“Top Ten” things paras do to make a difference for our children.

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Anxiety
Regardless of disability there is a great deal of anxiety.
Learn how the child presents his/her anxiety.
Help them through it.
Walking without talking or minimal talk, calming techniques.
Calming the child could make a great difference in the outcome of the rest of the day, week, school year.

Communication
There are many different ways children with disabilities communicate.
Learning their perspective is extremely important.
They like to be spoken to on the same level as their peers.
Children with ASD, EBD and ADD/ADHD sometimes communicate by using challenging behavior.
Try to learn their underlying language.

Respect
This is something that truly effects self-esteem.
Being in Special Ed places a stigma on self worth.
Some feel they are talked down to even though they have high intelligence.
Validate their feelings.
Gain Trust.
Understand the challenging behaviors.
Organization/Homework
Most students have trouble with both organization & homework. Develop a system that works for both you and the student. Some need help at the beginning of the day, some at the end of the day. Some have trouble excepting help. Some are confused with what is expected or just plain do not understand the work.

Keep an Open Mind!
There are a lot of preconceived notions about our children. Reports that are passed down about behavior may make you think differently about the child. Sometimes the diagnoses can come with preconceived ideas. No two children are alike. Try to start with a clean slate regardless.

Be Flexible
There is nothing worse than a power struggle. Many students are inflexible. What works for one may not work for all. Keep open to changing the environment for the student.
Be Creative
Get to know the individual first.
Find out likes and dislikes.
What motivates that student-tickets/Yu-gi-oh cards, food.
Be creative in the system- something added for incentive on the IEP.

Get to Know the Parents
We know you cannot directly communicate with us.
Communication Chart-daily, weekly as needed.
Parents can invite you to IEP meetings.
Many of us are in denial.
Students need your help regardless of the home situation.

Advocacy
Important!-Paras spend the most up close time with our students.
Many have unseen difficulties that you can see.
Being their eyes and ears is imperative for their survival in the school setting.
Reporting their needs can save a lot of time in both yours and the students day.
Teach them to self-advocate-how to appropriately tell others their needs.
Maybe then they can become para free.
Humor

Must have sense of humor!
Working with special needs can be stressful.
Laugh at ourselves when situations get tough.
Smiles are contagious. Have some fun.
Remember those with ASD may think you are laughing at them, not with them.

Thank You!