

Central Lyon Community School District

Paraeducator Manual

August 2012

Introduction

This manual was developed to ensure that the paraeducators have the information and training they need to work safely and effectively with special education students. Although each assignment will be different, there are certain basic areas in which it is felt that all paraeducators should be trained and others that will be based on need.

Some paraeducators work with one student at a time, others work with groups of students, and assignments can change as often as daily based on student need. Therefore, this manual was designed to assist the special education teacher, the paraeducator, and the administration in determining the specific training that each paraeducator needs in order to be effective in his or her job.

Individual Paraeducator Work Schedule

The standard work day for all paraeducators is 8:00 to 3:30 with a half hour unpaid lunch. The paraeducator's schedule is usually determined by the duties for which they are hired. Another factor which may come into play is the need for coverage at the school site. Each paraeducator's daily schedule, including lunch break, will be determined in working with the supervising special education teacher to which they are assigned and will be provided in writing. This will be impacted by class schedules and student needs. Duties and schedules are subject to change throughout a school year. There may be occasions that a paraeducator will be requested to work additional hours due to field trips, music programs, student needs after school, etc. These will be addressed on an as-needed and individual basis by the supervising special education teacher and/or administration.

Time sheets will be filled out on a daily basis and remain in the respective building offices. Hours submitted for paid days off including sick leave, personal days and holidays will be the same as an individual's regular work day. Paraeducators receive seven paid holidays including Labor Day, Thanksgiving (2), Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Presidents' Day, and the Friday before Easter. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, the preceding Friday shall be the designated holiday; if the holiday falls on a Sunday, the following Monday shall be the designated holiday.

Professionalism

All paraeducators will be addressed by Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. and their last name by staff and students within the building when serving in a professional role. This creates a level of respect and authority and sets paraeducators apart from the students within the classroom setting.

There are many factors to take into consideration when thinking about appropriate clothing for this position. Remember that you are an employee of a school district which makes you a representative of the school. When choosing your outfit, please remember that you are a professional who is setting an example for students. You want to establish credibility, professionalism, and respect. You will be working with impressionable children - please be aware of cleavage, midriff, short skirts/shorts or too-low pant waists. Be sensible and avoid these situations. In addition, you will be working with active children, so dress accordingly. Also, keep in mind that many students and co-workers have sensitivities to sounds and smells, such as scented deodorants and toiletries. Heavy perfumes or strong scents may precipitate seizures in some people.

If you are aware that you will be absent from work in advance due to personal time or an appointment, please notify the office, as well as general education and special education teachers, in advance of your absence. If you will be absent from work due to an immediate illness or other emergency, please notify your principal as soon as possible.

Chain of Command - School/District

Your immediate supervisor is the special education teacher to whom the position you hold is assigned. Daily conversations regarding the student(s)' behavior and progress should be taking place with this person. If you have a question or concerns about the student, first address them with the general education teacher and/or special education teacher. If there is a personality conflict or you do not feel comfortable addressing that person, talk to the principal. Do not discuss personality conflicts with other paraeducators.

Within the general education and special education classrooms, the certified teacher is in charge. The teacher is responsible for disciplining the students in the classroom. The teacher will establish and enforce classroom rules and expectations. The teacher will communicate to the paraeducator his or her role in this process.

Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse

As a paraeducator, you are a mandated reporter of child abuse. A mandated reporter is someone who works in a public position with children and is mandated by law to report a suspicion of child abuse. As a mandated reporter, your main concern is the welfare of the child. Reporting should be done when a person either knows or suspects that a child has been or is in danger of abuse or neglect. It is not your role to verify that abuse has occurred.

Suspected abuse may include any of the following:

- A child is physically injured by other than accidental means
- A child is subjected to willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment
- A child is abused or exploited sexually
- A child is neglected by a parent or caretaker who fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or supervision.

While you may choose to consult with a supervising teacher, nurse or administrator about your concerns, you are still responsible for reporting. If you suspect abuse, you must file a report. A report is filed by calling the Department of Human Services statewide hotline (1-800-362-2178) and in some cases, the police. Once you have called DHS, you will provide a written report via fax.

Confidentiality

Federal law, state law, and district policies protect the privacy of personal information and records of students with special needs. When working with students in special education, it is important to adhere to confidentiality requirements. Confidentiality means that all information about students is private information and may only be shared within the school setting among individuals directly working with the student, on a “need to know” basis.

Ways to maintain confidentiality are:

- Do not discuss your work with anyone not associated with the child’s educational program.
- When talking about your job, avoid specific student names.
- Never use information about a student as gossip or as a joke.
- Focus comments on student’s strengths and be positive.
- Redirect comments/questions from parents to the teacher.
- Never make suggestions or recommendations about a student’s program - redirect all questions to the teacher.

Interacting With Parents

Interaction with parents should be on a professional level. If parents are seeking information about a student’s progress, direct them to the teacher. By directing them to the teacher you are taking yourself out of the equation and will avoid the possibility of miscommunication. If communication needs to occur at any time about a specific student concern, this communication should occur with the general education teacher, special education teacher and/or office. If you are requested to send an e-mail to a parent regarding a specific student concern, the special education and general education teachers must be cc’d in the e-mail. Include office personnel in the e-mail if it is a medical concern.

Sharing your own personal information, such as cell phone numbers and personal e-mail addresses, is discouraged. As a paraeducator, you are an employee of the district and should represent yourself in a professional manner.

If you are directed to write up an incident, always check with the teacher and show them what is being written. Be careful of what is put in writing or what information you communicate as it can always be used in legal situations. If you complete a daily log or chart as part of a student’s programming needs, follow these recommendations:

- Regarding successes and challenges - Include facts only, **no opinions**, and be as brief and succinct as possible
- Mention upcoming changes in schedule, etc. for which a parent may need to prepare the student

- Daily logs must be reviewed by the general education and/or special education teacher before being sent home

Reading and Implementing the IEP

As a paraeducator, you will be implementing the Individual Education Program (IEP) as directed by the teacher. The IEP is a legal document that outlines the services that a student in special education receives as agreed upon by the IEP team. Also included in this plan are academic, social/emotional, behavioral, speech, and/or motor goals. The teacher is responsible for ensuring the goals are being met; however, the paraeducator will be directed on how to work with students to make sure their goals are being implemented.

Sections of the IEP which are especially important to be familiar with are the goals and Page F where accommodations and modifications are found, as well as any specific behavior plans or health plans. The special education teacher will direct you regarding your role in implementing the IEP, including any progress monitoring you may be involved in.

General Tips to Remember when Working With Students

- Treat all students with respect and talk to them using a calm, assertive voice.
- Refer to students by their names, not their disabilities.
- Follow through with what you tell the students. Do not give empty threats or promises. Students need to trust you.
- Assist with the arrival and departure of children as needed.
- Assist with the instruction of personal hygiene with students in a respectful manner.
- Monitor and provide positive discipline as necessary.
- Praise and motivate students frequently.
- Provide assistance with all instructional activities as needed.
- Assist all students in the classroom and divide your time according to student needs.
- Provide more individual attention to students who need it.
- Read with students during appropriate times in the classroom so as to not disrupt instruction.

Modifications and Accommodations

Modifications and accommodations assist the student to access the curriculum and activities of the classroom. The IEP team decides whether a change constitutes an accommodation or a modification. Any accommodations or modifications for students that you work with will be directed by the special education teacher in charge of the IEP.

Modification: A modification significantly alters the standard of what is being learned.

Accommodation: An accommodation is a change to the delivery of instruction or way the student responds which does not change or alter the standard of what is being learned.

Types of accommodations which can be made:

1. Participation - Adapt the extent to which the student is actively involved.
For example: Lying down to listen quietly to a story is as acceptable as sitting upright and responding to questions.
2. Time - Adapt the time allotted and allowed for learning or task completion.
For example: More time may be needed by some students to get dressed for outside play, or to complete an assignment.
3. Difficulty - Adapt the skill level or the rules of how the student approaches the activity.
For example: A cutting and pasting activity might include tearing paper when cutting is too difficult.
4. Input - Adapt the way materials and information are presented, including the way you use language.
For example: Use picture cues, simplify language, or demonstrate instructions.
5. Output - Adapt how the student can respond, including how much you expect to be accomplished.
For example: Choices made using eye gaze are as acceptable as spoken answers. Some students may be allowed to make oral, rather than written reports.
6. Alternate Goals - Identify different goals and outcomes for students within the same learning activity.
For example: Some students may be practicing addition with money, while another student is learning to identify coins.
7. Level of Support - Vary the amount of personal assistance provided.
For example: Hand –over-hand assistance may be needed for toothbrushing, but none is needed for outside play.
8. Alternative Teaching Opportunities - Use other opportunities throughout the day to teach the student concepts and/or skills presented in planned learning activities.
For example: Placing one plate and one napkin for each chair at the table may meet a goal for 1:1 correspondence better than a counting activity.
9. Environment - Adapt the flow of the room, seating, and positioning options. Adapt materials to meet individual needs.
For example: Provide a variety of materials in the sand table to allow for differences in ability to grasp and release.

Promoting Student Independence

What is my role/goals?

- To increase independence and decrease dependence
- To assist the student to reach his/her potential using the IEP as a road map
- To increase peer interaction and inclusion
- To use appropriate strategies and materials
- To model appropriate behavior and communication

Who is to offer support to a student?

- No student needs support all the time; having the student work with peers is helpful and necessary.
- Students must also work with the general education or special education teacher to build the student-teacher relationship.
- At times, the student needs to work alone to experience autonomy of learning - if a student has never worked alone, the student may think he/she can't!

When do you need to offer support?

- No student needs direct support every minute of every day; there are times when other forms of support would suffice (a reminder note on the desk, a visual cue, etc.).
- Recognize when support is needed by observing the student and the classroom activities and expectations.

When do you decrease the level of support?

- No student should be expected to spend all of their learning time with one person
- If a student does not function without an assistant constantly by his/her side, the paraeducator will need to find ways to gradually move away from the student
- Don't respond immediately to every request a student makes
 - Provide a 10 second delay before responding
 - Hold up your hand to acknowledge the request - Signaling the student that you have heard the request and will be there shortly
 - While standing close to the student, talk to others and offer support to others - expect students to "share" you
 - Work at a site within view of the student, but not next to the student

Student Behavior Needs

Self-Regulation

Some students with disabilities have a difficult time controlling their mood or level of alertness. This can make it difficult for them to pay attention in class, engage in learning, and complete their work.

If a student appears drowsy, bored, tired, etc. staff can increase their level of alertness with ideas such as:

- Getting a drink of water or splashing their face with water
- Taking a short walk
- Doing stretching exercises
- Taking deep breaths
- Chewing something crunchy, sour, etc.
- Doing wall push-ups
- Doing heavy lifting (books, blocks)

If a student appears agitated, angry, nervous, etc. staff can calm students with ideas such as:

- Deep breathing
- Calming visualization
- Putting head on desk to relax
- A timed break
- Sitting in a bean bag chair
- Soothing music with headphones

Positive Reinforcement

In school it's about catching a child doing something good that you want them to do and rewarding them for it. Sometimes the reward can be as simple as a "high-five." The child gets positive attention and a reward for doing the right thing and hopefully will focus on repeating that behavior.

A child needs to know exactly what they did right. Just saying, "Good job," might be nice, but not always enough. Say, "Good job, Jane. I like how you sat in your seat the first time you were asked," then give the reward immediately. It might be a "high-five," a point, a sticker, or a tap on the shoulder.

Prompting

Prompts are known as a *temporary crutch* that should be systematically withdrawn as soon as the student begins to perform the skill independently. What does a prompt do? It increases the likelihood that the student will engage in the correct behavior at the correct time.

During teacher-led instruction, prompts should focus the student's attention on the teacher's instruction/direction or the natural cue.

- Prompts should be as weak as possible.
- Prompts should be faded quickly.
- Unplanned prompts should be avoided.
- Prompt, reinforce and fade.

Start with prompting the student to attend to the teacher OR the other students (ie, “What do you need to be doing now?”). Allow for students to rely on their surroundings by phrasing prompts like, “What are the other kids doing?”, or “What did the teacher say to do?”

Sensory Needs

“Some challenging behaviors in the classroom may be due to a child either **seeking** or **avoiding** certain sensory input.” (Spitzer, 2004)

Sensory - Information that the brain receives about sight, smell, sound, touch, proprioception (activities that make the brain aware of the body in space), and vestibular movement

Sensory Diet - A schedule of activities that assists the individual in getting ready to undertake a task. These activities or events help to balance out one’s neurological state, so that one is neither too aroused nor too under-aroused to engage in the task at hand. A child in need of a sensory diet may need tune-ups throughout the day. The key concept is prevention through use of sensory items on a regular basis throughout the day so as to prevent regulatory flare-ups.

Sensory Room Guidelines

1. Students will have scheduled times in the sensory room.
2. Have students remove shoes before entering.
3. Make sure to sanitize items after each use.
4. Both students and paraeducators need to use hand sanitizer when leaving the room.

If you have questions regarding a student’s sensory needs, first refer to the special education teacher. You may be referred to the Occupational Therapist for further assistance.

Medical Needs

Medication

ALL medication shall be distributed and documented through the office by trained personnel. School secretaries are the trained personnel in the school district.

Medicaid Billing

Some students, due to medical or behavioral needs, qualify for Medicaid billing. You will be made aware of any needs of your students by the school nurse. If you are required to document for Medicaid Billing, you will be provided with training. Please follow these guidelines when documenting:

- White paper only
- Blue or black pens only - NO pencils
- Fill in each line - No ditto marks or squiggly lines
- If you make a mistake, cross out with one line and initial
- Make sure the year is included with the date
- Fill in in chronological order
- You cannot bill for time if someone else such as OT, PT, principal, etc. is working with your student unless you are assisting; do not document time if you are not involved in that time slot
- Turn in documentation monthly
- All records are confidential
- Secretaries can make you copies, so don't write on your last form
- Notify the school nurse if the health plan is not current (ie. no longer helps with toileting, feeding, etc.)
- Health code - T1019; add HG if group
- Behavior code - 96152; group - 96153
- Records are kept for 5 years