■ My paras are my lifeline in the classroom - they assist in implementing behavior plans, build relationships with students, and help each student reach their full potential! Andrea Hutchison - Orchard Hill Elementary ■ *Without my paraeducator, I would not be half the teacher that people think I am. She is the woman behind the scene that keeps this classroom running and keeps all of us calm. Without her, I would be lost. Brianna Konz - Moore Elementary* ■ My paras provide me with support and assistance throughout the day. They are essential to the workings of my classroom! Sarah Fitzsimmons - South Tama County High School ■ *Day in and day out our paras can be the one of the most important staff members in our childrens' lives. Kevin Blunt - Stanton Schools* ■ I have 11 of the most amazing paraeducators. 7 of the 11 paraeducators in my building have done this job for 15 years or longer. They are dedicated and have worked with very challenging behaviors through the years. The one thing that stands out to me above anything else is their ability to develop relationships with students and their families. I would love for you to do a story on them. Lindsey Millsap - Mason City Schools ■ *The paras at Carter Lake Elementary work hard to build relationships with students and close the learning gaps between our students with learning disabilities and our general education students. Thank you for considering Carter Lake Elementary in the Council Bluffs Community School District. Renae Wilkening - Carter Lake Elementary* ■ Each and every paraeducator who I work with is like a teacher in my eyes. They deserve the respect like all teachers. They are the ones who go to the general education classroom and see how the students do in the general education classroom. They are so important with communication between all teachers. Ms. Kelsey Heintz - Shenandoah Schools ■ *When I think of my room and the para-educators I get to work with, all I can think of is "success." Paras bring success to this classroom from all angles. This classroom would not run if it were not for the exceptional help I and our students gain from para-educators. Kylie Gross - Loma Schools* ■ My associate, Tracy, keeps our classroom running smoothly with her knowledge, strategies in dealing with students and perfectly timed humor to help diffuse tense situations! It would be tough without her! Carly Wettstein - Ottumwa Schools ■ *My paras are my eyes, ears, hands and presence in the classroom making it possible for the students to succeed and thrive in the general education classroom. Becky Porter - Interstate 35 Special Education* ■ My paras mean everything to me, without them I won't be able to achieve all that I do. One of my paras is the most resilient and determined person I have met in this field. Brittany Knipper - New Hampton Elementary School ■ *They are the backbone of special education; they are my eyes and ears when it comes to working with students with special needs. They can provide valuable classroom data with regard to behavior, attitude, and learning environment for students with special needs. They are the advocates for students with special needs in the general education classrooms. Lisa J. Denney - Van Buren Community Schools* ■ We have 25 spectacular Special Ed para-educators in our elementary school, and they assist every student in excelling! From autism to wheelchairs on the playground, our paras know what it takes to support student learning! Michelle Huntress - Storm Lake Elementary School ■ *The Para-Professionals in our building mean a life-line to our students and parents, a support system to enable students to self-advocate and thrive in challenging situations. We have a fantastic group of para-professionals who are strong advocates for the life-long success of our students. Patrick Miller - OABCIG* ■ What would I do without them? ;-) Stacy Brewer - Oelwein ■ *My paras help many of my students express their voice who otherwise might not be heard. Cassidy Long - CR Prairie* ■ My paras are the key to the success of my students, the school and myself, without them we could not grow, evolve to become productive members of society. Vicki Murphy - Spartan ■ *My students wouldn't be where they are without the help, support, and stability of my paras, as they not only provide educational support but the emotional support that our students need. Mrs. Emma Eaton - Carlisle Elementary School* ■ The paraeducator that serves the special needs students in my building, means so much more that I can express in words. She is caring to all students in the building, has a positive attitude towards learning, and is extremely flexible with her forever changing schedule! She helps us with our progress monitoring and sometimes observes things we cannot always see inside the classroom. We are blessed to have her! Kelly Olivier - Hoglan Elementary ■ *Karen Schroeder is a para that works at South Winneshiek HIgh School with a sophomore student who is totally blind. What stands out to me is her ability to relate with all the students. When she interacts with other students beyond just Logan it allows him to mesh in with the class. She does an amazing job of helping our blind student be a "regular" student. Karen is selfless when it comes to the time she puts in above and beyond her contract hours to help Logan and other students and staff as well. We are lucky to have have Karen as part of our education team! Connie Euans - South Winneshiek Community School* ■ Paras are essential members of a team, supplying the minute by minute, everyday support our students need and they make educational plans possible, without them, there is no “us”! Taylor Deena - Pleasant Valley ■ *My classroom para is my right arm. She can finish my thoughts and have paperwork to back it up. My school paras are compassionate, flexible and amazing. I would not be able to do my job without them! Whitney Turner - Mount Vernon* ■ My paraeducator in my special education classroom, is a valuable, precious, hard-working individual who enhances and enriches the education and lives of my special education students daily. Karen Rosas - Mediapolis Community School ■ *My paras help my classroom run smoothly and make every kid feel cared about. I couldn't do my job without them. Casey Hupp - Hoover Elementary* ■ Quality paraeducators can mean a world of difference to students at a small alternative school, a difference only made more difficult to achieve by the treatment paras receive at the hands of some districts. Jonathan Jenkins - Marshalltown ■ *Para-educators are often times the fuel that makes the vehicle go; you have the vehicle (the students), and the engine (the teacher) but without the para-educators (the fuel) we certainly wouldn't get too far. Katie Rezac - Estherville Lincoln Central CSD* ■ The para educators at Ed White Elementary collaborate with general education teachers and special education teachers to ensure that the unique needs of students are being met in diverse settings across the student's day so each student is able to be successful. Laura L. Jacobsen - Edward White Elementary ■ *My paras are the heart and soul of our special education department! Mrs. Rachael Marion - Sidney Community School District* ■ Paraeducators are the glue that hold me and my students together. They are some of the hardest working, under appreciated I have ever had the pleasure to work with. The paras in my building are simply amazing! Nathan Johnston - Johnston ■ *I have the utmost confidence in my para. She helps make the secondary special education program at Tri-County School function as well as it does. We "get" it other and are on the same page with student expectations. Kerri Tegtmeier - Tri-County Schools* ■ Our paras go above and beyond each and every day for our students by doing the homework themselves so they know best how to re-explain classroom concepts for student success. Barb Foster - Osage ■ *I have a very interesting para in the building. He is a a 30 year veteran of teaching in the classroom and is the President of the Indianola School Board. He does it because he "needs a purpose" and it shows each day he comes to work. He is a great example of what all educators should strive for in a job. Jill Anderson - Lakewood Elementary* ■ Our Associates are highly qualified and irreplaceable when it comes to getting our kids the services they need to succeed at high levels. Brett Nagle - Wapello Elementary ■ *Our paras are extraordinary and we could not effectively meet students' needs without them. They are kind, caring individuals who are strong at building relationships with some of our toughest students. They work along side our teachers to provide support with the ultimate goal of building students' skills and independence. Angela Livezey - North Mahaska CSD* ■ My paras mean the world to me and help me grow as a teacher, along with making my students be the best they can be! Cara J. Murphy - CAM High School ■ *If I could only use one sentence it would be a major run on sentence so here are a few thoughts! My para's are my right and left hands! They often know what I am thinking without me having to use words because they invest in their students and know what they need. My Para's are some of the hardest working individuals I know and they always put the kids and their needs first! They level the playing field so ALL students can be successful. Amber Sly - Grundy Center Elementary* ■ The question is, "What do my paras mean to the students?" Everything! Hughes, Glenda - Marshalltown ■ *Mrs. Charline Malli has to be the best Para we have. She is so empathetic to our students in our program or any other program. The best thing about her, is this isn’t a job, but a time where she can help students. For example she spent her own money and own time on a project for a student. She sewed some material on a lanyard for a student who has a sensor disorder that will allow the student to calm down just by touching the lanyard. She is my good cop to my bad cop and most importantly she has ears, which allows all kids to talk to her and she makes their day better. I have never been so picky about having a para, until I met Mrs. Charline Malli, I will never let her go. I don’t know if I could replace her, but I do know she has made me a better teacher just by having my back and being their when I need her. Andrew Carbajal - Clinton* ■ My paras are important lifelines for their students. They help students achieve things that they did not even think was possible. Shane Kalous - Estherville Lincoln Central CSD ■ *We are like the sea creature, the octopus. I am the body of the octopus and the paras are the legs. They can go in different directions to reach kids at the same time in different ways, yet are extensions of my thoughts. They support the students in different classrooms at the same time. I have great paras, and we are a team. Sherry Carlson - Humboldt Community School District* ■ I am in the second year of teaching at Monticello HS. I work with 2 of the greatest paras ever. They are the foundation of the special education program; in my opinion, and the whole thing would fall down without them. I love the paras I work with. Kelly Derby - Monticello ■ *My Associate Teachers are the John Stockton to my Michael Jordan. They make me look good and rarely get the credit. John D. Ruhland M.A. - Woodward-Granger Middle School* ■ My paraeducators are the angels that watch over my students when they walk out of my classroom into the general education setting. The two paras that aid me on a daily basis, are the life-blood to our family atmosphere that has lasted an amazing 15 years. Don Hatcher - MSTM ■ *One sentence would be impossible! I made the analogy with one of our paras the other day that they are like the person who scores the touchdown! I'm just the coach. They are truly the difference makers!! One quick example: We are blessed with a young lady who has made the commitment to a student and family that she will put off moving until their child graduates from high school. John Miller - SOS Wolverines* ■ Paraeducators are an extension of the classroom teacher and an essential component of the learning process for our students with IEP's. Colin E. Wikan - Bettendorf High School ■ *Jim- Wow one sentence! This will be a challenge but I'm up for it..thanks for thinking of the support staff for an article. Due to the amazing, kind, funny, dependable, motivated, passionate, student focus support staff in my classroom they have made it possible for my students to make social, emotional, and academic progress through building relationships and trust! Because of them they make me a better teacher and person daily and my classroom is a wonderful place to learn because in a level 3 classroom setting. Melissa Shields - Mount Ayr Community Schools ■ *My para means I can learn and play with the other kids having the comfort of knowing someone is there to help and encourage me when I need it. -written by Mrs. Sifert on behalf of a special education student in my classroom - Belmond-Klemme Preschool* ■ The para-professionals are an integral part of our program, they are an extension of the special education professional (teacher) in the classroom, our ears, eyes and voice especially for our students who are not able to communicate their needs independently. Gail Hilleshiem - Allamakee Community School District ■ *My paraprofessionals are an integral part of special education. My students would not be successful in the general education classroom without their hard work and dedication. Dawn Kramer - Spirit Lake Elementary* ■ I wouldn’t be successful at my job without them! Miranda Cornell - Franklin Middle School ■ *My paras are a part of a team where each person brings their strengths to complete the puzzle. Deb Rogers - Greene County CSD* ■ My paras mean the world to me. My paras are my right hand women who do a lot of the "behind the scenes" work to help make sure each day goes smoothly. Morgan Steege - SF Cougars ■ *There is no way that this is going to be a one sentence e-mail!! I have been in education for 30+ years, and I have been an administrator for 22 years. I have two Level II and Level III programs in my building. I have 10-12 OUTSTANDING paras. They are truly amazing. The cream of the crop. Sherri Marceau - North Scott* ■ My paras are teachers, nurses, timekeepers, counselors, mentors, and friends to all of the children they work with throughout the day at school. They are wonderful and mean the world to me! They lead by example and are positive role models to all the children! Tara Michel - Maquoketa Schools ■ *Without our instructional associates, Wapsie Valley would not be able to accomplish our mission of guaranteed learning for every student. Josh Sinram - Wapsie Valley Elementary Schools* ■ My para is an irreplaceable positive influence on children’s lives with her extra eyes, ears, brain and ability to work with all types of abilities in any situation. Kristie Hrdlicka - Sumner-Fredericksburg Schools ■ *We are so enthused by our paras' full participation in the "whole child" here at North Tama. Our paras' willingness to attend training (PBIS, CPI and CPR for example) is only the tip of the iceberg of their involvement in our school. Teresa O'Meara - North Tama* ■ Some of the most amazing, student oriented, caring, self-sacrificing, genuine, people I know who do not get the recognition they deserve or the credit they deserve. Tamara Johnson - John Adams Middle School ■ *Newton Community School District paras are the extra reach of our teachers, thus empowering us to invite ALL students into our mission to learn to think, innovate and succeed. Enjoy today-Sheri Benson, NCSD Board member* ■ Without them, I would not have the successful program that I have today. I cannot travel this path alone and I give credit of my success to my paraeducators. Without them, student success would not be at the level of rigor that it is. Shannon Tackes - Hawthorne Elementary ■ *My job as a special education teacher would be utterly impossible without the dedication, hard work, passion, drive to learn, and flexibility of my outstanding associates. Sadie Terpstra-Schwab - Denver Elementary* ■ Missouri Valley Elementary paras have kind hearts, fierce work ethic, and relentless determination to make a difference. Ashley Denton - Missouri Valley Elementary ■ *Our special ed paras are indispensable, they are the ones in the "trenches" who know each and every need of their students. Margaret Dunbar - Mason City Schools* ■ My paras mean the world to me, and our students would not thrive without them!!! Annette Saxion - Oak Ridge Middle School ■ *Because she is as invested in my students as I am, my para means that I have a partner in ensuring that my students' IEPs are followed with fidelity, compassion, and high expectations for student growth and success. Tabatha L. Commins - Boone High School* ■ Our paras are the support line between us as special education teachers and whats going on in the regular education classroom. They take care of a lot of the accommodations that our students are entitled to. Lance Ellingson - English Valleys JH ■ *Even with 1,025,109 words in the English Language, as a building administrator I find it difficult to come up with the perfect word(s) to describe the value Douma's paraeducators add to the educational experience of each and every student that attends our school. Sarah McGlothlen - Douma* Elementary (Ottumwa) ■ Paras are the unsung heroes of our school system, and ours helps our son, who is legally blind, learn right with the rest of his classmates. Sarah Corkery - Cedar Heights School, Cedar Falls ■ *My para educators are the teachers who truly make a difference in the lives of the students they interact with on a daily basis. Lindsey Scherff - Shuler Elementary* ■ I use the analogy that as a special educator, I am the quarterback and the paraeducators are my offensive line. They are the foundation of our team and because they each perform their respective duties well, it makes my job a whole lot easier to be successful also! Eric Thornton - Mid-Prairie High School ■ *My 13 paras are my support system, my sounding board, my saving grace and my friends. Kay Gustin - Bondurant-Farrar Community Schools* ■ Our associates are a highly valued part of the WMS family…they make all the difference for our students and play a vital role on the team that’s responsible for the tremendous progress our students make year-to-year. Adam Shockey - Waukee Middle School ■ *This is an easy one. I tell people all the time that Special Education Paras are the unsung heros in our building. They work for little to nothing, their job description changes by the minute, yet they show up, they do what has to be done without complaint, all the while making life-changing relationships with some of the toughest students in education! Greg Smith - FM CSD* ■ One sentence doesn't seem to adequately describe my para because she possesses so many outstanding qualities such as compassion, caring, flexible, competent and willing to do whatever is needed to help our kids be successful. Thanks for your interest in our paras. Rose Grau - Lawton-Bronson Elementary ■ *My para is like my right arm, left arm and everything in between to me! (She does so much more than I could ever imagine any other para doing. After 10 years of working together, she's like my "work wife" and knows what I'm thinking before I do sometimes.) Nick Moore - College View Preschool, Council Bluffs schools* ■ To me, my paras mean a deeper, richer, more fun education for my preschool students! I would be half the teacher I am without them! Adriann Anderson - Wayne Preschool, Wayne CSD ■ *Paras are the most essential piece, acting as: parent, teacher, helper, friend, peace-maker, encourager, & accountability partner. Sara Coffin, BSN, RN - Van Buren CSD* ■ I couldn't do my job without the help of my two para professional educators. They show initiative and are determined to help each child in my classroom succeed to his/her potential. Jenn Rose - AGWSR School District 6th Grade ■ *Our para-educators are like having another teacher in the classroom, they are that awesome! Nancy Gardner - West Liberty Elementary School* ■ My paras are the life preservers that help keep me from drowning in the sea of IEP's. Janelle Kralik/EC/ECSE - Nodaway Valley CSD ■ *My paras are a true God send that allow me to keep my sanity. Diana Strayer - East Marshall* ■ "Our paras are hard-working, dedicated, resourceful, kind, joyful, and committed to students and teachers." Jennifer Watkins - Neil Armstrong Elementary, Bettendorf ■ *It is difficult to encapsulate in one sentence the value that our para professionals bring to the classroom, but in an attempt to sum it up, I would suggest that our paras at Hudson schools are consummate professionals who work tirelessly day in and day out because of the love they have for the children they work with. Further, I hear from the teachers they work with all the time the value and experience they bring to bear is second to none. Dr. Anthony D. Voss - Hudson Community School District* ■ She completes our classroom in a way that I cannot by providing explicit, appropriate, one-on-one instruction, with a kind, caring demeanor, in a general education setting, for our student with special needs. Shawn Perkins - Danville Community School District ■ *I have a very strong, veteran team that all get along so well. They respond to help one another out without question and are always willing to do whatever it takes to make it all work! Tammie McKenzie - Carroll* ■ Professional, productive, proud paras -- priceless! Amy Kaster - Harlan Community Middle School ■ *At Southeast Polk Junior High the associates are the intimate link between the teacher, the IEP Goals and the learning of each student who requires additional supports. Mike Dailey - Southeast Polk Junior High* ■ Our paras teach, laugh with, and love all of our students helping them feel welcome, important, and worthwhile. Lindy Borske-Hubbard - Decorah ■ *My para lights up my life and uses that light to make the path of learning brighter and easier to follow for all students. Mary Pat King - Glenwood* ■ The cape-less heroes, the prompting gurus, and the ooey gooey glue that holds my room together. Thank you to ALL paras! Megan McCarthy - Waukee Schools ■ *What do my paras mean to me in one sentence? This is an impossible task without sounding cheesy. So at the sake of cheesiness and following the request ... My paras are my teammates, sounding boards, brainstorming partners, and often my lifelines. Darci Maas - Adair-Casey/Guthrie Center schools* ■ The paraprofessionals I work with are dedicated to improving student achievement, are positive mentors influencing students daily to make the best choices for success, work above and beyond to make sure student needs are met, and do this all for little pay which makes them superheroes to not just me, but to all the students they work with. Ann Berry - Lenihan Intermediate ■