

Waverly Community Unit School District Paraprofessional Educator Handbook

What is a Paraeducator?

A paraeducator is a school employee who works under the supervision of a certificated/licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to children and youth and their families. The certificated/licensed staff member remains responsible for the overall conduct and management of the classroom or program including the design, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional programs and student progress. (Adapted from A.L. Pickett, Director for the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, City University of New York, 1993.)

“Para” means “alongside.” The general public has an understanding of this term because of paralegals and paramedics. “Paraeducator” means working alongside an educator. “Supervision” refers to directing the work of a paraeducator; it does not refer to hiring, firing or evaluating the paraeducator although certificated or licensed staff could have input.

Job Titles Over the years, more than 15 different job titles have been used to describe a paraeducator. Examples of some titles are:

Aide

Classroom Assistant
Educational Assistant (EA)
Educational Paraprofessional
Instructional Aide (IA)
Instructional Assistant (IA)
LAP Assistant
Paraeducator
Paraprofessional
Special Education Assistant
Teacher Aide (TA)
Teacher Assistant (TA)

“Paraeducator” or “paraprofessional” is currently the most generally accepted and recognized job title.

The competencies are guidelines for the knowledge and skills that paraeducators should demonstrate in order to work with students with disabilities. This expanded role has dramatically increased the number of paraeducators in the school system in the past decade.

Paraeducators are integral to the delivery of instructional and other services to students with disabilities. As a result, there is a need to develop systems that support paraeducators to guarantee quality instruction and services for children with disabilities.

- ★ Awareness (knowing or realization; a simple recognition)
- ★ Knowledge (acknowledgment; familiarity; acquaintance with facts; being informed)
- ★ Understanding (having a clear perception of the meaning)
- ★ Ability (able to apply or demonstrate)
- ★ To work in education and related services programs for children and youth with disabilities, paraeducators will demonstrate:
 - a. Awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families and colleagues with whom they work.
 - b. Knowledge and application of the elements of effective instruction to assist teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/ licensed staff in a variety of settings.
 - c. Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff.
 - d. Ability to motivate and assist children and youth.
 - e. Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed.
 - f. Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning.
 - g. Awareness of personal care and/or health related support.

PARA CODE OF ETHICS

SOURCE: A. L. Pickett, and K. Gerlach, Supervising Paraeducators in School Settings. Proed Austin, Texas ©2003 SOURCE S. F. Vasa and A. I. Steckelberg. Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders, University of Nebraska at Lincoln ©1991

Accepting Responsibilities

- ★ Recognize that the supervisor has the ultimate responsibility for the instruction and management, and follow the directions prescribed by him/her.
- ★ Engage only in activities for which you are qualified or trained.
- ★ Do not communicate (in a text, folder, or note) progress or concerns about students to parents unless directed to do so by the supervising teacher.
- ★ Refer concerns expressed by parents, students, or others to the supervising teacher.

Relationships with Students and Parents

- ★ Discuss a child's progress, limitations and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher in the appropriate setting.
- ★ Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel.
- ★ Refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a student's disability, race, sex, cultural background or religion.
- ★ Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and staff members.
- ★ Present yourself as a positive adult role model.

Relationship with the Teacher (Supervisor)

- ★ Recognize the teacher as a supervisor and team leader.
- ★ Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- ★ When problems cannot be resolved, utilize the school district's grievance and/or complaint procedures located in your At-Will Employee Handbook.
- ★ Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher.

Relationship with the School

- ★ Accept responsibility for improving skills.
- ★ Know school policies and procedures.
- ★ Represent the school district in a positive manner.

Providing instructional services to students while working under the direct supervision of a teacher.

Working under the direct supervision of a teacher is interpreted, through the US Department of Education's Title I Paraprofessional Non-regulatory Guidance (November 2002), to mean:

The teacher

Plans the instructional support activities the paraprofessional carries out.
Evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working.

The paraprofessional

Works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher.

Tips for staff

Never violate confidentiality! Understand the rule "Need to Know vs. Desire to Tell." It will guide you in deciding when and to whom you share student information. Only those people who are directly involved in the education of a special needs student may have specific student information.

Remember you have both your public and private self. As an educator you are always scrutinized by your community. It is important to project a professional ethical image both in and out of school.

If you are unsure about accessing specific student information, ask your supervising teacher or building administrator.

If you are unsure about sharing student information, defer to your supervising teacher or building administrator.

You are a mandated reporter. Please refer to your Public Works training on the guidelines. It is important to note that reporting to a supervisor does not meet the requirements of reporting.

Behavior Management

When working with students, the paraeducator will be expected to support the behavior management plan of the teacher. It is important to discuss with each teacher the behavior expectations and interventions which s/he has established, and to define the role of the paraeducator in carrying out that plan. The use of proactive management strategies often helps paraeducators avoid possible management difficulties. Proactive means planning ahead to avoid problems. Following is a list of proactive management strategies which have proven successful in the classroom. It is preferable to spend the majority of our behavior management energies here.

Supporting Teachers During Whole-Class Instruction

When a behavioral challenge begins to emerge, assist in a non-instructive manner that allows the lesson momentum to continue. Some possible options include:

1. Stand near the student/s exhibiting inappropriate behavior. Maintain your attention on the teacher.
2. Touch the student's back, then step away, while maintaining your attention on the teacher.
3. Communicate to the student using nonverbal procedures, such as eye contact, a nod, or gesture.
4. If necessary, give a quiet, private redirective to the student. Tell the student the exact behavior that you desire. End the directive with "Thank you," and move your attention away from the student.

When Providing Small-Group Instruction

When monitoring students apart from the teacher—in a small group in the back of the classroom, or in another room—the following management strategies may be helpful.

When a behavioral challenge begins to emerge, ignore the behavior if: you can teach, the student can learn, his/her classmates can learn, and the behavior is unlikely to escalate.

If it is a behavior you cannot ignore, use this five step behavior plan:

1. Use nonverbal communication (eye contact, proximity, touch.) Note: Be sure you are aware of any triggers. Some students cannot be touched or may not make eye contact. This

has nothing to do with you or being “disrespectful”. Always consult the certified teacher to find out this information.

2. Give a redirective to the group. A verbal reminder of expectations.
3. Praise students who are making appropriate choices.
4. If necessary, give a quiet, private redirective to individual students. State what you are seeing and the exact behavior that you desire. End the directive with “Thank you,” and move your attention away from the student.
5. If the off-task behavior continues, give a choice that involves a consequence. (“If you don’t put the magazine away, I will need to take it away.”)

Assisting with instruction has the following four components:

Part I: Planning

The teacher and paraeducator collaborate to prepare the lesson, identify who the lesson is for, and the objectives and purpose of the lesson.

Part II: Working with Students

The paraeducator implements the lesson prepared by the teacher

Part III: Communicating the Performance of Students to the Teacher

The paraeducator records the student performance and communicates this information to the teacher.

Part IV: Reflection on the Instructional Session

The paraeducator self-assesses their success in teaching the lesson including their interactions with the teacher and students during the planning, working with students, and communicating the performance of students to the teacher.

Reflection questions:

- ★ What went well?
- ★ What didn’t go well?
- ★ What additional information or strategies do I need?
- ★ What would I do differently next time?

Effective Instructional Strategies

The teacher has the contractual responsibility for designing instruction and management programs for students. The paraeducator is often called upon to help carry out and monitor these programs. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to introduce and model instructional programs for paraeducators. Some of the instructional strategies which teachers often select for use by paraeducators are:

Provide additional input to students which parallels the teacher's input:

I DO IT

Provide additional modeling (demonstration) for the student, using wording similar to that used by the teacher.

WE DO IT

Prompt or guide students in completing additional items. Fade the assistance as students demonstrate competency.

YOU DO IT

Observe students completing items independently.

An effective procedure for teaching students a list of words using the method above:

"This word is ____." (I do it)

"Say it with me: ____." (We do it)

"What word? ____." (You do it)

If the student mispronounces a word, say: "This word is _____. What word?"

Return to the top of the list. Point to each word and say: "What word? _____" Repeat until the word list is read accurately.

Guest ParaEducator Worksheet

Paraeducator: _____ Date: _____

Classroom/Program:

Location: _____ Time: _____

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Bus/Recess/Lunch Duties:

Lunch and Rest Periods:

Planning/Conferring Time With Teacher:

Schedule Changes/ Special Events or Activities:

We hope this information helped to make your time in our school as pleasant as possible. We would appreciate a note summarizing your time with our students. Thank you!
