and learners give feedback, the course will be adjusted and modified by bringing it back to the analysis phase to drive better instruction.

[Design Thinking] Test, Part 2: Get feedback from learners.

- During this phase, we will ask a variety of questions to drive feedback throughout the classroom experience: Are students getting pulled who have SPED services? Are students receiving beneficial lessons based on what the paras can provide? Do students receive equitable support that is aligned with their SPED/IEP minutes? If the classroom teacher, administration, and paras can answer yes to these questions, there is success within the project.

- Success will ultimately be determined based on the training the paraprofessionals receive and their readiness. We will receive feedback from paras on their readiness both via direct assessment and via people manager input. We plan to measure a confidence interval by measuring the self reported confidence of newly hired paraprofessionals prior to and following the completion of the program as aligned to the designed learning outcomes. This feedback will be reviewed bi-annually to determine if updates, revisions, or changes need to be made to the onboarding learning path for paraprofessionals.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this training program, learners will be able to:

1. Confidently identify and independently act on the job role expectations of a paraprofessional in Aurora Public Schools.
2. Summarize and apply an understanding of various behavior management theories to address current and future scenarios.
3. Analyze the efficacy of various learning accommodations in meeting the needs of students in a special education classroom.

4. Apply a variety of communication strategies in order to communicate effectively with students and to support students' speech and language development.
5. Identify common forms of bias and how to avoid biased decision making and support in a classroom environment.

Proposed Learning Solutions & Alignment

Course Format & Length

- This hybrid training program is designed to support paraprofessionals for the length of a school year and will include both online and in-person learning experiences.

    - Best efforts will be made at the program level to ensure that recently hired paraprofessionals are comfortable using e-learning applications.

    - Additionally, emails offering scheduling opportunities for each in-person training will be sent to each learner. These registrations will be supported and tracked by people managers (see Schedule section for additional details).

- Recently hired paraprofessionals will be assigned an onboarding buddy who is either an experienced paraprofessional or a teacher in the same learning environment. Onboarding buddies will provide learners with role support and guidance throughout the school year.

- This course will build on the skills and knowledge that learners already have by collecting information on what they know and what skills and knowledge they feel is valuable to their future success as a paraprofessional.

How the Learning Solution Addresses Learner Needs

- This learning solution effectively educates paraprofessionals on how to support students with different abilities in the classroom due to the lack of effective preparation

for paraprofessionals working in schools with special needs students, especially when staffing is short.

- Our program addresses the varied needs of paraprofessionals by providing a hybrid model with both **online and in-person components**.

    - The course's **online training** will:

        - Give learners the flexibility to complete the asynchronous sections from home or from work. It will also give them the flexibility to complete the asynchronous sections when it works best for their unique schedules and commitments.

        - Allow learners to progress at their own pace and engage more with lessons and materials that are more relevant to their needs and interests.

        - Inform paraprofessionals on important topics that are integral to their specific role. This includes the following:

            - Individualized Education Plans (IEPs)

            - SPED supports for Specific Reading Disabilities (SRDs) and other learning disabilities

            - Different interventions used at their school

            - Classroom management

            - Safety protocols

    - The course's **in-person training** will give learners valuable hands-on training, allowing them to put their skills and knowledge into practice in the following ways:3

        - Engaging in co-planning and co-teaching with a teacher of record

        - Learning effective methods for supporting students in the classroom by observing teachers' interactions with small groups

- Using interventions such as DIBELS 8 kits and READ Act interventions (95 Percent, OG, etc.)
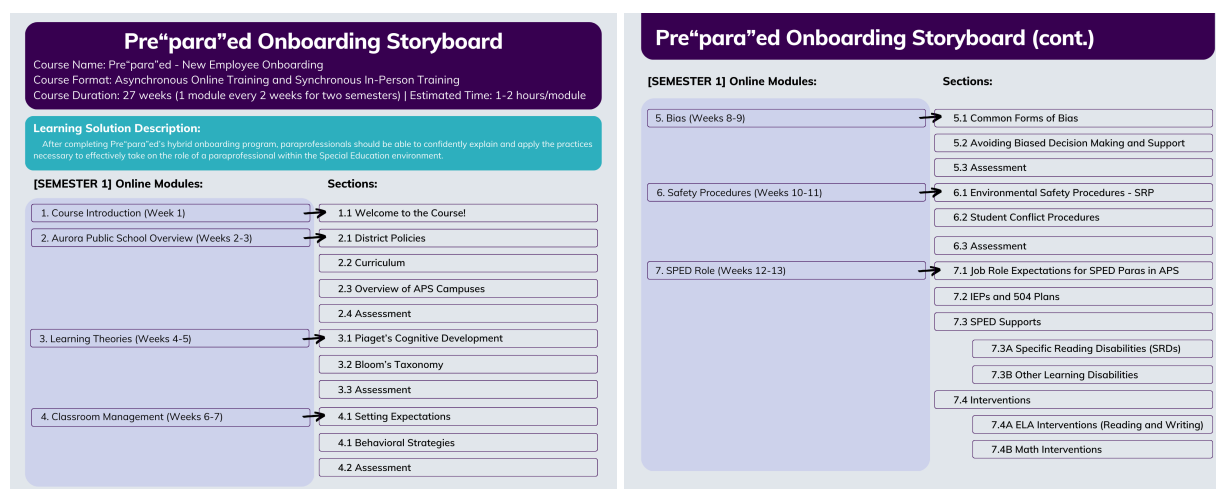
- Implementing safety protocols

Alignment of Learning Outcomes to Learning Solutions

1. **Learning Solution:** All classroom paraprofessionals should be offered an e-learning to help in onboarding them both as paraprofessionals as well as employees of Aurora School District.

    ○ Aligns with Learning Outcomes: #1, #2, #5 (See table below for a description of each learning outcome).

2. **Learning Solution:** Recently hired paraprofessionals should be assigned an onboarding buddy who is either an experienced paraprofessional (optimal) or a teacher in the same learning environment. The onboarding buddy will provide role support and guidance throughout the school year. Care should be taken to ensure that the onboarding buddy for SPED paraprofessionals is from the SPED learning environment.

    ○ Aligns with Learning Outcomes: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5

3. **Learning Solution:** Paraprofessionals who will be supporting special education environments should be offered additional e-learning and in-person training to assist in understanding the SPED learning environment as well as the specific role expectations of a paraprofessional in that environment.

    ○ Aligns with Learning Outcomes: #1, #2, #3, #4, #5

Learning Outcome #1	Learning Outcome #2	Learning Outcome #3	Learning Outcome #4	Learning Outcome #5
Confidently identify and independently act	Summarize and apply an understanding of	Analyze the efficacy of various learning	Apply a variety of communication strategies in order	Identify common forms of bias and how

on the job role expectations of a paraprofessional in Aurora Public Schools.	various behavior management theories to address current and future scenarios	accommodations in meeting the needs of students in a special education classroom	to communicate effectively with students and to support students' speech and language development	to avoid biased decision making and support in a classroom environment

Solution Storyboard

Pre"para"ed Onboarding Storyboard

Course Name: Pre"para"ed - New Employee Onboarding
Course Format: Asynchronous Online Training and Synchronous In-Person Training
Course Duration: 27 weeks (1 module every 2 weeks for two semesters) | Estimated Time: 1-2 hours/module

Learning Solution Description:
After completing Pre"para"ed's hybrid onboarding program, paraprofessionals should be able to confidently explain and apply the practices necessary to effectively take on the role of a paraprofessional within the Special Education environment.

[SEMESTER 1] Online Modules: **Sections:**

1. Course Introduction (Week 1)	→	1.1 Welcome to the Course!
2. Aurora Public School Overview (Weeks 2-3)	→	2.1 District Policies
		2.2 Curriculum
		2.3 Overview of APS Campuses
		2.4 Assessment
3. Learning Theories (Weeks 4-5)	→	3.1 Piaget's Cognitive Development
		3.2 Bloom's Taxonomy
		3.3 Assessment
4. Classroom Management (Weeks 6-7)	→	4.1 Setting Expectations
		4.1 Behavioral Strategies
		4.2 Assessment

Pre"para"ed Onboarding Storyboard (cont.)

[SEMESTER 1] Online Modules: **Sections:**

5. Bias (Weeks 8-9)	→	5.1 Common Forms of Bias
		5.2 Avoiding Biased Decision Making and Support
		5.3 Assessment
6. Safety Procedures (Weeks 10-11)	→	6.1 Environmental Safety Procedures - SRP
		6.2 Student Conflict Procedures
		6.3 Assessment
7. SPED Role (Weeks 12-13)	→	7.1 Job Role Expectations for SPED Paras in APS
		7.2 IEPs and 504 Plans
		7.3 SPED Supports
		7.3A Specific Reading Disabilities (SRDs)
		7.3B Other Learning Disabilities
		7.4 Interventions
		7.4A ELA Interventions (Reading and Writing)
		7.4B Math Interventions

Pre"para"ed Onboarding Storyboard (cont.)

[SEMESTER 1] Online Modules: **Sections:**

	7.5 Behavior Management Theories
	7.6 Communication Strategies
	7.7 Learning Accommodations
	7.8 Assessments
8. Customized Choice Session (Weeks 14-15)	8.1 Individualized Choice Sessions
	8.2 Assessment

Pre"para"ed Onboarding Storyboard (cont.)

[SEMESTER 2] In-Person Training: **Sections:**

9. Co-Planning (Weeks 16-17)	9.1 Aligning Lessons with the Classroom Teacher
	9.2 Assessment
10. Co-Teaching (Weeks 18-19)	10.1 Inclusions into the General Education Classroom
	10.2 Assessment
11. Implementing Strategies for Supporting Students (Weeks 20-21)	11.1 Introducing Strategies and Building Them Into Lessons
	11.2 Assessment
12. Implementing Interventions (Weeks 22-23)	12.1 Creating Lesson Plans Using the Interventions
	12.2 Assessment
13. Implementing Safety Protocols (Weeks 24-25)	13.1 Practicing/Teaching Safety with Students
	13.2 Assessment
14. Meet Your Onboarding Buddy/Mentor (Weeks 26-27)	14.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the Onboarding Buddy/Mentor
	14.2 Onboarding Exit Criteria

Module 6.2 - Student Conflict Procedures

Timeline: To be completed as a part of Module 6 (Weeks 10-11)
Format: Self-paced, online learning module to be completed individually
Duration: Approx. 30 minutes

Screen As You Scroll:

6.2 Student Conflict Procedures

Conflict Happens

It is unfortunate, but conflict (physical and verbal) occurs on school campuses. We hope that Module 6.2 helps you feel confident in addressing conflict among students according to APS policies and procedures.

Types of Conflict:

Physical   +

Verbal   +

🔒 Complete the content above before moving on.

Instructions for Learners:
- Please read through the different types of student conflicts that you might encounter on your campus and explore the APS Policies and Procedures that are in place to mitigate risk and promote safety.
- Complete the checks for understanding to monitor your learning.

Notes:

Overview: This page introduces learners to the APS District policies and procedures on student conflict. At the end of this section, learners should feel confident in their ability to address student conflicts on their campus. Learners will likely spend approximately 30 minutes maximum completing Module 6.2 before moving on to the quiz in the next section (Module 6.3).

Module 6 Alignment:
- Outcome #1: Confidently identify and independently act on the job role expectations of a paraprofessional in the Aurora School District.
- Outcome #2: Summarize and apply various behavior management theories to address current and future scenarios.

Notes for Development:
- This page should ensure that the learner is educated on the necessary content for the outcomes listed above.
- This section is a requirement for employees as it is part of the risk management strategy for the school district in ensuring that all onboarding employees are aware of and familiar with the required safety procedures.
- Checks for knowledge should be present to allow learners to gauge their own understanding.

Media Information: Module page created with Articulate Rise that will include PDFs, PNGs, and interactive links to convey information.

Module 6.3 - Safety Procedures Assessment

Timeline: To be taken at the completion of Module 6 (Weeks 10-11)
Format: Self-paced, online assessment to be taken individually
Duration: Approx. 10 minutes

Screen/Quiz As You Scroll:

6.3 APS Safety Procedures Quiz

Check for Understanding
You have made it to the end of Module 6! Complete the following quiz with a 100% before moving on the the next module.

The Standard Response Protocol has 5 emergency conditions.
○ True
○ False

"_____" is used when the threat is _____ the building.
Type your answer here

"Shelter" is used when the possible threat is a _____:
○ Snake
○ Intruder
○ Tornado
○ Angry Parent

🔒 Complete the content above before moving on.

Instructions for Learners:
- Use your understanding about APS safety procedures from Module 6 to complete the quiz.
- You must pass the quiz with a 100% before moving on to Module 7.

Notes:

Overview: This page utilizes a quiz to check learners' comprehension of the various safety procedures used by Aurora Public Schools. Learners will likely spend approximately 10 minutes maximum on this page before progressing to the next module (Module 7 - SPED Role).

Module 6 Alignment:
- Outcome #1: Confidently identify and independently act on the job role expectations of a paraprofessional in the Aurora School District.
- Outcome #2: Summarize and apply various behavior management theories to address current and future scenarios.

Notes for Development:
- Include various types of questions (True/False, multiple choice, drag and drop matching, etc.).
- Learners must pass the quiz with a 100% before they can move on to the next module.
  - Learners should be able to take the quiz as many times as necessary.
  - Learners should not be able to see correct/incorrect answers after their answers are submitted.

Media Information: Quiz created in Articulate Rise.

Evaluation Plan

Purpose of Evaluating the Learning Solution

The purpose of evaluating this learning solution is to assess the impact our program has on the ability of special education paraprofessionals in APS to effectively support students of all abilities. Our program is designed to provide paras with specialized training, relevant hands-on experience, and much needed support and clarity around their unique roles. Through the evaluation process outlined below, we'll be able to more accurately assess whether our learning

outcomes have been achieved and determine where modifications need to be made in order to better prepare paras for the classroom.

Data Collection and Analysis Plan

We will collect both qualitative and quantitative data throughout the duration of our training program. This data will be collected in the form of feedback surveys, participant assessments, observations, verbal questionnaires, and online questionnaires. We will review and analyze data bi-annually to determine if updates, revisions, or changes need to be made to the course.

Levels of Evaluation Included in the Plan

Our team will use Levels 3, 2, and 1 of the New World Kirkpatrick Model to evaluate our learning solution (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2015).
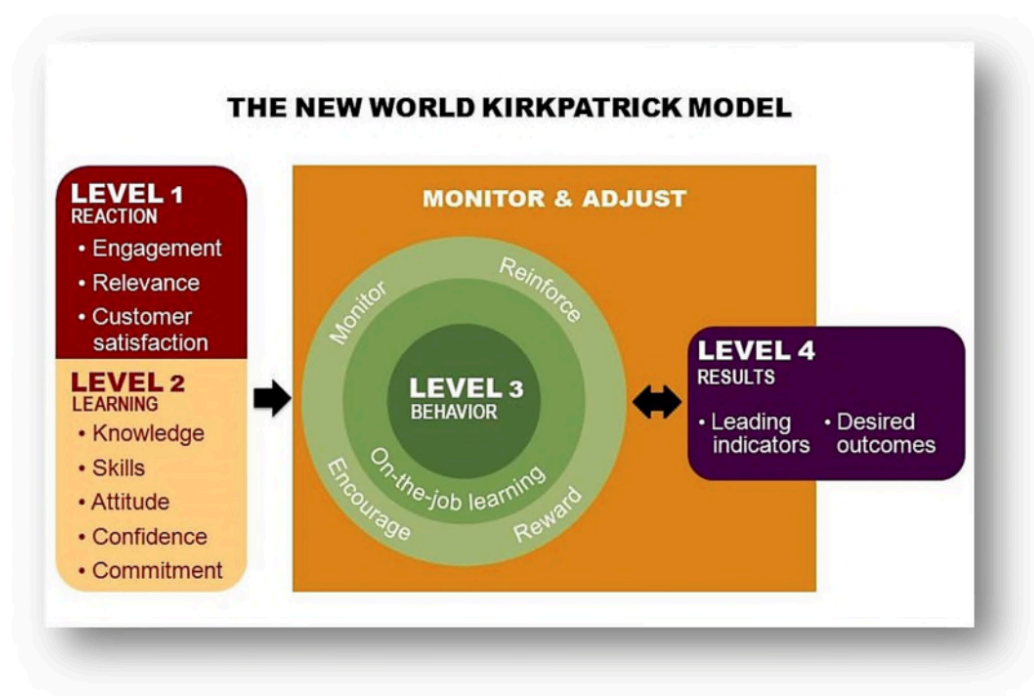
LEVEL 3: BEHAVIOR

To evaluate the degree to which learners are applying their skills and knowledge from this training to their work in the classroom, we will have learners, mentors, and classroom teachers complete behavior-related questionnaires. These questionnaires will be distributed at the end of the training program and at the end of the school year. They'll give participants the opportunity to describe the ways they're applying their learnings in the classroom, and whether there are areas of content that need to be revised and/or improved upon. In addition, these questionnaires will give mentors and classroom teachers the chance to share their observations of how effectively program participants are applying their knowledge in their roles. Feedback from learners, mentors, and teachers will be compared and analyzed at the end of the school year to determine if modifications to the program are needed.

LEVEL 2: LEARNING

In conjunction with a feedback survey (outlined in Level 1 below), both the mentors and the direct supervisors of participants will assess learning at multiple points in the onboarding program. For the first form of assessment, a learner's direct supervisor will provide a standardized series of questions via a verbal questionnaire to confirm conceptual understanding and comprehension of the required onboarding courses required for their role. Secondarily, the mentor assigned to the paraprofessional will observe initial classroom interactions and take notes on strengths and areas of opportunity to be shared with the supervisor.

LEVEL 1: REACTION

Following the instructor-led training, learners will be required to complete a feedback survey, sent via email, that is aligned with both the generalized and special education-specific e-learnings. This feedback survey requests input in the form of a Likert scale and open text. Learners will be asked a series of questions to determine if they found the training useful, if the content can be put to use in their role, and their impression on the overall quality of content. In addition, the survey will request open text feedback on the following: learners' self-assessed confidence before and after completing the training and how the course could be improved in the future.

Plans for Revision Cycles

Program administrators will be managing both feedback and content with a lifecycle content process. Each piece of content will be entered into a shared document to be made accessible to all managing stakeholders of the onboarding program. Within that document, all three learning assets will have a review lifecycle attached to them with a default timeline of bi-annual review (to be adjusted as needed).

As part of the lifecycle review, the program manager will gather feedback from all three levels of assessment inclusive of surveys, assessments, and observations recorded by mentors and supervisors. This feedback will be reviewed via a series of review meetings by stakeholders and considered when determining if revisions or updates need to be made to the learning assets for the following school year. If changes are needed, the program manager is responsible for revisions and will coordinate with subject matter experts to have content updated and published.

Evaluation Schedule

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Weeks 2-7	● Aurora Public Schools Overview ● Learning Theories ● Classroom Management	● Standardized Supervisor Assessment	
Weeks 8-13	● Bias ● Safety Procedures ● SPED Role	● Standardized Supervisor Assessment	
Weeks 14-19	● Co-Planning ● Co-Teaching	● Mentor Field Observation Notes and Feedback	

Weeks 20-27	• Implementing Strategies for Supporting Students • Implementing Interventions • Implementing Safety Protocols	• Mentor Field Observation Notes and Feedback	• Behavior-related questionnaire • Evaluate how learners are co-planning and co-teaching with classroom teachers and other SPED support staff
Review		• Feedback Survey • Supervisor Assessments • Field Observation Notes and Feedback	• Behavior-related questionnaire • Evaluate how learners are applying their skills and knowledge from the course in the classroom (e.g., strategies for supporting students, interventions, classroom management, safety protocols, etc.)

Plan to Communicate Findings & Results

As part of the revision and content lifecycle management process interested stakeholders will be notified of findings, trends, and results from the onboarding process bi-annually. The process will include findings being shared via stakeholder summaries and a series of meetings to offer the ability for input, discussion, and requests of proposed revisions to the content and program for the upcoming school year. Stakeholders can expect to be notified twice a year with a proposed meeting schedule, program updates, and evaluation results.

Assumptions

The following assumptions related to this hybrid training program have been discussed and agreed upon by all stakeholders.

Is this training required for all newly hired paraprofessionals?

- All newly hired paraprofessionals in APS will be required to complete this training program.

How will learners find out about this training program and/or enroll?

- Learners will be notified about the training program at their time of hire. Additionally, learners will receive a letter of offer and welcome email that reminds them about the training program requirement during their first year of employment. Enrollment will be assigned by Human Resources at the time of hire, so a hyperlink to the training will automatically appear in the "Onboarding Tasks" section of the learner's Oracle account.

Are there costs to the learner for completing the training? Do learners need to have access to readily available technologies?

- This program is being supported at the district level and there are no costs to the learner for participating. Paraprofessionals will be given the time and resources (laptop, wi-fi, etc.) necessary to complete the course.

Who has agreed to implement the program?

- The APS District Professional Development Team is implementing the program and monitoring success. Additionally, this program will be supported by and take input and guidance on district wide policies and standards from the APS Human Resources department via designated program liaisons.

Do learners need to be available for any synchronous activities?

- Learners will need to participate in synchronous activities in the schools such as observations, mentor meetings, and lesson planning in addition to being present for work every day.

What is the plan if learners do not successfully complete the training?

- If learners do not successfully complete the program within their first school year of hire, they will be given an opportunity for an accelerated course over the summer. If the learner does not successfully complete the training during the summer, their contract will not be renewed.

Will resources be available for learners after the experience has concluded? If so, in what format and how will learners access resources?

- The course modules and various resources will still be available to the learner after successful completion of the training. Learners can access these resources, and any other district learning resources, through PowerSchool.

Timeline

Phase 1: Analysis, Empathize & Define			
Milestone	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Owner**
Project kickoff meeting	04-01-2025	04-01-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators, Mentors, SMEs, Developers, Media Production
Gain insight and understanding into our learners through research and interviews	04-02-2025	04-11-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed
Analyze collected data	04-14-2025	04-18-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed
Create learner personas	04-21-2025	04-22-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed
Create "Get To Know You" survey for learners	04-23-2025	04-25-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Developers
Reviews and revisions	04-29-2025	05-02-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators, Developers
Final approval	05-05-2025	05-09-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators, Developers
	04-01-2025 to 05-05-2025	**04-01-2025 to 05-09-2025**	

Phase 2: Design & Ideate			
Milestone	**Start Date**	**End Date**	**Owner**
Create relevant and meaningful learning outcomes based on research and analysis from Phase 1	05-12-2025	05-15-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, SMEs

Create a learner journey map	05-16-2025	05-21-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed
Brainstorm and design learning solutions that target specific supports needed by our targeted learners	05-22-2025	05-29-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, SMEs
Develop and create a storyboard	05-30-2025	06-06-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed
Reviews and revisions	06-09-2025	06-12-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, SMEs
Final approval	06-13-2025	06-17-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, SMEs
	05-12-2025 to 06-13-2025	**05-15-2025 to 06-17-2025**	

Phase 3: Development & Prototype

| Milestone	Start Date	End Date	Owner
Develop and create e-learning modules for the online learning experience	06-18-2025	07-22-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, SMEs, Developers, Media Production
Develop and create quizzes and assessments	06-18-2025	07-22-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Developers
Develop and create any materials and resources needed for the in-person learning experience	06-18-2025	07-22-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, SMEs, Developers
Create feedback survey and questionnaires for learners, mentors, and classroom teachers	07-14-2025	07-22-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed
Reviews and revisions	07-23-2025	08-06-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
Final approval	08-07-2025	08-14-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
	06-18-2025 to 08-07-2025	**07-22-2025 to 08-14-2025**	

Phase 4: Implementation & Testing, Part 1

Milestone	Start Date	End Date	Owner
Distribute the course to learners	08-15-2025	08-15-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
Learners participate in the hybrid training program	08-15-2025	05-23-2026	Learners
Distribute instructor-led training feedback survey to learners	12-19-2025	12-19-2025	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
Learners complete instructor-led training feedback survey	12-19-2025	01-16-2026	Learners
	08-15-2025 to 12-19-2025	**08-15-2025 to 01-16-2026**	

Phase 5: Evaluation & Testing, Part 2

Name	Start Date	End Date	Owner
Distribute behavior-related questionnaires forms to learners, mentors, and classroom teachers	10-06-2025	05-22-2026	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
Gather and compile feedback from surveys and questionnaires	05-25-2026	06-01-2026	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
Meet with stakeholders to review, analyze, and discuss all forms of feedback	06-02-2026	06-09-2026	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
Make necessary revisions and updates to program content	06-10-2026	07-08-2026	Team Pre"Para"ed, Developers, Media Production
Final approval for program revisions	07-09-2026	07-17-2026	Team Pre"Para"ed, Program Administrators
	10-06-2025 to 07-09-2026	**05-22-2026 to 07-17-2026**	

Gantt Chart
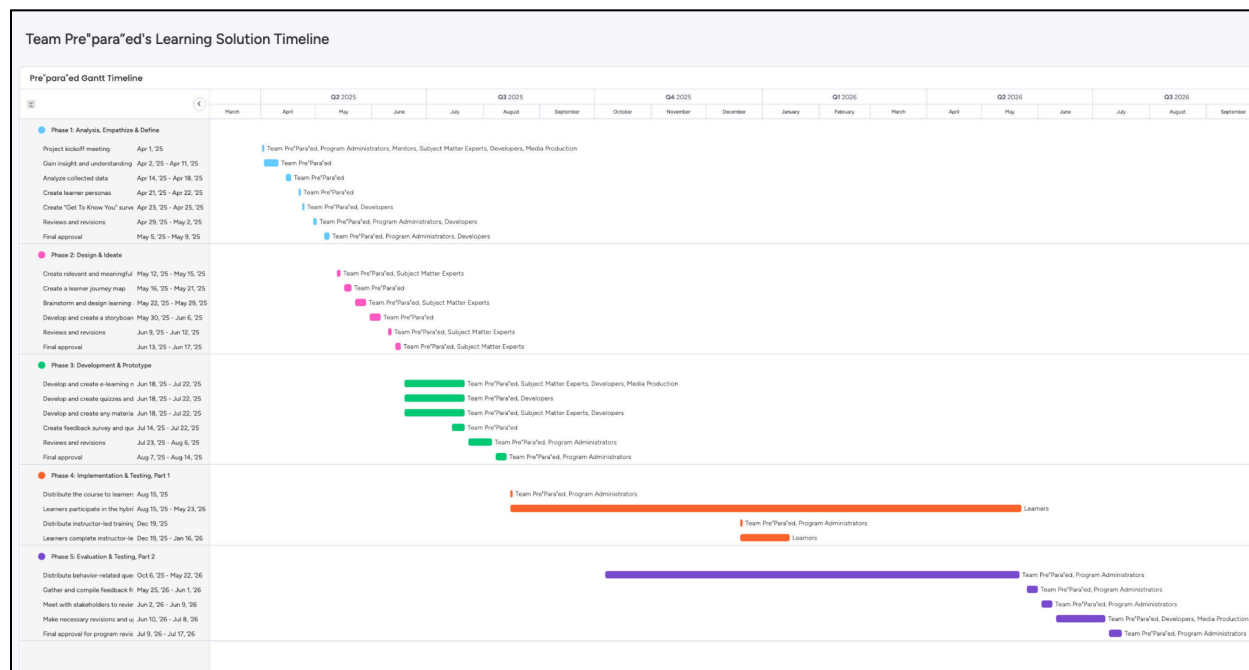
Communication Plan

Communication Strategy: There are multiple types of communications to be managed by program administrators. Internal communications largely consist of functional work to be done by the program team, including learning design. This is to be maintained in Monday.com via Gantt chart and guided by timeline and milestone management. Stakeholder communications are tied to milestone achievements and the projected communication dates are outlined in the Key Communications Draft.

Key Communication Draft: A non-exhaustive list of communication (comms) that represent project phase changes and other key dates are highlighted below.

Phase 1 - Analysis & Definitions Comms:

- Project Kickoff Meeting - April 1, 2025

- Storyboard Review / Revisions Deadline - May 2, 2025

- Final Approval & Exit Phase - May 9, 2025

Phase 2 - Design Comms:

- Data & Persona Review / Revisions Deadline - June 12, 2025

- Final Approval & Exit Phase - June 17, 2025

Phase 3 - Prototype Comms:

- e-Learning & Assets Review / Revisions Deadline - Aug. 6, 2025

- Final Approval & Exit Phase - Aug. 14, 2025

Phase 4 - Implementation Comms:

- Course Distributed to Learners - Aug. 15, 2025

- Hybrid Training Program Delivery - Aug. 15, 2025 - May 23, 2026

- Learner Feedback Survey Deadline - Jan. 16, 2026

Phase 5 - Evaluation & Testing Comms:

- Feedback Gathered & Compiled Deadline - June 1, 2026

- Meet with Stakeholders to Review - June 9, 2026

- Final Approval for Program Revisions - July 17, 2026

Summary

Paraprofessionals play a vital role within our education system, providing support to both teachers and students. One of the most important responsibilities of a para is to assist special education teachers in the classroom. However, due to a lack of effective training programs, preparation tools, and guidance, it can be challenging for paras to successfully fulfill their job responsibilities. This solution design document, created for Aurora Public Schools, outlines an effective hybrid training program for paras who are assigned roles within the special education learning environment. Using the ADDIE Instructional Design Model and Design Thinking as the guiding frameworks, we've developed an impactful learning solution to address the learning and skills gaps that can prevent paras from meeting the needs of their students. Through a combination of e-learning modules and in-person training, Pre"para"ed's nine-month program will provide learners with valuable knowledge, strategies, hands-on experience, and much needed professional guidance that are crucial to succeeding in their roles. Upon completion of this course, learners will have the necessary skills and tools to effectively support students of all abilities in the classroom.

Appendix

A. Learner Personas

JAQUELYN

Paraprofessional

AGE | 32
EDUCATION | High School Diploma
LOCATION | Aurora, CO
SALARY | $30,000/year

BIO

Jaquelyn is a single mother who spent the majority of her 20s in the beauty industry doing hair and nails out of her home studio. Jaquelyn found a love for supporting children in education after COVID made schools go remote and she helped her daughter navigate all of her school work. Over the past couple years, Jaquelyn has been volunteering in her daughter's classroom on a regular basis. She also started supporting the teacher by working with some of the extra reading groups during the school day. Jaquelyn was hired by Aurora Public Schools at the beginning of this school year as a paraprofessional in special education classrooms. In addition to her love of working with children, Jaquelyn wanted to be a para so that she and her daughter, who is in fourth grade, could have similar schedules and spend more time together. In order to make ends meet, Jaquelyn still runs her hair and nails salon part-time when she is not working as a para.

MOTIVATORS

WANTS TO HELP STUDENTS FEEL SUCCESSFUL

WANTS A JOB THAT ALLOWS HER TO BE CLOSER TO HER DAUGHTER

EXCITED TO RECEIVE PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

SKILLS

BILINGUAL IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH

EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH CHILDREN

THRIVES IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT

CARING   HARD-WORKING   CURIOUS

GOALS

- Make every student feel welcomed and loved
- Create a collaborative environment where all students can learn
- Make a difference and feel more valued
- Support teachers in the classroom
- Feel less overwhelmed by work

FRUSTRATIONS

- The lack of specialized training on learning theories for diverse learners
- Not confident in classroom management and how to handle safety concerns in the classroom
- Having to pick up the slack for short-staffed classrooms and departments
- Unsure of her role in different classrooms
- Low compensation

SKILLS GAP

- Jaquelyn has a lack of experience and training in education. In order to successfully work with students of all abilities, she will need to learn how to effectively support them in the classroom. She will also need to familiarize herself with the curriculum.

- Because Jaquelyn hasn't worked in a school before, she will have to learn how to navigate the building during the school day before pulling or pushing in with students.

- Jaquelyn lacks awareness about the potential for bias toward her own child. Working in the same school as her daughter could get in the way of her success if she doesn't support other students in the same way she does her child.

"Working in a school has shown me how truly rewarding this job is."

—Jaquelyn

LEARNING SOLUTION FOR JAQUELYN

Hybrid learning modules that include some asynchronous online modules and some in-person learning sessions. These trainings will inform the learner about district policies, the role of a classroom paraprofessional, and best practices within the field of education.

ADVANTAGES

The asynchronous online modules can be completed at the learner's pace and convenience. This fits well with Jaquelyn's needs since she is new to the field and may need more time to review the materials and because she has additional job and parental responsibilities outside her work as a para.

The in-person sessions will give Jaquelyn relevant "hands-on experience," provide her with opportunities to apply her knowledge from the asynchronous modules, and familiarize her with her campus. This is helpful for Jaquelyn because she doesn't have as much practical experience in the classroom and she's nervous about navigating the campus.

DISADVANTAGES

The in-person sessions will be scheduled and synchronous, which does not allow learners to complete this part of the training at their convenience. This could be a struggle for Jaquelyn because she might have to find child care for her daughter if the times for the sessions are outside of school hours.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES

The efficacy of asynchronous online modules depends on the dedication and willingness of the learner to put in the time and effort to proficiently complete them. A potential consequence of asynchronous online learning is that some people may rush through the training for the sake of finishing the modules and, thus, do not get the full benefit or learning experience.

DONNA

Paraprofessional

AGE | 55
EDUCATION | Associate Degree
LOCATION | Denver, CO
SALARY | $38,000/year

BIO

Donna earned her associate degree in psychology and has roughly 20 years of experience working as a paraprofessional in multiple states. She loves being a paraprofessional and can't imagine herself doing anything else. Donna's job responsibilities have varied at each school she's worked at. She has assisted teachers in handling administrative tasks, helped prep learning materials, monitored students during lessons, and assisted with a variety of school support functions. Donna recently accepted a paraeducator position with Aurora Public Schools and moved with her long-time partner from Texas to Colorado, where she's looking forward to spending more time outdoors hiking and biking. In her new school, Donna will be working with small groups of special education students to provide them with extra guidance and support. She is excited about her new responsibilities and plans to learn more about how she can effectively meet the needs of students of all abilities.

MOTIVATORS

ENJOYS SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM

WANTS TO CONTINUE DEVELOPING HER SKILL SET

LOVES TO LEARN NEW THINGS

SKILLS

MANY YEARS EXPERIENCE AS A PARAPROFESSIONAL

ADAPTABLE SKILL SET GAINED FROM WORKING IN DIFFERENT SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

EXPERIENCED **DEDICATED** **ADAPTABLE**

GOALS

- Learn how things are done at her new school in order to succeed in her role
- Feel like she is making a difference for students of all abilities
- To be respected and seen in her school community

FRUSTRATIONS

- The lack of clarity on job responsibilities when starting at a new school
- The lack of specialized training and professional development around special education services at the school and district levels
- Feels that her experience is not appreciated as she has changed schools multiple times
- Feels underappreciated in compensation due to her lack of formal education credentials

SKILLS GAP

- Although Donna is an experienced paraeducator, she didn't get the opportunity to work with special education students in her previous roles. In order to effectively support and communicate with students of all abilities at her new school, she will need specialized training.

- Each state and each school district uses different curriculums to support their students. Because Donna is new to Colorado and Aurora Public Schools, she's unfamiliar with the curriculum. Donna will need to familiarize herself with the curriculum that her new school has adopted in order to be successful in her role.

"Every day is completely different from the next, and I love having to adapt each day." —Donna

LEARNING SOLUTION FOR DONNA

Hybrid learning modules that include some asynchronous online modules and some in-person learning sessions. These trainings will inform the learner about district policies, the role of a classroom paraprofessional, and best practices within the field of education.

ADVANTAGES

The asynchronous online modules can be completed at the learner's pace and convenience. This will be helpful as Donna completes her relocation to Colorado and settles into her new community.

The in-person sessions will give Donna relevant "hands-on experience," provide her with opportunities to apply her knowledge from the asynchronous modules, and familiarize her with her campus. This is helpful for Donna because she doesn't have much experience working with special needs students. She also prefers in-person guidance when onboarding at a new school and district.
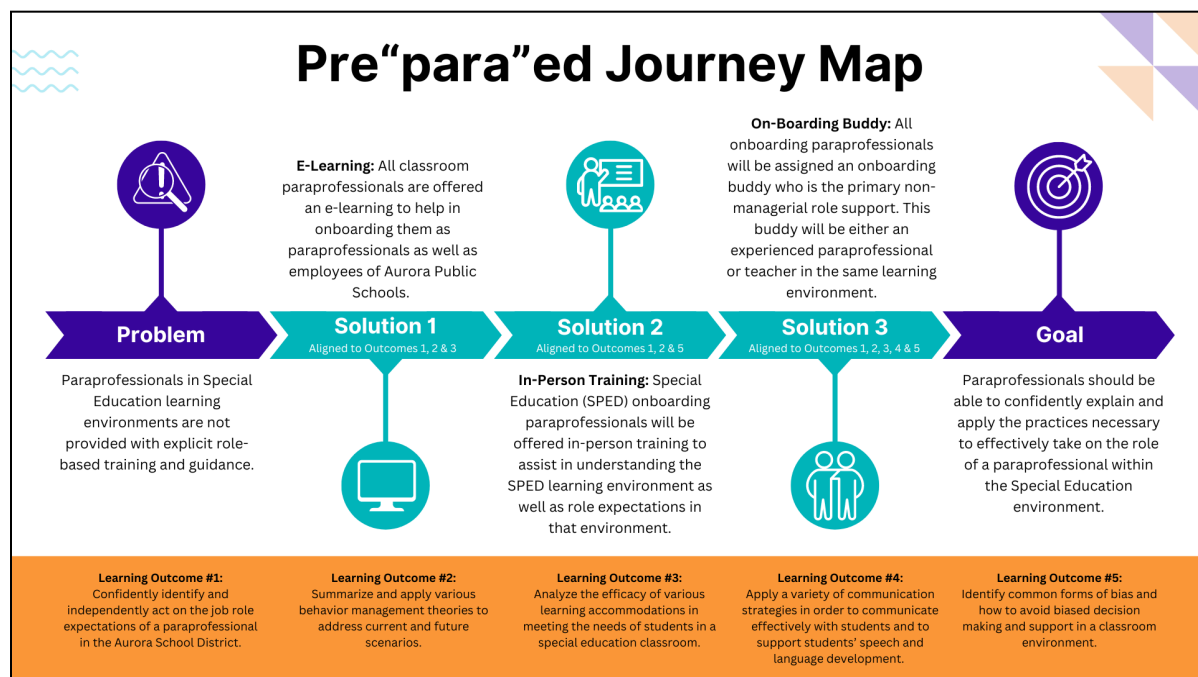
DISADVANTAGES

The asynchronous online modules require a device and a stable internet connection. This could be an issue for Donna during her relocation process.

Donna does not spend a lot of time immersed in technology, and she's not familiar with the technology used for the online training. She will have to familiarize herself with how to navigate through the modules in order to successfully complete the training.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES

Donna has experience working in a variety of paraprofessional roles in various states, which may require her to "unlearn" some of her previous knowledge and skills. This can be difficult to do via an online learning process, even if the person is open-minded and ready to adapt.

B. Journey Map

Pre"para"ed Journey Map

E-Learning: All classroom paraprofessionals are offered an e-learning to help in onboarding them as paraprofessionals as well as employees of Aurora Public Schools.

On-Boarding Buddy: All onboarding paraprofessionals will be assigned an onboarding buddy who is the primary non-managerial role support. This buddy will be either an experienced paraprofessional or teacher in the same learning environment.

Problem	Solution 1	Solution 2	Solution 3	Goal
	Aligned to Outcomes 1, 2 & 3	Aligned to Outcomes 1, 2 & 5	Aligned to Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5	

Paraprofessionals in Special Education learning environments are not provided with explicit role-based training and guidance.

In-Person Training: Special Education (SPED) onboarding paraprofessionals will be offered in-person training to assist in understanding the SPED learning environment as well as role expectations in that environment.

Paraprofessionals should be able to confidently explain and apply the practices necessary to effectively take on the role of a paraprofessional within the Special Education environment.

Learning Outcome #1:
Confidently identify and independently act on the job role expectations of a paraprofessional in the Aurora School District.

Learning Outcome #2:
Summarize and apply various behavior management theories to address current and future scenarios.

Learning Outcome #3:
Analyze the efficacy of various learning accommodations in meeting the needs of students in a special education classroom.

Learning Outcome #4:
Apply a variety of communication strategies in order to communicate effectively with students and to support students' speech and language development.

Learning Outcome #5:
Identify common forms of bias and how to avoid biased decision making and support in a classroom environment.

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