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The Washougal School District greatly appreciates ESD 112 for sharing their staff handbook. A large portion of this document was adapted from their resource.
Special Education Paraeducator Core Competencies

The list of core competencies which includes descriptors, is attached as Appendix D.

1. Understands the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities.

2. An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators.

3. Understanding of (a) patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages, and (b) risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development.

4. Ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality.

5. Ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem solving and other skills that will enable the paraeducator to work as an effective member of the instructional team.

6. Ability to provide positive behavioral support and management.

7. Awareness of legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families.

8. Awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families, and colleagues with whom they work.

9. Understanding of the elements of effective instruction to assist with teaching and learning as developed by certificated/licensed staff in a variety of settings.

10. Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff.

11. Ability to motivate and assist children and youth.

12. Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed.

13. Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist in teaching and learning.

14. Awareness of personal care and/or health-related supports.

Washington State Core Competencies for Paraeducators are different from the Title I Paraeducator requirements. Title I requirements specifically mandate knowledge and ability to instruct in reading, writing, mathematics, and assisting with instruction in these specific subject areas. Washington State Recommended Core Competencies for Paraeducators (9, 10, and 11) addresses assisting with instruction, but only in general terms. Thus, the Washington State Recommended Core Competencies cannot be used to fulfill the requirements of ESEA Title I Requirements.
**Introduction**

This handbook has been put together to act as a resource for general education and special programs paraeducators. The District appreciates and acknowledges how important each paraeducator is to the success of our students and wishes to provide opportunities for a successful career within the Washougal School District.

As a paraeducator, your job and responsibilities will vary based upon the needs of the students with which you will be working. The nature of your position places you as an important member of the educational team who works closely, under the supervision of the teacher or other professional practitioners, to ensure and support student independence. At all times you will be expected to abide by the expectations, rules, guidelines, and the confidentiality requirements established within the teaching community.

**General Information**

**Absences and Leave Requests**
All absences must be submitted and approved via AESOP (aesoponline.com). It is your responsibility to log in and submit a request for absence approvals. Your building secretary should only be used as a back up when changes need to be made to the original request or in an emergency. If absences exceed 3 or more days, HR may request a hardcopy of the Absence Request Form.

**Attendance**
Attendance and punctuality convey how seriously you take your job. Your assigned classroom teacher and the students you work with count on you being at work and on time every day. (Competency #2)

**Cell Phone Use and Texting**
Texting and cell phone use is to be done on your own time and not during your scheduled work time. Cell phones can become a distraction and should not be turned on or used during work time unless arranged by the assigned classroom teacher or building administrator. (Competency #4)

**Electronic Communication & Social Networking**
In general, employees are prohibited from engaging in electronic communication and social networking with students. This means by email, text messaging, instant messaging, or Social Networking – Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, etc. (Competency #4)

**Concerns**
If work related issues arise, an initial attempt should be made to alleviate the issue with your assigned classroom teacher. If the problem is not resolved through this discussion, it should be immediately brought to the attention of the building principal. (Competency #5)
Dress Code
Please dress appropriately and professionally at all times. Check your school handbook or with your principal to determine appropriate work attire.

Washougal School District E-mail and Website
Email is provided to all district employees. Please check your email account daily during your workday. Information regarding policies, forms, benefits, etc. are available on the district’s website at www.washougal.k12.wa.us.

Time Sheets
An Excel based, on-line, spreadsheet is available on the Washougal webpage under the tab “For District Employees”. Instructions on filling out the Classified Time Sheet are on the 2nd page of the document. Time will be provided during your workday to complete your timesheet. If you need assistance in scheduling the time to complete this task, please talk with the teacher and then, if necessary, your building principal.
http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/districtemployees/districtemployees.htm

Pay Periods
Paraeducators shall be paid monthly for hours worked during the pay periods. Checks will be deposited directly to your bank. If the last day of the month falls on a holiday or weekend, check deposits will be received on the last previous week day.

Work Schedule
It is expected that all paraeducators report to work at the time specified by the assigned classroom teacher and/or building principal. Paraeducators work only those days when school is in session with students present unless attending a pre-approved training or meeting. Your building principal or the special services department director must pre-approve any additional hours. If an emergency occurs and you are needed to stay with students, notify your assigned classroom teacher as soon as possible so they can advise the building administrator.

Leaving the Building During the Day
Do not leave the building you’re assigned to during your scheduled work time. If leaving the building is part of your regular work schedule, let your teacher and/or building secretary know when you leave. (Competency #2)

Evaluations
Building principals, with input from your assigned classroom teacher(s), program administrators and other professional support staff, evaluate all paraeducators twice a year. When the evaluation is completed, the building principal will discuss the evaluation with the paraeducator and make suggestions for improvements. The paraeducator signs the evaluation form to show that he/she has conferred with the building principal about the evaluation. The paraeducator is provided with a copy of the completed evaluation form and the original is sent to the district office to be filed in the employee’s file. If you disagree with all or part of your evaluation, you will still need to sign it, acknowledging receipt of the evaluation. You do have the right to attach a rebuttal letter in accordance with Section 3.6 of the PSE Collective Bargaining Agreement.
Training
Paraeducators are provided training opportunities specific to their assignment. Training opportunities may include areas such as reading, written language, math, autism, behavior management, etc. When the district is providing mandatory paid training for specific paraeducators based on their assignment, the district may offer non-compensated training opportunities to other paraeducators when room is available. If this occurs during the school day, administrative approval will be required and the paraeducator will need to have pre-approval to access their association’s professional development fund to compensate their substitute. Paraeducators also have access to their association’s professional development funds to access other training resources including those offered via ESD 112 and the State’s apprenticeship program.

School Policies and Procedures
Paraeducators are responsible to go over their school’s handbook and be familiar with the school’s policies and procedures. A handbook can be obtained from the school office. (Competency #2)

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying Policy
Washougal School District is committed to a safe and civil educational environment for all students, employees, parents/legal guardians, volunteers, and patrons that is free from harassment, intimidation and bullying. Specific information regarding the district’s policy and procedures can be found on the district’s website. http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/board/policies/3000/3207.pdf (Competency #2)

Individualized Educational Program (IEP)
Each student in the special education program has an IEP that the teacher uses as a guide for that child’s school activities. This program was developed in a combined meeting of a school administrator, the child’s teacher(s), the child’s parents/guardians, support personnel, and other professionals. It is usually written for one year and periodically reviewed throughout the year by the teacher to note progress. Paraeducators may or may not take part in the committee meeting where the IEP is written. Paraeducators will support the learning/behavioral activities and record progress concerning the IEP goals and objectives. Your special education and/or classroom teachers will provide you with the details of each child’s IEP you will need to know to provide appropriate educational support. Paraeducators must keep the confidentiality of this document at all times.

The special education teacher you’re assigned to will provide you with the details of each student’s IEP that you will need to know in order to provide appropriate educational support. Please talk to the special education teacher and your building principal if you have not been provided with this information. (Competency #7)

Confidentiality
The issue of confidentiality is an important ethical consideration for all staff members. Because paraeducators have daily contact with students and access to confidential information, and may often interact with families and community members, they need to be aware of certain confidentiality ethics. No staff members, including paraeducators, should informally discuss school problems between and among staff members, discuss personalities of staff members outside the school, discuss administrative and interschool problems in the presence of students, or discuss student concerns with anyone not authorized to be a part of those discussions.

Paraeducators should not discuss student’s information around other students or post student progress with personally identifiable information. Unless authorized to do so by the assigned classroom teacher,
Paraeducators are directed to not communicate with parents about a student's progress in or outside of the school setting. If a parent/guardian brings up a question, concern or requests assistance for their student outside of the school day, please refer them to the classroom teacher and/or case manager.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) are federal laws intended to protect an individual's right to privacy with respect to medical or educational records maintained regarding that individual. Paraeducators should not give or discuss personal information from any student files without first addressing the issue with the assigned classroom teacher. (Additional information about these laws can be found at http://www.ed.gov/offices/OII/fpco/ferpa/ferparegs.html) (Competency #4)

Student/Paraeducator Safety

First Aid
All paraeducators are required to maintain their first-aid card. Remember to always use universal precautions when administering first aid or when assisting students with personal care: treat blood and bodily fluids as if they are known to be infectious for blood-borne diseases. Be familiar with Individual Health Plans for students with whom you interact.

Paraeducators are to know the location of the first aid equipment and supplies and become familiar with the first aid book. You may be required to administer minor first aid for your students --- treating scratches, scrapes, burns, splinters, and the like. Be sure your teacher is made aware of any treatment given to the student. If a school nurse is present and available, he/she will handle such matters.

Medication
NO MEDICATION SHALL BE ADMINISTERED BY ANY SCHOOL PERSONNEL WITHOUT A WRITTEN ORDER FROM A PHYSICIAN.
This includes all prescription and non-prescription medications, such as aspirin, ointments, drops, etc. If the student is mature enough to assume the responsibility of taking his/her own medication, the parent must inform the school staff of the name of and instructions for all medications. When at all possible, medication should be administered outside of school hours. (Competency #12)

Seizures
Paraeducators need to be aware if students they're working with are prone to seizures. Talk with your teacher and/or the school nurse about specific procedures regarding specific students. If a student is having a seizure, the teacher, or a paraeducator assigned to do so by the teacher, will contact the school nurse and the building administrator.

In general, a student having a seizure should be kept from harming himself/herself or others while not restricting their movement. Adults should make sure students are not choking during the seizure and should keep hands and objects out of the student's mouth. Dangerous objects should be removed from the vicinity of the student to reduce the possibility of injury. When the seizure is over, the student should be kept warm and quiet and be allowed to lie down and rest for as long as necessary. (Competency #12 and #14)
Reporting of Child or Adult Dependent Person Abuse

Any school employee who has reasonable cause to believe that a child or adult dependent person has suffered abuse or neglect is required to report such abuse or neglect directly to the proper law enforcement agency and/or the Department of Social and Health Services, Child Protective Division. The report shall be made at the first opportunity, but in no case longer than forty-eight (48) hours after there is reasonable cause to believe that the child or adult has suffered abuse or neglect. RCW 26.44.030. In determining if reasonable cause exists, employees are encouraged to consult with the assigned classroom teacher and/or principal who may have pertinent information; however, each employee who determines that there is reasonable cause to believe abuse or neglect has occurred is individually mandated to personally report their concerns in accordance with administrative regulations. Employees can access additional information, including a training video and the District’s Child Abuse Reporting Form, at: [http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/districtemployees/districtemployees.html](http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/districtemployees/districtemployees.html)

Board Policy 3421 – Child Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation Prevention
The district’s board policy regarding abuse, neglect and exploitation can be found here: [http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/board/policies/3000/3421.pdf](http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/board/policies/3000/3421.pdf) (Competency #7 and #12)

Paraeducator Description

Primary Role
The primary role of the paraeducator is to facilitate educational and functional independence in students by providing classroom and/or community support while under a teacher’s direct supervision.

Characteristics of Effective Paraeducators

1. Provides students with opportunities to increase their independence
2. Demonstrates good interpersonal skills, able to problem solve with others
3. Strong oral and written communication skills
4. A positive attitude
5. A desire for self-improvement
6. Self-confidence
7. Patience
8. Empathy and concern for children
9. Job knowledge – understands how to instruct and engage students
10. Cooperative and adaptable
11. Takes initiative to support staff and students

Paraeducator Responsibilities (Competency #2)
The primary responsibility of the paraeducator is to perform the tasks assigned by the case manager, teacher or supplemental service providers.

Paraeducators may be asked to:

1. Implement teacher lesson plans
2. Supervise and assist students within all assigned school settings
3. Communicate pertinent information to teachers
4. Collect data and maintain records
5. Assist in supervision of students during recess and lunch periods and accompany student on community experiences

6. Strictly adhere to confidentiality requirements regarding all matters pertaining to student, parents, parent communications, and/or classroom activities (NOTE: Unless instructed otherwise by assigned classroom teacher, all parent communication must come directly from certified personnel.)

7. Assist with activities or prescribed programs including those written by related service personnel such as: Physical Therapists (PT), Occupational Therapists (OT), Speech Language Pathologists (SLP), and School Psychologists

8. Follow through with the IEP goals/objectives, including academics, speech/language, motor, and developing independence skills

9. Implement behavior management techniques in accordance with the direction given by the assigned classroom teacher (reinforcing appropriate behaviors, implementing student’s behavior plan, supervising student time-out, etc.)

10. Other duties as assigned by supervisor, such as providing clerical assistance (typing and duplicating materials, making instructional games, etc.)

11. As applicable, assist with transportation to and from job sites and assist students within community settings

Other Duties That Fall Specifically Under the Classification of SPA

(Para-educators receive additional compensation in 15-minute increments when providing these types of services to students)

1. Assist with students’ self-care activities (i.e. toileting, ostomy care, bathing)

2. Provide support of health care needs (i.e. suctioning tracheotomy, tube feeding)

Paraeducators May NOT (Competency #2)

1. Be solely responsible for instructional or related services

2. Be responsible for selecting formal diagnostic or psychological instruments or for interpreting the result of those instruments

3. Be responsible for selecting, programming or prescribing educational activity or material for the student without the supervision and guidance of the teacher

4. Be assigned to implement the individual education program for students with disabilities without direct supervision and involvement from the certified staff

5. Be employed in lieu of certified special education personnel

6. Perform nursing procedures or administer medications without appropriate supervision from an approved health care professional

7. Read personal books, use a computer for private use, use cell phone, etc. during work time

Information to Ask Your Assigned Classroom Teacher(s) (Competency #5)

1. Clarify hours and days you will be working – ask for a school calendar/schedule.

2. What records am I responsible for keeping? What data should I collect? How?

3. What special services are available to the classroom and the school in which I work?

4. What schedules am I responsible for following?

5. When do students arrive and depart?

6. What are the playground rules and regulations?

7. When is my lunch scheduled?

8. When are my breaks scheduled?
9. Where are the supplies kept and how are they obtained?
10. How much time will I spend in inclusion classrooms? How much time in the special education classroom?
11. What is the line of communication and authority I am to follow?
12. With whom should I discuss a problem concerning relationships? School policy?
13. What should be my response when a parent raises questions on their child’s functioning in the classroom?
14. What pupil records are available to me?
15. What is expected of me in terms of student discipline?
16. What should I do if I feel that I do not have enough to do?
17. How does the teacher view the teacher/paraeducator relationship?

Classroom Teachers’ Responsibilities
The primary responsibility of the assigned classroom teacher is to provide students with educational programs that meet their individual needs. *(Competency #2 and #9)*

Their roles include:
1. Deciding on the types of instruction, supports, and services each student needs
2. Determining students’ goals and objectives
3. Preparing lesson plans
4. Modifying the curriculum and determining adaptations
5. Communicating with staff, parents, students, and peers
6. Implementing student IEPs, behavior plans, etc.
7. Evaluating the effectiveness of student IEPs, behavior plans, etc.
8. Evaluating student progress and making decisions about program changes
9. Reviewing and training paraeducators to implement learning plans, IEPs, behavior plans, etc.
10. Providing paraeducators with constructive feedback regarding their performance
11. Working with other service providers (PT, OT, SLP)
12. Developing a successful working and educational area for students and staff
13. Developing instructional plans for paraeducators
14. With assistance from building principals, creating work schedules for paraeducators
15. Recognizing and respecting the knowledge and expertise paraeducators bring to their role
16. Identifying areas of need within their program and advocating for staff training

Guidelines for Working with Students with Special Needs

Working with Students in all Settings
Paraeducators work with a range of students who present with a wide array of strengths and needs. As a paraeducator, your responsibility is to aid in meeting each student's needs and assisting them with becoming successful and independent within their environment. You are always encouraged to give specific verbal praise to children or high fives for good work, but avoid hugging. Learn the positive reinforcement program that has been developed by the teachers you work with and the school where you are assigned. Grabbing student’s arms or hands or participating in any form of physical intervention should never occur unless you are trained in *Right Response* and you have been directed to do so by the special education teacher.
Never verbally berate a child or call them negative names. Talk in depth to your assigned classroom teacher to find the best ways to work with each student. (*Competency #6 and #11*)

**General Guidelines:**
1. Treat each student as an individual
2. Be kind, consistent, and firm
3. Allow each child to be as independent as possible
4. Be positive with each child
5. Give many nonverbal and verbal praises
6. Follow any behavior plan identified for the student

**Working with Students in Inclusion Classrooms**
1. Work closely with your assigned teacher(s) to assist in student(s) success.
2. Talk to general education teacher about student expectations within the classroom and how behavior may be dealt with, if needed. Special education teachers should be talking with general education teachers in advance about what assignments, tests etc. are going to be taught so modifications/accommodations can be made if necessary.
3. Students supported in a Life Skill classroom can perform in the general education setting with the proper supports, modifications, and accommodations.
4. Paraeducators should always be in the classroom with the student(s) and focused on what the student(s) is doing and providing the least restrictive environment for the student.
5. If at all possible, do not sit with the student(s) throughout the entire instructional time. The general education teacher is primarily responsible for the student. You are there to assist, as indicated on the student’s IEP and per the directions of the general and special education teachers.
6. If student(s) are absent, assist them in requesting their makeup work. Generally, the student will be required to complete the assignments missed.
7. Tests – closely follow the guidance of the special education teacher when you supervise testing. Test accommodations/modifications should be specifically listed in the student’s IEP.
8. Be aware of behavior goals and, if applicable, the student’s behavior plan. Monitor the students to make sure they are using appropriate behavior and paying attention. Provide support to the student if requested by the teacher or if there is prior agreement for you to do so. Remember, praise and encouragement from you can help students succeed.
9. Each student is different and requires a different strategy to manage his/her behavior. Work with the special education teacher if there are issues.
10. Give students positive reinforcement.
11. Have clear expectations of the student and make sure the student understands what you and the general education teacher expect, such as “get your journal or notes out each day”.

**Specific Protocols for Working with Students**

**Universal Precautions** (*Competency #12*)
1. Obtain and maintain first aid card
2. Treat all blood and bodily fluids as if they are known to be infectious for blood-borne diseases
3. Avoid direct contact with bodily fluids
4. Use a barrier, such as gloves or a mask, and wash hands after removing gloves
5. Don’t eat or touch your mouth or eyes while providing first aid care
6. Clean up and dispose of waste products and needles appropriately
7. Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to prevent transmission of infectious organisms
8. Soap in a dispenser and disposable towels are best
9. When water isn’t available, use germicidal wipes or a waterless, alcohol-based hand sanitizer
10. Disinfect surfaces with a bleach solution

Guidelines for Lifting Students
Proper lifting maintains the back health and safety of the lifter and the student’s independence, function and range of motion. **Make sure you participate in training by OT/PT prior to lifting.** *(Competency #12)*

When lifting students:
1. Clear both transfer surfaces and the movement path
2. Stabilize the transfer surfaces and lock wheelchair brakes and any wheeled support
3. Wear non-skid shoes
4. Tell the student what you will do in the lift and what they will be expected to do
5. Unfasten all straps and belts
6. Keep feet shoulder-width apart to improve balance
7. Bend mainly at the hips and knees while maintaining normal back alignment, including an arch in the lower back
8. Lift the student as close to his or her center of gravity as possible, by the waist or crossed arms
9. Hold the student as close to your body as possible to decrease the weight of the load
10. Instruct and enable the student to help you as much as possible
11. Complete the lift before turning; do not twist your body while lifting
12. Use safety devices, including a gait belt, whenever possible
13. If the student is heavier than 35% of your body weight...use two people to lift
14. Transfer the student, rather than lift; examples of transferring include moving the student from the floor to a standing position; from a wheelchair to a mat or chair; and from a standing table to a wheelchair
15. Use adaptive equipment to help lift the student
16. Always transfer rather than lift students who can assist you
17. Remember in lifting, transferring, and carrying, your personal safety and that of the student are the primary concern
18. Consult with the physical therapist, occupational therapist or nurse if you have questions

Guidelines for Toileting, Diapering, and Feminine Hygiene *(Competency #14)*
1. If provided, closely follow visual or written routine developed specifically for the student
2. Learn how the student communicates the need to go to the bathroom
3. Allow the student as much independence as possible
4. Maintain the student’s privacy by closing the door or using a screen
5. Remember important safety issues, such as how to handle body fluid and using correct transferring techniques
6. Wear gloves; bag and seal diapers or body fluid
7. Dispose of diapers and other supplies in a proper container
8. Wash both the student’s hands and your own

 Strategies for Working with Students

**Prompting**
A prompt is a stimulus (cue) given by a teacher/paraeducator to a student in order to elicit a specific response (behavior). Prompts are generally used in conjunction with positive reinforcement to teach new behaviors. The following is an illustration of the hierarchy of prompts that are commonly used in the classroom. **Note:** It is always desirable to use the least intrusive prompt that is necessary to elicit the desired response. (*Competency #10*)

**PROMPTING LESS TO MOST: Least Intrusive to Most Intrusive**

1. **Independence** – the student performs the desired step on his/her own
2. **Indirect Verbal/Nonverbal Prompt** – the student performs the desired step within a task with a subtle verbal or nonverbal message from the teacher/paraeducator, which infers that a specific step needs to occur next (e.g. “What do you need to do now?” or pointing to task).
3. **Direct Verbal Prompt** – the student performs the desired step within a task with direct and specific instructions from the teacher/paraeducator (e.g. “Pick up the ______.”).
4. **Gestural Prompt** – the student performs the desired step within a task with a motion or signal from the teacher/paraeducator (e.g. the teacher points to the “finish box”).
5. **Modeling Prompt** – the student performs the desired step within a task by imitating the teacher/paraeducator’s motion (e.g. the teacher/paraeducator performs the task prior to or during performance by the student).
6. **Partial Physical Assistance** – the student performs the desired step within the task with light physical guidance from the teacher/paraeducator (e.g. the teacher taps the student’s elbow to remind him/her to move it forward).
7. **Full Physical Assistance** – the student performs the desired step within the task with light, but firm guidance from the teacher/paraeducator (e.g. the teacher/paraeducator lightly holds the student’s forearm and guides it forward).

**Remember:** There should always be at least five positive reinforcers given for each prompt given throughout the day. These reinforcers should be individualized to the student because students vary in the kinds of things they like. For example, some students will like “high fives,” handshakes or a pat on the shoulder, others might prefer verbal praise, a nod, or getting to participate in a favorite activity. The reinforcers should be varied for each student. When you use the same reinforcer all the time, it loses its effectiveness because it becomes ordinary.

*Remember the 5 to 1 ratio of positive reinforcers to prompts is very important!*

**Points to remember for the use and selection of prompts:**

- A prompt should occur before an error is made. If an error is made, then you will be correcting an error instead of giving a prompt. Less assistance is indicated if a student responds correctly several times to the prompt that you are currently using. This is called fading. Since our goal should always be to get the student to respond to natural, inherent cues, we should always be thinking of fading our instructional prompts.
- Remember to always allow students processing time before prompting. Some students need extra processing time, not another prompt. After a natural cue has been given, allow the
student to process before adding the prompt, move physically/visually away from the student (count to 10 in your head if needed).

- Up to 90% of communication with students is non-verbal. Be aware of your body language and facial expressions. Use a neutral tone of voice—avoid blame, shame, and sarcasm. Always allow processing time and keep directions simple and explicit.

When selecting appropriate prompts, you should consider the following questions:
1. What level of prompts has been used successfully in the past with the student?
2. Does the prompt selected to use with the student make sense to the student?
3. Is the chosen prompt the least intrusive one that is effective?
4. Follow guidelines from the assigned classroom teacher.

Fostering Independence in Students

Student Independence (student dependent on self)
1. Paraeducator lets student take risks and make mistakes
2. Paraeducator focuses on student’s strengths and skills
   a. Provide positive information and strategies
   b. Answer the question, “What works for this student?”
   c. Encourage and motivate the student
   d. Build self-esteem in student
   e. Build on what the student can do rather than what he student can’t do
3. Paraeducator allows time for student processing of information
4. Paraeducator allows for environmental arrangement
5. Paraeducator allows peer support
6. Paraeducator prompts using least to most
7. Paraeducator has a plan for fading support
   a. Fading is the process of gradually and systematically reducing the amount of assistance a student receives from staff
   b. Allows student to respond to natural cues
   c. Reduce intensity of prompts while maintaining reinforcement
   d. Can reduce by intensity or frequency
   e. Plans to fade should be done in collaboration and based on data, student’s strengths and needs

Obstacles to Student Independence (student becomes dependent on staff)
1. Too much assistance from paraeducator
2. Time— not allowing sufficient time for student to process information/ formulate a response
3. Outside Pressure—family wants paraeducator to fulfill expectations
4. Lack of proper paraeducator training—best practices, structured planning time
5. Interfering with students’ interactions with peers
6. Within the general education classroom…
   - Separating the student from the rest of the classroom
   - Sitting next to the student the entire time
   - Interfering with general education teacher engagement
Paraeducator Resources & Websites:
Washougal School District (WSD): http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/
District Employees webpage: http://www.washougal.k12.wa.us/districtemployees/districtemployees.htm
National Resource Center for Paraeducators (NRCP): http://www.nrcpara.org/
OSPI: http://www.k12.wa.us/Paraeducators/default.aspx
Appendix A

Qualifying Students for Special Education
For a student to receive services in Special Education, they must:
• Have a qualifying disability AND
• Need Special Education services to reach their potential

At times, this can be very confusing. A student may (for example) have a severe health problem such as Muscular Dystrophy. If the student is able to succeed in the traditional school setting, they won’t qualify for Special Education services. However, under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, they may qualify for accommodations to their school program - such as having a personal aide. A student with a temporary disability (like a broken leg) would temporarily be a “504 student” and could have his or her class requirements modified for a time.

There is a process to decide if a student qualifies for Special Education services. Usually, it starts with a variety of assessments. A team of professionals will review the results and consider other aspects of a student's background. As a group, they will decide on a plan for the student. The plan should include RTI considerations, placements, additional services, and supports. Based on student performance over time, the team may decide the student will benefit from services in Special Education.

The IDEA Special Education categories are:

1. Autism
2. Deaf/blindness
3. Developmental Delay
4. Emotional Disturbance
5. Hearing Impaired/Deafness
6. Intellectual Disability
7. Multiple Disabilities
8. Orthopedic Impairment
9. Other Health Impaired
10. Specific Learning Disability
11. Speech-Language Impairment
12. Traumatic Brain Injury
13. Visual Impairment

Sometimes students have more than one disability. For example, a student may have a learning disability and use a wheelchair. If that is the case, the question becomes, “Which disability affects the student’s education the most?” Their classification is determined by the answer. Of course, the student will receive appropriate services for any disability regardless of his classification.

Each category or classification is very broad. The classification isn’t very useful in understanding the needs of the INDIVIDUAL student. For example, one student with the label of “Specific Learning Disability” could have problems with reading and writing but the student may be good in math and have strong social skills. A different student with the same label could be socially awkward, impulsive, and have poor writing skills but have strong reading and vocational skills.

That said, here is some information on the categories/classifications that are commonly encountered. If you work with students who are in categories not listed, you should ask your supervisor for help in understanding your students and meeting their needs.
Appendix B

Specific Learning Disability
This is the most commonly identified disability. These students have average or above average IQs but have problems in one or more of the following areas:

- understanding or using language (written or oral)
- reading (decoding and comprehension),
- writing,
- spelling,
- listening, and
- mathematics.

They maybe described as having dyslexia, perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, and so on. Their problems are NOT a result of lack of education, a disadvantaged background, poor hearing or eyesight, or emotional disturbance.

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- short attention span
- easily distracted
- difficulty decoding written language
- poor reading comprehension
- organizational difficulties
- poor coordination
- poor handwriting
- impulsive
- immature for their chronological age
- inconsistent performance
- slow completing tasks
- easily frustrated
- doesn’t persevere

Ideas for supporting these students

- Use variety
- Avoid distractions (background noises, etc.)
- Offer choices of ways to accomplish a task or assignment when possible
- Use lots of gestures and body language
- Give specific, honest praise to help students realize their strengths
- Provide extra time and space while they process information
- Demonstrate (don’t just explain) tasks
- Give clear, concise directions – don’t use too many words
- Use visual progress charts
- Use peer tutors when possible
- Use concrete examples whenever possible. Abstract ideas are often confusing
- Present new information in small doses – Let them master it before presenting more information
- Don’t give “busy work” – make sure all written work is meaningful
- Teach learning and organizational techniques when possible.

Intellectual Disability
These students have IQs that are significantly below average as well as problems with adaptive behavior. They will have this disability for their whole life. They will most likely struggle with self-care and independent living skills (cooking, shopping, finding and keeping employment, transportation, etc.).
Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- limited problem solving skill
- slow academic skills (reading, writing, math, etc.)
- needs extensive practice to learn new skills – forgets easily
- may “parrot” back information without understanding what she is saying
- may tell you he understands when he doesn’t
- tends to mimic behaviors she doesn’t comprehend
- demonstrates few pre-vocational or vocational skills
- has fewer work experiences (babysitting, lawn mowing, etc.) typical for their age
- below average motors skills
- slower rate of speed
- needs immediate positive feedback
- limited vocabulary
- inability to put her thoughts into words
- low frustration level
- poor concentration
- unable to generalize new concepts – for example, he can count change at school but doesn’t know how to use that skill on a job
- doesn’t understand abstract ideas
- doesn’t comprehend amounts (time, space, numbers, etc.)
- immature social skills and emotional reactions

Ideas for supporting these students

- Teach new skills in smaller steps – one step at a time
  - Make sure they master each step before moving on
  - Review often
  - Give lots of practice
  - Demonstrate (don’t just explain) tasks
  - Give multiple opportunities to practice a new skill. She may forget it easily
- Use positive reinforcement often
- Provide extra time to process information – don’t rush her
- Use concrete examples whenever possible
- A student may tell you that he understands, even when he doesn’t. If he can tell you the idea in his own words, he probably understands it
- Avoid distractions.

Emotional Behavioral Disability
These students have emotional or behavior problems that last over a long period of time. These behaviors are not a result of a crisis such as a divorce of parents or a death. These problems have an adverse influence on their education.

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

- poor self control
- have problems associating their behavior with consequences
- negative self concept or lack of confidence
- impulsive, overactive, and restless
- frequently disruptive
- uncooperative and defiant
- severely depressed
- destructive to themselves and others
• aggressive
• easily distracted
• short attention span
• inhibited and withdrawn or will not communicate with others
• "the whole world is against me"

Ideas for supporting these students

• Establish clear, concise expectations
• Provide immediate feedback
• Use high rates of specific praise
• Provide specific instructions
• Provide a work area free of distractions
• Separate students that provoke each other
• Break large tasks into smaller ones so that it is less overwhelming
• When disciplining or discussing problems, don't do it in front of an "audience"
  o Calmly discuss the problem
  o Explain when a behavior is inappropriate
  o Keep voice low and soft
  o Let the student calm down
• Allow student to explain his point of view
• Once the student has had an opportunity to discuss any problem, you should work together to plan some solutions.

Hearing Impairment/Deafness

These students have problems hearing but may not be deaf.

Ideas for supporting these students

• Remember, students who are totally deaf and do not read lips will not be communicating in their first language. English is a second language for them. Therefore, misunderstandings and miscommunications easily occur. Abstract concepts are often difficult to share
• Use an interpreter if a student needs it
• If student reads lips, have good lighting (no backlighting)
• Use body language to supplement the spoken word
• Face the student while you are talking them

Autism

Autism significantly affects a person’s ability to communicate (verbally and/or nonverbally) and to interact socially in a typical manner. It is a spectrum disability that covers a wide range of abilities. Some people will be able to function fairly well, especially with appropriate training and support. Others seem to be in a world of their own.

Characteristics (a student may have one or several)

• social deficits
  o hard time relating to others
  o socially awkward
  o little or no empathy for others
  o severe problems in transitioning from one activity (or location) to another
  o developmentally behind peers and may learn skills out of typical sequence
• has a hard time making and maintaining friendships
  • communication problems
    o significant problems with communication (speech)
    o peculiar speech patterns
    o very literal in understanding speech and doesn’t understand idioms, humor, sarcasm, word plays, etc.
  • bizarre and/or repetitive behavior
    o maybe unusually sensitive or insensitive to sensory stimuli
    o rocking, flapping, head banging, etc.

Ideas for supporting these students
  • Prepare students for upcoming changes. Give them time to make a mental transition before starting new activities or going to a new location
  • Provide a work area free of distractions
  • Provide social skills training
  • Provide training in practical areas (in addition to academics) - work experience, accessing public transportation, independent living skills, etc.
  • Avoid slang, jokes, and idioms.

Speech or Language Impairment
This disorder includes things such as stuttering, impaired articulation, language impairment, or voice impairment.

Ideas for supporting these students
  • Allow students time to process information or give information
  • Provide follow up to verbal instructions
  • Provide written outlines for lectures or notes of lectures so they can concentrate on what is being said
  • Demonstrate and/or give examples of what you talk about
  • Realize that these students often have a hard time finding the right words to express themselves and/or in organizing their thoughts

Traumatic Brain Injury
Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) means an injury to the brain (such as from an accident, surgery, etc.) and adversely affects a child's educational performance. It may be a temporary or permanent disability. The effects of the injury vary from person to person. Generally, people with TBI improve over time. Recovery may take many years. It is impossible to predict the amount of improvement, or how long it will continue.
The effects of the injury can show up in areas such as:

  • Cognition
  • Attention
  • Judgment
  • Perception
  • Language
  • Reasoning
  • Problem solving
  • Speech
  • Memory (especially short term)
  • Abstract thinking
  • Sensory
  • Personality changes
Other Disabilities
There are other conditions people think of as being a disability but are not a federal Special Education category. The conditions may result in the student receiving a Special Education classification.

ADHD (Attention Deficient Hyperactive Disorder)
This is a condition that describes a student with "developmentally inappropriate" degrees of inattention, impulsiveness, and hyperactivity." ADHD may not be identified until the student enters school and they begin to stand out. Boys seem to be affected more often than girls. NOTE: School personnel should never recommend medication.

There are three types of ADHD:
- Predominantly Inattentive
- Predominantly Hyperactive – Impulsive
- Combined

Primary Characteristics:
- Inattention - unable to stay on task; easily distracted
- Impulsivity - acts without thinking
- Overactive - "much too busy" often showing up as fidgeting and squirming

Associated Characteristics:
- noncompliant - unable or resistive to compliance with adult requests
- poor self control - difficulty in delaying gratification, "governed" by the closest attractive thing or by what they want in their environment
- academic deficits especially with basic academic subjects
- social skills deficits - trouble interacting with peers and adults, often described as easily frustrated, "bossy," uncooperative, or able to maintain long lasting friendships

Students can learn to manage their behaviors. ADHD lasts beyond childhood. It is seen in a wide variety of situations but is noticed at school because students have to pay attention, sit in his seat, and have appropriate behavior. Students with ADHD may be served by Special Education or a “504” plan.

Ideas for supporting these students
- Give assignments in small chunks
- Present material using as many different senses as possible
- Reward student when she is paying attention
- Teach organizational skills
- Allow extra time for tasks
- Strive for quality rather than quantity during tasks
- Make expectations clear
- Use natural consequences whenever possible

Cerebral Palsy
This condition is due to damage to the brain. It occurs in the womb or soon after birth. It can be a minor impairment or it can be very involved.

Typical impairments:
- abnormal muscle tone (their muscles will be too loose or too tight)
- abnormal reflexes
- poor control of movement (arms flaying, muscles uncooperative, etc.)
- poor posture and balance
- sensory deficits
Other possible impairments:
- low IQ
- poor social skills
- seizures
- sensory impairments
- easily distractible
- poor endurance

Ideas for supporting these students
- Modify work to enhance independent
- Have a work area free from distractions
- Give extra time
- Break tasks into smaller chunks
Appendix C

Questions that may be asked of you during your bi-annual evaluations:

How does the teacher keep you informed of his/her daily, weekly, and monthly schedule?

How does the teacher direct your work with students?

• Are you provided with daily lesson plans for the students?
• How are you made aware of students IEP goals?
• How are you involved in the collection of student progress?
• How often are you given feedback from the teacher regarding student progress?
• How are behavior plans reviewed with you?

Do you have an opportunity to communicate any issues or concerns that come up for you?

Has your teacher scheduled a specific time for you to monitor email & complete timecards?
Appendix D
Recommended Core Competencies For Paraeducators Working In Special Education

To work in Special Education and related services programs for children and youth with disabilities, paraeducators will demonstrate:

1. Understanding of the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities.
   - Awareness of historical perspective of students with disabilities, including IDEA, 504, ADA, value and benefit to schools, staff, students and general community, and modeling an integrated community.
   - Knowledge of the purpose of Special Education programs and education for students with disabilities.
   - Understanding of the philosophy that all students can learn and contribute.

2. Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators.
   - Knowledge of certificated/licensed staff roles and responsibilities for program development and evaluation and for instructional supervision of paraeducators, including legal requirements and district policies and procedures.
   - Understanding of district chain of command and paraeducator's role in relation to other school employees.
   - Understanding of the value of paraeducators in educational programs.
   - Understanding of paraeducator's roles and responsibilities, including legal requirements and district policies and procedures.
   - Understanding of shared roles and responsibilities, including teaming and collaboration.
   - Understanding how to do self-evaluation and/or reflection as it applies to the paraeducator's role.

3. Knowledge of (a) patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages, and (b) risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development.
   - Awareness of learning theory and different approaches certificated staff may use.
   - Awareness of and respect for the impact on families having children with disabilities.
   - Knowledge of the developmental continuum birth to 21 years in the following areas: communication, self-help, physical development, social/emotional development, and cognitive development.
   - Knowledge of and respect for the influence that families have on student learning and development.
   - Knowledge of issues and requirements surrounding transition for children, youth, and families.

4. Ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality.
   - Ability to comply with the requirements of confidentiality for educational and medical records.
   - Ability to comply with legal requirements regarding the reporting of abuse, discipline, and inappropriate conduct, such as, touching.
   - Ability to comply with district policies and procedures regarding delegation and supervision, and issues of insubordination.

5. Ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem solving and other skills that will enable the paraeducator to work as an effective member of the instructional team.
• Ability to use communication methods to increase understanding.
• Ability to use techniques/strategies for problem solving and negotiation.
• Ability to recognize learning and communication styles.
• Ability to do self-evaluation and reflection as it pertains to working as an effective member of the instructional team.
• Ability to advocate for oneself.

6. **Ability to provide positive behavioral support and management.**
   • Understanding of how disabilities can impact behavior.
   • Understanding of the legal requirements and district policies and procedures for discipline.
   • Ability to promote the development of social skills.
   • Ability to use prevention and intervention skills.
   • Ability to use reinforcement strategies.
   • Ability to use data collection and observation techniques.
   • Understanding of the use of crisis intervention and restraint techniques.

7. **Knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families.**
   • Knowledge of the intent of IDEA, including historical perspective, impact of legal decisions, and value of legislation.
   • Knowledge of IDEA – parts B and C, ADA and 504.
   • Knowledge of definitions, such as Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Individual Education Program (IEP), 504 plans, and the implications for paraeducators in relation to legal requirements, district policies and procedures, and contract provisions.
   • Knowledge of Washington’s special education requirements in general terms including definitions, qualifications, and service options.

8. **Awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families, and colleagues with whom they work.**
   • Awareness of how the different aspects of diversity enhance opportunities for learning.
   • Awareness of cultural biases and personal differences that affect working with students, families, and other team members.

9. **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.**
   • Ability to use reinforcement strategies.
   • Ability to use instructional techniques.
   • Ability to use data collection and observation techniques.

10. **Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff.**
    • Ability to apply small group instructional techniques for management and support of student learning.
    • Ability to apply specific instructional techniques to support academic areas.
    • Ability to apply techniques that support instruction in academic areas.

11. **Ability to motivate and assist children and youth.**
    • Ability to use appropriate interest and ability level material and to modify material as necessary.
    • Ability to use appropriate reinforcement strategies.
12. Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed.
   • Knowledge or basic first aid.
   • Ability to use infection control and universal precautions.
   • Understanding of district policies and procedures, contract provisions, and state requirements.
   • Understanding of the legal requirements of delegation and supervision.
   • Understanding of the legal requirements and district policies and procedures for chain of command.
   • Ability to use lifting, carrying and transferring techniques.

13. Awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning.
   • Awareness of assistive communication.
   • Awareness of technological equipment.

14. Awareness of personal care and/or health related support.
   • Awareness of legal requirements providing health related care in the schools.
   • Awareness of types of personal care and health related support tasks.
   • Awareness of district policies and procedures, the legal requirements for delegation, training and supervision, and the issues of insubordination.