



Does my child need a one-to-one aide?

Children have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) so that they can be involved and make progress in the general education curriculum. IEPs describe a variety of services that include specialized instruction and related services. Sometimes a child may need the related service of a one-to-one aide (1:1) or para-educator. A one-to-one can be useful for some students and may not be beneficial for others.

Decisions to use a one-to-one should be well thought out. IEP teams should ask:

- Why is 1:1 assistance being considered?
- What other interventions or supports have been tried and how did that work?
- What is the specific concern that would be addressed with a 1:1?
- When does the student seem to need intensive support?
- Would changes or accommodations in the classroom, playground or cafeteria or in the way work is presented help the student?

Research shows that extensive use of 1:1 aides can actually foster dependence and shift responsibility for a student away from the teacher. If you are thinking about asking for 1:1 support for most of your child's school day, it is important to consider that one-to-one support can:

- Decrease ownership of your student by the teacher.
- Decrease interaction between your student and the teacher.
- Promote dependence on an adult rather than independence.
- Contribute to isolating your child by setting them apart from their peers.
- Place responsibility for most of your child's education with someone who may not be trained to carry out the task.

If the IEP team decides that a student does need this intensive service there should be a plan that includes:

- When and how the 1:1 will be support be provided.
- Who will provide the service.
- How the 1:1 will be trained and supervised.
- What the plan will be to reduce or fade support as the student's skills increase.
- How the effectiveness of the service will be monitored.
- Who will ensure that the student's teacher and the 1:1 work together.

It is important to ask the question: Are we shifting responsibility for environmental, instructional, behavioral or other concerns from the professionals to a 1:1 or para-educator? Be cautious if para-educators are given the main responsibility for instruction, curriculum and behavior. When a teacher sees that a student has another adult at their side, there is a tendency to believe that the student's needs are being addressed.

There are positive uses of 1:1 support for students with significant behavioral or medical needs or during specific times during the day. It is important for the IEP team to look at what problems they would try to address with the use of a 1:1 aide. It should not be viewed as a quick fix for every concern.

The California Dept. of Education website PENT (Positive Environments, Network of Trainers) has information on the use of individual supports for students at www.pent.ca.gov/pos/pr/paras.html. Many districts and county SELPAs have policies to guide them. Ask if these materials are available in your district if you are considering this important decision.



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