Summary:

Sue Miller, a special educator, has become overwhelmed by her job responsibilities. Two months ago, one of her paraeducators married and moved out of state. Sue’s classroom of ten students with moderate to severe disabilities has been short staffed ever since. A new paraeducator was hired last Friday and will be starting on Wednesday. Although Sue is thankful that Marti was hired, Sue doesn’t know when she will find the time to orient and train her. With the help of a colleague, Sue develops and successfully implements a plan to orient Marti. Within a few days of starting work, Marti has a personalized job description and clearly understands what Sue expects of her. Everyone feels that Marti has started off on the right foot.

Characters and Roles

- Sue Miller, Special Education Teacher
- Marti Olsen, New Paraeducator
- Ellen Martin, Teacher Colleague of Sue
- Nancy, Paraeducator
- Betty, Paraeducator

Tools

- Starting off on the Right Foot: Providing Orientation for Paraeducators
- Starting off on the Right Foot: Getting Acquainted

Artifacts:

- Orientation Components Checklist
- Paraeducator Work Style and Preferences Inventory
- Teacher Work Style and Preferences Inventory
- Work Style Score Comparison Sheet
- Master List of Tasks and Demands
- Paraeducator Task Preparation/Confidence Inventory

Glossary Terms:

- Individual Education Plan
- Paraeducator
- Orient
• Confidentiality
• Safety and Emergency Procedures
• Shadow
• Work Style and Preferences Inventory
• Master List of Tasks and Duties
• Behavior Intervention Plan (Behavior Support Plan)

Web Sites:

• [http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/development/teams/programs/Paraed/checklists.shtm](http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/departments/development/teams/programs/Paraed/checklists.shtm)
• [http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/paraprep/supervisor.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/paraprep/supervisor.html)

Discussion Points:

• Why is it important to orient and train paraeducators?
• What is needed for training to be effective?
• Given that the school structure provides both limitations and resources for training, how might paraeducator training occur?
• What is the value of having written guidelines, tools, and checklists in place for training?

Activities:

• List areas that are critical for paraeducator training and then prioritize the list.
• Determine, from the list above who might potentially provide training
• List areas to be included in a written document on safety and emergency procedures.
• Role play a situation where a teacher discusses expectations for a new paraeducator in a critical area such as punctuality/attendance, behavior management, or confidentiality.

Reflective Question: Scene 4, Question 2 – What might Sue do as Marti shadows her to ensure that Marti isn’t just a passive observer but a thoughtful participant? Are there things that Sue can say to help Marti to “pick up” on the important things that are happening with students in the classroom? Sue will want to make sure that Marti is paying attention to the relevant features of a situation by calling Marti’s attention to these. Sue might have Marti read a student’s behavior plan, ask Marti to note any instances where Sue implements the plan during instruction with a student, and then discuss with Marti her observations. In addition, Sue could verbalize her own thought process as she’s working with a student so that Marti understands the judgments and decisions that Sue makes.