

Golden Plains

Unified School District 316

Thomas County, Kansas

Ashley Arnberger, Superintendent/ 6-12 Principal

Brandy Spresser, PK-5 Principal

Travis Smith, Administrative Assistant



Paraeducator Handbook

2023 - 2024

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Introduction

This handbook has been designed to assist paraeducators (paras) in understanding and successfully fulfilling their roles. This handbook is a supplement to the USD 316 Classified Staff Handbook.

Job Qualifications

All paraeducators are required to have a high school diploma or equivalent. In addition, paras must have a minimum of 48 hours of college credit, an associate's degree, or demonstrate proficiency through formal testing. Paras should enjoy working with children and have the ability to maintain confidentiality of information. A para must have, or be able to obtain, and maintain a valid Kansas driver's license.

The Role of Paraeducator

A paraeducator works under the supervision of the special education teacher and school administration performing various instructional and non-instructional duties to assist in providing special education students a free and appropriate public education.

Paraeducators primarily provide instructional or related services under the supervision of licensed special education teachers as part of the school's special education program. Job duties often include, but are not limited to, instructional support, staff development, student data collection and record keeping, supervision of students, and assisting students with basic needs. Paraeducators also may be asked to assist the special education teacher with paperwork related to special education students for whom he/she is responsible. Paraeducators should be willing to perform any other duties as assigned by the special education teacher or school administration.

Job Roles in Educational Settings

Instructional Support in the General Education Classroom (Inclusion) – In the general education classroom the paraeducator becomes an extension of the teacher. The paraeducator and teacher work collaboratively to ensure that special education and related services are provided to students as specified in a student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP). The paraeducator and classroom teacher should meet to determine the role the paraeducator will fill in the classroom and the teacher's expectations for the paraeducator. The role and expectations must be clear to the special education teacher, general education teacher, and the paraeducator before placement in the classroom.

Instructional Support Special Education Setting (Pullout) – In a pull out setting, the paraeducator becomes an extension of the special education teacher. Students identified with exceptionalities are placed in a special education setting to meet specific objectives

within the student's IEP. The paraeducator must follow the educational plan created by the teacher. The paraeducator must communicate with the teacher regularly concerning student performance and data collection.

Behavioral Support – A paraeducator may be assigned to provide support to a student whose behavior is such that they cannot effectively interact with others independently. The paraeducator will fulfill two functions. The first will be to monitor and prompt the student's behavior, and the second will be to teach the student the behavioral skills necessary to be successful independently. The paraeducator must follow the educational plan created by the special education teacher, behavior consultant, or other member of the student's IEP team. The paraeducator must communicate with the teacher regularly concerning student performance and data collection.

General Supervision of Students – Part of a paraeducator's job responsibilities may include supervising groups of students before or after school, at lunch, recess, field trips, etc. The paraeducator must be familiar with the expectations the school has for this role.

Supervision -

Supervision of the special education paraeducator is a joint responsibility of the special education teacher and the building administrator(s). The special education teacher will be responsible for structuring the paraeducator's schedule and working with the paraeducator on a regular basis to ensure the responsibilities assigned are carried out in an efficient manner. The special education teacher may assign duties to the paraeducator according to classroom/student needs and capabilities of each paraeducator.

Responsibilities & General Expectations

Cell Phone Use – Cell phone use must never interfere with or disrupt student learning or the paraeducator's job responsibilities. Phones should never be used to take photos of students that the paraeducator works with.

Dress – The board encourages appropriate dress for all district employees. USD 316 employees are expected to dress appropriately for the position they hold. They are expected to present themselves in a manner conducive to representing the district well.

Professional Development Hours – The paraeducator is responsible for attending and documenting 20 inservice hours per year. This includes annually mandated Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) training.

Suggestions for Success –

- Remember all final decisions are up to your teachers.
- Don't talk about school problems to people outside of school.
- Be patient: with yourself, with the teacher, and with the children.
- If work problems arise, always discuss the issues with your supervising teacher.

Code of Ethics

A. Relationship with the School

- Have good attendance and be on time
- Accept responsibility for improving skills
- Know school policies and procedures
- Represent the school district in a positive manner

B. Accepting Responsibilities

- Recognize the teacher has the ultimate responsibility for instruction
- Do not communicate progress or concerns to parents unless directed to by staff

C. Relationship with Students and Parents

- Discuss a child's progress and/or program only with your supervising teacher in an appropriate setting
- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and staff
- Present yourself as a positive adult role model

D. Relationship with the Teacher

- Recognize the special education teacher as the supervisor and team leader
- Establish a positive relationship with the teacher
- Discuss concerns about the teacher or methods directly with the teacher

Evaluation Process

Paraeducators are evaluated by the end of the first semester of school by their immediate supervisor and/or the building administrator. In the first year of employment with the district, a paraeducator will be evaluated a second time during the second semester of school, prior to May 1st. Paraeducators who have areas that need improvement on their evaluation will be re-evaluated by May 1st.

A system for evaluating personnel is essential in an education setting to ensure all students receive quality services. Evaluations are used in making decisions concerning continuing employment, assignment, advancement, and more importantly, improving services. The evaluation will utilize the evaluation tool approved by the board of education for this process. The tool will appraise the individual's strengths and weaknesses, provide for growth and improvement, and encourage beneficial changes in service.

If a plan of improvement is written, termination of employment is an option when satisfactory progress is not made.

Confidentiality

As a paraeducator, you will hear, read and observe information about students that is considered confidential. You will learn a great deal about the students you work with and their families. You must always respect the privacy of the students and their families. There are federal and state laws designed to protect the confidentiality of students served in special education programs. The law says that only educators, directly involved in delivering services to a student may have access to records or information about the student. Persons not directly involved in delivering services to a student do not have a right to this information. You have a right to know information about the student(s) with whom you are involved.

Tips to Keep Confidentiality in Check

- Be careful with whom you share information. Is that person directly involved with the student's education?
- Don't point out or label children in public (outside of school) as "your student".
- Avoid using names if you are asked about your job.
- Suggest that questions about a student be directed to the classroom or special education teacher.
- Never use information about a student as gossip or as a joke.
- No matter who asks you a question about a student, if you don't want to answer or are unsure whether you should, DON'T.
- Be direct and honest in your response: I'm sorry, I can't say.
- **If you know it because you work here, it is to be treated as confidential!**

Acknowledgment of Receipt of Handbook

Employees are required to sign this statement annually acknowledging the receipt of the Paraeducator Handbook and the other provisions stated below. These acknowledgments will be kept on file in the clerk's office.

I, _____ do hereby acknowledge receipt of the paraeducator handbook. I have read, and I understand the contents. Further, I understand:

- This handbook is not an employee contract. Further, this handbook is not to be considered as either an express or implied contract between the school district and the employee. No employee has authority to create an employee contract by modification of this document.
- As a condition of employment, employees agree to follow rules and regulations, which have been adopted by the board.
- This handbook may be changed or modified and items added or deleted at any time recommended by the superintendent and approved by the board.
- Classified employees, including paraeducators, are employees-at-will and employment may be terminated at any time, with or without cause. Classified employees employed pursuant to a written contract may still be employees-at-will in accordance with the written contract and employment may be terminated as provided in the written contract.

Date: _____

Signature of Employee: _____