

VIRGINIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS
411 5TH AVENUE SOUTH
VIRGINIA, MN 55792

PARAPROFESSIONAL GUIDEBOOK



Welcome to the team!

Virginia District Para-Professional Expectations

**You, as a paraprofessional, are expected to do and know the following things:
(If you have ANY questions, please ask your
case manager/SpEd teacher for help.)**

- **Read and understand your AFSCME Master Agreement.**
- **Read and understand the Para-Professional Guidebook.**
- **Make sure you fully understand your job assignment and what it entails.**
- **Have good attendance. Understand and manage your leave appropriately. Your student and case manager depend on you!**
- **Be on time (this means ready to work with your student at your designated start time.) This does not mean punch in at your start time.**
- **Read and understand your child's IEP or information prepared for you by your SpEd or classroom teacher. Understand that the information you have access to is confidential.**
- **Understand the chain of command. If you have a question, ask your case manager/SpEd teacher. If she or he cannot answer it, go to the SpEd Coordinator. If that person cannot answer it, go to your building principal.**
- **Make sure you understand the procedure for processing sick leave.**
- **Make sure you understand that the district has the right to ask for a Dr. Certificate for requested sick leave. Your sick leave must be approved by your building principal. Please understand the difference between approved sick leave and approval for a substitute by the principal.**
- **Make sure you have TOC (Teachers On Call) information.**
- **Make sure you get approval from your building principal before you call TOC for a personal day.**
- **Take your breaks in a timely fashion.**
- **Do not carry your coffee to classrooms. Drink your coffee on your breaks.**
- **Dress in a "Business Casual" manner. The more professional you look, the more respect you will get. Friday is casual day. It's OK to wear jeans on that day but again, they should be appropriate jeans for the workplace.**
- **Make sure you understand that everything that happens in school is confidential. Never talk about your student in public. Do not even talk to your student's parents about school issues—refer parents to the case manager/SpEd teacher.**

- **Make sure you know what to do in a lock-down. (Talk to your case manager/teacher.)**
- **Know where the EXITS are no matter what part of the building you are in.**
- **Read the daily bulletin. Listen to the announcements. The safety of you and your student may depend on it.**
- **Cell phones should be used during your breaks—unless you have an emergency for yourself or your student.**
- **Check your mailbox once a day.**
- **Make sure you have an email address and make sure you know how to use your email.**
- **Check your email 2 times a day. This is the district’s chosen way of communicating with all employees.**
- **Make sure you understand how and where to “clock in.”**
- **Work as a team. Keep the students as your focus. You are their role model as much as a teacher is--maybe even more given the time you spend with your students.**
- **Read “Tips for a Para” on Page 7 of the Paraprofessional Guidebook. You will find even more excellent advice.**
- **Read over the Para Evaluation Tool, found at the end of the Paraprofessional Guidebook so you know in advance what you will be evaluated on.**
- **And finally—The Golden Rule applies at all times. Do not gossip, talk shop, criticize your co-workers, or discuss work issues in front of your students or co-workers during your workday.**

CONFIDENTIALITY

****Confidentiality is one of the most important and critical aspects of a paraprofessionals job!!**

Students and parents have a legal right to data privacy. You have a legal and ethical right to ensure that that right is afforded them. Below are some guidelines to consider when working in this school setting.

1. Consider, as a general rule, putting yourself in a student/parent's position: What information would you want discussed with others regarding your child? In what settings, and with whom?
2. Think about what we need to know and share about a student or their parent in order for us to better educate that child. What we need to know can be vital versus what some of us want to know. NEED vs. WANT to know.
3. Never discuss other students or share information regarding their programs with parents during staffings, conferences, or out in the public.
4. Information regarding specific students should not be discussed in lunchrooms, staff rooms, or in the community.
5. Paraprofessionals should question school policies and programs only through the proper channels. Talk to your supervisor about the determined chain-of-command in your district.
6. Information in records is confidential. You may have access to this information on a need basis and by following your building guidelines pertaining to access. Again, your supervising teacher can best explain this to you.
7. Paraprofessionals need to support teacher's techniques, methods and materials especially in the presence of parents, students, and other paras. Questions should be directed to the specific teacher privately.
8. When having conversations or when writing confidential information regarding a student or family, be aware of those around you who may be within hearing or reading distance. Look for a private place to conduct this task.
9. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) is a legal document developed by a team based on the student's needs with goals and objectives in the areas of service. It is a **confidential** document!

Paraprofessional Roles and Responsibilities

The special education paraprofessional's role is to assist the teacher and allow more effective utilization of the teacher's abilities and professional knowledge. The teacher must function in a leadership role. It is the teacher's responsibility to assure that students are moving toward achievement of individualized goals and objectives. Paraprofessionals serve under the direction and supervision of the teacher to assist in carrying out the individualized program. In order for paraprofessionals to provide direct instruction to students, teachers must plan and prescribe the learning environment and instruction for the student. Teachers must train the paraprofessional in the specifics of instruction, evaluation of student progress, and monitoring the effectiveness of the paraprofessional's implementation of the instructional strategies.

Comparison of Supervising Teacher and Paraprofessional Duties

<u>Supervising Teacher</u>	<u>Paraprofessional</u>
1. Diagnose educational needs	1. Scores and compiles data associated with informal assessment
2. Plans instructional programs	2. Assists with planning process: copies, transcribes, types, files, etc.
3. Grades student performance	3. Checks, scores and records student work
4. Takes complete responsibility for new concepts, skills, activities	4. Reinforces and reviews concepts and skills Assists students with activities from teacher
5. Revises instructional program	5. Monitors student progress in instructional programs and reports this to the teacher
6. Designs instructional materials	6. Constructs materials for the student as designed by the supervising teacher
7. Designs and implements behavior and intervention plans	7. Monitors and reinforces student performance during behavioral interventions through observations: collects and compiles data
8. Communicates with parents	8. Maintains records associated with parent conferences, confirms dates, etc.
9. Responsible for discipline	9. Disciplines students by following the behavior management techniques set up by the supervising teacher
10. Attends in-service meetings	10. Attends professional development meetings

Do's for Paraprofessionals

Special Education Paraprofessionals May:

1. Be left alone in the classroom, in a planned way, when supervision teacher is called away.
2. Work without direct supervision with individuals or groups of students with disabilities on concepts introduced by the supervising teacher.
3. Have specific instructional and management responsibility for students with disabilities.
4. Be involved in student staffings when invited or needed.
5. Be used to support inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classes by tutoring students in regular class assignments and giving tests orally.
6. Be assigned record keeping tasks relevant to classroom assignment.
7. Assist in supervising assemblies and group field trips. Take individual students with disabilities on school related job interviews.
8. Perform other duties as assigned by your supervisor(s).

Working With School Staff

If you are in an educational setting you may work directly or come in contact with some of the following professionals. Your supervising Special Education Teacher will go over this with you and give you the names of these people.

General Education Teacher

The role of the general education teacher is largely teaching the regular lessons. You may be responsible with general educators to adapt and explain the curriculum. You may further assist students in regular classrooms with work completion and with behavioral issues. It is important to note that all of these teachers will conduct their classrooms in individual ways. It is best to communicate with them as to the specific role that will be expected of you.

Special Education Teacher (ECSE-12th Grade)

Special Education Teachers have the background and training to set up specific plans to meet students' educational needs. She/he may be the paraprofessional's immediate supervisor and may determine the daily/weekly responsibilities that the paraprofessional will perform with the students. It would be a good practice to set aside some time on a daily basis to communicate with the special education teacher that you work with.

Adaptive Physical Education Teacher

In some schools there is a physical education teacher who designs exercises and activities to meet the unique physical needs of individual students. This may be common with students who have physical disabilities.

School Nurse

The role of the school nurse is to develop and manage Individual Health Plans (IHP) for students with disabilities. Individual health care planning is a nursing responsibility and a standard of care that is necessary for the successful management of students with chronic health conditions in order to enable them to fully access their educational programs, to prevent the development of serious and life-threatening complications and emergencies, and to prolong life. The school nurse is additionally responsible to teach staff and faculty about a student's special needs.

Occupational and Physical Therapists

Students with disabilities may spend individual time with an occupational or physical therapist. The role of this person will be to collaborate with other staff to design therapeutic procedures that will help students become physically independent.

***Physical Therapists** work with ambulation (walking), modalities (senses), and cardio-respiratory functioning.

***Occupational Therapists** work with fine motor and perceptual skills, sensory integration, cognitive and psychosocial aspects of performance, and adaptive devices related to daily activities.

School Social Worker

The school social worker is often the person on staff who has family information and an understanding of the blend of needs between school and home. The social worker is an excellent resource for background information on a student's family life and the community support which may be available to assist that student. Not all schools have social workers on staff.

Speech Clinician

The speech clinician in your building is a trained professional that will provide individualized remediation to the student that has severe speech or language problems. They work with students that have fluency, voice, articulation, or language disorders. Their expertise is to set up specific plans to meet students' communication needs.

Psychologist

The psychologist is licensed to test students to determine their level of intellectual functioning. They are often involved as part of the team that helps to determine the educational needs of the students. They further may also offer counseling and support to students with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Building Principal

The principal supervises all school staff. She/he is the person that the paraprofessional would ultimately address regarding building and policy concerns. The principal's role is very diverse. She/he is responsible to see that all rules and policies are followed by the students and the staff.

Superintendent

The superintendent is responsible for all policy and programming throughout the entire school district. She/he is ultimately responsible to the school board.

Definitions of Disabilities

Students with disabilities are those students identified as having a mental handicap, hearing impairment, communication disorder, vision impairment, specific learning disability, health

condition, or multiple handicaps who because of this disorder need special education and related services.

Autism

Autism is a lifelong disability with onset usually in the first three years of life. It is a behaviorally defined syndrome characterized by an uneven developmental profile and disturbances in interaction, communication, and perceptual organization. Autism occurs in a continuum from mild to severe. It occurs by itself or in association with other disorders such as mental retardation or fragile X syndrome. It may include the diagnosis of pervasive developmental disorder. Because of the low incidence and complexity of this disability, professionals with experience and expertise in the area of autism need to be included on the team determining the disability and educational program.

Deaf – Blindness

Deaf-Blindness is a medically verified visual impairment coupled with medically verified hearing impairment that together interferes with acquiring information or interacting in the environment. Both conditions need to be present simultaneously and must meet the criteria for both vision and hearing impairment.

Emotional or Behavioral Disorders

E/BD is defined as an established pattern characterized by one or more of the following behavior clusters:

- Severely aggressive or impulsive behaviors:
- Severely withdrawn or anxious behaviors, general pervasive unhappiness, depression, or wide mood swings; or
- Severely disordered thought processes manifested by unusual behavior patterns, atypical communication styles, and distorted interpersonal relationships.

This category may include children or youth with schizophrenic disorders, affective disorders, anxiety disorders, or other sustained disorders of conduct or adjustment when they adversely affect educational performance. The established pattern adversely affects educational performance and results in either an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relations necessary to the learning process with peers, teachers, and other, or failure to attain or maintain a satisfactory rate of educational or developmental progress that cannot be improved or explained by addressing intellectual, sensory, health, cultural, or linguistic factors.

Hearing Impaired

Hearing impaired means a diminished sensitivity to sound that is expressed in terms of standard audiological measures. Hearing impairment has the potential to affect educational, communicative, or social functioning that may result in the need for special education and related services.

Speech or Language Disorders

“Fluency Disorder” means intrusion or repetition of sounds, syllables, and words; prolongation of sounds, avoidance of words: silent blocks, or inappropriate inhalations, exhalation, or phonation patterns. Facial and body movements associated with the effort to speak may also accompany these patterns.

“Voice Disorder” means the absence of voice or presence of abnormal quality, pitch, resonance, loudness, or durations.

“Articulation Disorder” means the absence of or incorrect production of speech sounds that are developmentally appropriate.

“Language Disorder” means a breakdown in communication as characterized by

problems in expressing needs, ideas, or information that may be accompanied by problems in understanding.

**None of these patterns can be attributed only to dialectical, cultural, or ethnic difference or to the influence of foreign language, should not be identified as a disorder.

Mentally Impaired: Mild-Moderate/Moderate-Severe (MMMI-MSMI) (DCD)

“Mentally Impaired” refers to students with significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning resulting in or associated with concurrent deficits in adaptive behavior that may require special education instruction and related services.

Physically Impaired (PI)

“Physically Impaired” means a medically diagnosed chronic physical impairment, either congenital or acquired, that may adversely affect physical or academic functioning and result in the need for special education or related services.

Severely Multiply Impaired

“Severely Multiply Impaired” means a pupil who has severe learning and developmental problems resulting from two or more disability conditions determined by assessment.

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

A condition within the individual affecting learning relative to potential. A specific learning disability is demonstrated by a significant discrepancy between a pupil’s general intellectual ability and academic achievement in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, mathematical calculation, mathematics reasoning, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, and written expression.

Visually Impaired (VI)

A medically verified visual impairment accompanied by limitations in sight that interfere with acquiring information or interaction with the environment to the extent that special education instruction and related services may be needed.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

An Acquired injury to the brain caused by an external force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that may adversely affect a child’s educational performance and results in the need for special education and related services. The term applies to open and closed head injuries resulting in impairments in one or more areas, such as: cognition, speech/language, memory, attention, reasoning, abstract thinking, judgment, problem-solving, sensory, perceptual and motor abilities, psychosocial behavior, physical functions, and information processing. The term does not apply to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Developmental Adapted Physical Education (DAPE)

Specific physical education instruction and services for pupils with disabilities who have a substantial delay or disorder in physical development. Developmental adapted physical education: special education for pupils age three through twenty-one which includes development of physical fitness, motor fitness, fundamental motor skills and patterns, skills in aquatics, dance, individual and group sports.

Other Health Impaired (OHI)

OHI means a broad range of medically diagnosed chronic or acute health conditions that may adversely affect academic functioning and result in the need for special education instruction and related services. The decision that a specific health condition qualifies as other health impaired will be determined by the impact of the condition on academic functioning rather than by the diagnostic label given the condition.

Tips for a Paraprofessional

1. Allow your students to be as independent as possible. In general, the less work that you do for your student the better. It may be frustrating, but that is the only way the student will learn.
2. Spend most of your time asking questions, listening, writing, and helping students think for themselves.
3. Be sensitive to the existence of emotional or psychological problems, which may be affecting the performance of the young person. However, it is not your responsibility to handle these problems. Bring them to the attention of the student's IEP manager, school principal or social worker. Ask for help.
4. Avoid assuming the role and responsibilities of other professionals and parents. Your job is to assist these people, not replace them.
5. Be patient and reinforce positively when a goal is met. Progress may sometimes be slow, but always point out the effort and accomplishment.
6. Be sensitive in communicating with your student. More than anything, be a careful listener.
7. Don't be judgmental or stereotype your students. Don't let them just get by.
8. Set goals and standard for your students. Don't let them just get by.
9. When a student needs assistance, encourage them to try first, and then to ask for help.
10. Encourage students to be responsible for listening to directions. Ask them questions to find out what they understand.
11. Assist and praise all students in the class, not just the student you are helping.
12. Allow students to make as many decision for themselves as possible.. Give them choices.
13. Encourage all students to accept, support, trust and assist each other. On occasion, model how to help a student and move away to let a peer take over.
14. Have fun and help students to have fun.

PARAPROFESSIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT FORM

PARAPROFESSIONAL _____ BUILDING _____

SPECIAL ED TEACHER _____ DATE _____

Instructions: The following items have been prepared so that you can indicate how you feel about your performance in relation to each of the questions. For each item, circle the letter which represents your reaction as to whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | I plan for the activity that I have been assigned. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2. | I am helpful by offering my services to the teacher when there is an obvious need for help. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 3. | I find that I give students choices instead of always directing them. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. | I observe closely the techniques used by the teacher and follow through when I am working with the students. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5. | I really listen to what students have to say. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 6. | I accept criticism and suggestions without becoming emotionally upset. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7. | I follow the directions of the professional(s). | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8. | I try to develop a friendly attitude with my co-workers. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9. | I give too much help to my students. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. | I refrain from interfering between another teacher and student unless called on for assistance. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 11. | I avoid criticism of the students, teachers, and school. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 12. | I maintain accurate and complete student records. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 13. | I know and follow the rules and policies of the school district. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 14. | I understand the discipline procedures employed by the teacher. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 15. | I know the emergency procedures- fire, tornado, first aid. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 16. | I dress in an appropriate manner. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 17. | I use the proper school channels when I disagree with an issue. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 18. | I feel that I am making a positive contribution to the school and students. | SA | A | D | SD |

TEACHER ASSESSMENT OF PARAPROFESSIONAL

PARAPROFESSIONAL _____ BUILDING _____

SPECIAL ED TEACHER _____ DATE _____

Instructions: The following items have been prepared so that you can indicate how you feel about your performance in relation to each of the questions. For each item, circle the letter which represents your reaction as to whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), or Strongly Disagree (SD).

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|----|---|---|----|
| 1. | Plans for the activity which she/he has been assigned. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 2. | Is helpful by offering assistance to the teacher when there is an obvious need for help. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 3. | Finds opportunities for giving students choices. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 4. | Observes closely the techniques of the teacher and follows through when she/he is working with the students. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 5. | Listens to what students have to say. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 6. | Accepts criticism and suggestions without becoming emotionally upset. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 7. | Follows the directions of the professional(s). | SA | A | D | SD |
| 8. | Tries to develop a friendly attitude with co-workers. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 9. | Gives too much help to the students. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 10. | Refrains from interfering between another teacher and student unless called on for assistance. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 11. | Avoids criticism of the students, teachers, and school. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 12. | Maintains accurate and complete student records. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 13. | Knows and follows the rules and policies of the school district. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 14. | Understands the discipline procedures employed by the teacher. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 15. | Knows the emergency procedures- fire, tornado, first aid. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 16. | Dresses in an appropriate manner. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 17. | Uses the proper school channels when she/he disagrees with an issue. | SA | A | D | SD |
| 18. | She/he is making a positive contribution to the school and students. | SA | A | D | SD |

SPECIAL ED. PARAPROFESSIONAL EVALUATION FORM

PARAPROFESSIONAL _____ BUILDING _____

EVALUATOR _____ DATE _____

Instructions: The following program assistant evaluation form has a rating scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being low and 5 being high. Make narrative comments where appropriate. (NA refers to Not Applicable.) This form is intended to be a positive tool for skill building, goal setting and communication.

1.	Rapport/Interpersonal Skills	HIGH		AVERAGE		LOW	
	1. Rapport with children	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	2. Communication with supervising teacher	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	3. Communication with other staff members	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	4. Communication with parents of children	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
2.	Personal Characteristics						
	1. Initiative and work habits	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	2. Interest and enthusiasm for the job	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	3. Friendliness and cooperativeness	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	4. Self-control in stress situations	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	5. Neatness and appropriate dress	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
3.	Employment Performance						
	1. General assistance to the teacher						
	a. Attendance taking, general tasks	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	b. Record keeping of student progress	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	c. General housekeeping of room	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	d. _____	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	2. Technical assistance in instruction						
	a. Operation of equipment	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	b. Preparation of instructional material	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	c. Bulletin board assistance	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	d. _____	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	3. Instructional assistance						
	a. Individual tutoring skills	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	b. Group supervision	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	c. Story telling or reading	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	d. Behavior management	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	e. Observation reports for the teacher	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	f. _____	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
4.	General Observations						
	1. Is punctual	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	2. Carries out all assigned responsibilities	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	3. Follows ethical procedures	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	4. Uses designated management strategies	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	5. Takes part in training opportunities	5	4	3	2	1	N/A
	6. _____	5	4	3	2	1	N/A