• Not being able to read facial expressions.

Students with autism have a tendency to be either hypersensitive or hyposensitive to stimuli. For example, they may be sensitive to light, sound and room temperature. A student in a brightly lit classroom might experience extreme difficulty learning.

You will need to find a way to work around the stimuli that might be causing the problem in order to help the student learn effectively.

The ABC's of being a paraprofessional

The role of the paraprofessional has changed significantly. Today, you must be able to distinguish between your role and that of the classroom teacher; be familiar with federal and state laws and regulations; and know the legal and ethical standards.

Here are some valuable things to know when beginning your career:

The teacher has ultimate responsibility for the education of the student — for the design and delivery of the instructional program. As a paraprofessional, you help to improve the quality of education by supporting the teacher in meeting the instructional objectives.

One of the most important aspects of ethical behavior is the handling and disclosure of confidential information about students and families.

You are required by law to keep this information confidential.

Both state and federal laws regulate access to information about students. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, or FERPA, addresses issues regarding the privacy of students and their parents.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

New York State United Teachers offers a variety of materials and workshops to help its members. The information in this brochure comes from workshops offered through NYSUT Education & Learning Trust.

If you are interested in having an ELT worskhop in your area, ask your local union president to schedule one by calling ELT in Latham, at **800-528-6208**.

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Representing more than 600,000 pre-K–12 teachers, school-related professionals, academic and professional faculty in higher education, other professionals in education and health care, and retirees.

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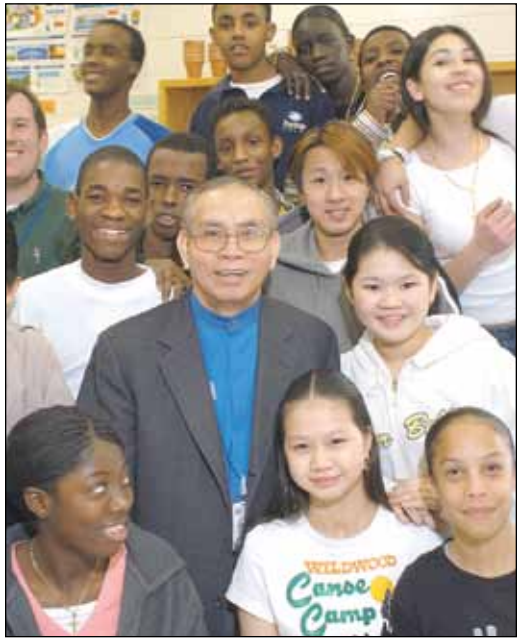
FOR SRP MEMBERS

TIPS for SUCCESS FROM NYSUT SRP WORKSHOPS



Here are some valuable tips selected specially for School-Related Professionals. They come from workshops offered through NYSUT Education & Learning Trust.

ELT
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Advance your career. Refresh your mind.

Dealing with difficult students

Whether you drive a school bus, work in the cafeteria or are a classroom aide or teaching assistant, it is likely that you will come in contact with students who exhibit chronic and extreme misbehavior, including the use of violence. How you react as an adult can escalate the conflict or help to defuse a power struggle. Here are tips for dealing with difficult students:

• Identify and recognize warning signs indicating the potential for aggressive or violent behavior. These may include excessive feelings of isolation; uncontrolled anger; gang affiliation; or drug and alcohol use.

• What you say when confronted with outbursts of hostility from students can determine whether it's resolved quickly and calmly or whether the conflict is escalated.

• Never ignore aggression. If you do, small acts of aggression can quickly grow to more violent aggression.

• When defusing a power struggle, respond calmly and confidently. Recognize the situation for what it is — a power struggle.

Disability awareness

If you work in a school setting, you will have contact with students with disabilities. Some important things to know include:

• Be sensitive to the proper way to speak to or about someone who has a disability. Say "people with disabilities" — don't say "the disabled." Don't label people as part of a disability group.

• Choice and independence are important; let the student do and speak for himself or herself as much as possible.

• Many factors can cause a disability, including genetic, environmental, prenatal, natal and postnatal.

New York recognizes 13 disability categories, but the ones you will most frequently encounter are learning disabilities, emotional disabilities, autism, speech and language disorders, and deafness and hearing loss.

Familiarize yourself with the acronyms that are commonly used when dealing with students with disabilities. Some important ones are:

CSE — Committee on Special Education
FAPE — Free and Appropriate Public Education
IDEA — Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP — Individualized Education Program
LRE — Least Restrictive Environment
RTI — Response to Intervention

Supporting students with autism

The prevalence of autism has increased dramatically over the last 10 years. Today, one in every 166 children is diagnosed with autism, yet there is not one specific test that can be used to diagnose it. It is a complex disorder that is not easily defined.

The specific characteristics of Autism Spectrum Diagnosis (ASD) will be different in each individual child. For instance, a child may have no trouble learning to read but may exhibit extremely poor social interaction.

It is helpful to know the following common characteristics of students with autism:

• Not being able to express needs appropriately;

• Speaking in a loud voice;

• Speaking in a monotone;

• Repetitive speech;

• Lack of eye contact; and