



# **GILTNER PUBLIC SCHOOLS PARA HANDBOOK**

Striving together for excellence today to succeed in the world tomorrow.



The job of educating our youth is a challenging and important job. We often forget this when we are dealing with the daily routine. However, who among us can say we have never done something wrong that we knew we shouldn't. That is part of the process of growing up. It is our job in the school to help the children develop habits and skills that are acceptable and also will help them become good citizens.

Para professionals are a very important part of that process. They can help the teacher help children by allowing the teachers more time to work on teaching tasks. They can help the children by the direct contact they have with them in the lunchroom, on the playground, and in the classroom. It is important that through it all each of us involved in the process of education remembers that growing up is not easy. We need to be patient, kind, understanding, and above all, flexible.

## **Educational Paraprofessionals in Special Education**

The educational paraprofessionals, employed by our school district, assist and support general education/special education classroom teachers in carrying out instructional activities planned to support the individual educational plans developed for students.

Their purposes are:

- ★ To increase the potential for student learning
- ★ To improve the quality of the educational program offered for exceptional children
- ★ To enhance the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom

A paraprofessional shall mean an individual who serves under the supervision of a classroom teacher as an assistant in the educational process. NDE Rule 51, 003.26

## **Definition of Teaching**

Nebraska State Law 79-101 defines teaching as:

- ★ The organization and management of the classroom or the physical area in which the learning experience of students take place.
- ★ The assessment and diagnosis of the individual educational needs of the students.
- ★ The planning, selecting, organizing, prescribing, and directing of the learning experiences of students.
- ★ The evaluation and reporting of student progress.

## **Role of the Paraprofessional in Special Education**

The paraprofessional's role is to primarily assist the resource teacher/classroom teacher so that the teacher's responsibilities are more efficiently and effectively accomplished.

The roles of the teacher and paraprofessional require different levels of training and experience.

The paraprofessional's responsibilities will include:

- ★ Assisting students in teacher-directed activities
- ★ Assisting in the promotion of a positive learning environment for the student
- ★ Supervising students during school activities
- ★ Knowing and following rules and regulations as established by the school district
- ★ Assisting with a variety of clerical duties
- ★ Maintaining confidentiality
- ★ Completing other duties as assigned by the resource teacher/classroom teacher and/or supervisor.
- ★ The teacher may provide an informal evaluation of the para's work to the para. (If the teacher feels there are problems, they are to inform the principal/supervisor.)
- ★ The teacher will give feedback to the para, both positive and constructive.

## **Duties the Paraprofessional MAY NOT Perform**

The following illustrate tasks that the paraprofessional should not be assigned:

- ★ Diagnostic testing of students' strengths and weaknesses
- ★ Grading subjective papers and assigning grades to students
- ★ Taking full responsibility for supervising and planning students' activities
- ★ Supervise general education students or work in classrooms with no special education students in need of assistance (unless hired as part time general ed. para)
- ★ Reporting student progress to parents

## **PROCEDURES AND RULES**

Paraprofessionals should familiarize themselves with contents of the student handbook. Several procedures are outlined there. They will need to review the handbook in detail.

### **CELL PHONES**

Cell phones should be used on a limited basis. Staff WILL be allowed to make calls or receive calls on a limited basis on their personal cell phone when they are not responsible for supervising students (planning time, lunch, etc.). Cell **phones must remain off or on vibrate** while students are in the room. Cell phones are NOT to be left on your desk or in the sight of students.

### **SOCIAL NETWORKING**

Please be careful what you post on your email and social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) about students. Please do not discuss students or put pictures of students on those sites without consulting administration. Be professional in what you do and say when posting. We, as educators, are held to a high standard in the public's eye.

# COMMUNICATION



The attitudes and feeling of both the teacher and the paraprofessional need to be known, respected, and understood. Teachers and paraprofessionals need to deal openly with their attitudes and feelings toward instructional styles and management and their attitudes toward the value of the other person's contributions. When feelings are not shared and openly communicated the nature of the relationship will not grow and the team will not be effective.

An understanding of the similarities and differences between the people involved in the team must be recognized and understood ranging from different points of view about educational strategies to different values, different cultural and religious heritages, different levels of education and experience and other factors that affect the working relationship.

The teacher and paraprofessional should actively seek to develop and share common vocabulary and system of non-verbal cues.

The teacher must make sure directions and expectations are clearly understood and that the paraprofessional is able to perform an assigned task prior to implementing the activity in the classroom.

The paraprofessional must be willing to ask for clarification or assistance if the assignment is not understood.

The teacher should determine what special interests, talents, and training the paraprofessional has that will complement and enhance his/her own skills and improve the delivery of instructional programs to students.

The team must actively work to create a climate of cooperation, trust, respect, and loyalty by meeting daily to discuss procedures and techniques that will establish and maintain open channels of communication.



## **Problems??? Let's Work Together**

If problems do occur, there is a recommended procedure for the paraprofessional to follow:

- ★ Talk to the teacher about the concern
  - If the problem isn't resolved and is of deep concern, the next step is to...
- ★ Contact the Director of Special Education
  - If the problem is still not resolved, then the paraprofessional should...
- ★ Contact the Superintendent of Schools

## **Supervision of Paraprofessionals**

By definition, paraprofessionals assist special education teachers and are under their supervision. Guidelines for supervision and evaluation provide a vehicle for the improvement of delivery of services to children and assurance that their rights are protected.

According to Nebraska Revised Statute Section 43-625(2) qualified teachers in special training and educational programs are responsible for the supervision of paraprofessionals:

(3) Each qualified teacher shall be responsible for the direct supervision of teacher aides, whose duties shall be limited to those prescribed in section 79-1233.

In addition, the statute defines a qualified teacher:

As used in this section, qualified teacher shall mean an individual holding a valid State of Nebraska teaching or special services certificate with an endorsement appropriate to the handicaps served. If such teacher is serving children with more than one handicap, qualified teacher shall mean an individual holding a valid State of Nebraska teaching or special services certificate with an endorsement in at least one of the handicaps served.

The Nebraska Professional Practices Commission in Teacher Aides: A Position Statement (1977), makes the following statement regarding paraprofessional supervision:

An aide may assist a teacher in instruction in subject matter or in conducting instructional activities. The teacher shall be continuously aware of the aide's instructional activities, and must be able to control or modify them. It is difficult to conceive of a teacher's being able to do this if the aide mans an instructional station alone, except possibly for very brief periods of time.

The professional practices commission position statement also notes that a teacher aide may not be supervised by a building principal, adjacent classroom teacher or supervisor.

"Resource Guide for the Development of Policies and Practices in the Use of Paraprofessionals in Special Education", University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

## **SELF IMPROVEMENT**

Everyone should strive to improve at all times. The following checklist is a method whereby the para can evaluate their own performance.

	Always	Usually	Rarely
1. Am I aware of the importance of the responsibility assigned?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do I cooperate with the classroom teacher?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do I follow directions given by the teacher?	_____	_____	_____
4. Do I follow through with lessons initiated by the teacher?	_____	_____	_____
5. Am I prompt in carrying out the duties assigned to me?	_____	_____	_____
6. Am I dependable and reliable?	_____	_____	_____
7. Do I exhibit initiative?	_____	_____	_____
8. Do I accept criticism?	_____	_____	_____
9. Do I strive to do my best at all times and take every opportunity to improve?	_____	_____	_____
10. Am I aware of differences among students?	_____	_____	_____
11. Do children respond positively to me?	_____	_____	_____
12. Do I treat all children fairly?	_____	_____	_____
13. Am I able to secure the cooperation of the students?	_____	_____	_____
14. Do I listen to the children?	_____	_____	_____
15. Do I talk too much?	_____	_____	_____
16. Am I courteous at all times?	_____	_____	_____
17. Do I present a favorable image of the school to the public?	_____	_____	_____
18. Is my dress and appearance appropriate?	_____	_____	_____
19. Do I exhibit self-control?	_____	_____	_____
20. Do I enjoy being a Para professional?	_____	_____	_____

What professional goal do you have for this school year?

What step will you take to reach this goal?

# **Evaluation**

## **Conference Guide**

Conferencing between the supervising teacher and the paraprofessional provides for planning and scheduling of upcoming events and objectives. Conferences can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of past activities and paraprofessional performance. These conferences need to place once a year with supervising teacher and the paraprofessional.

Following are elements of a good conference between and teacher and para:

- ★ Determine in advance the purpose and/or content of the conference
- ★ Conference should be in a place where materials are accessible and free of interruptions
- ★ Conferences should be positive and involve sharing by both the teacher and paraprofessional when problem solving
- ★ Discussion should be efficient and end when the purposes have been met

Listed below are some general topics of a conference if clarification or support is needed:

- ★ Individual Education Plans (IEP's)
- ★ Lesson planning
- ★ Teaching strategies
- ★ Student progress evaluation
- ★ Classroom management
- ★ Materials and resources
- ★ School events/meetings

## **Ethics**

### **Ethical Considerations for Paraprofessionals**

- ★ Engage only in non-instructional activities in which qualified or trained
- ★ Discuss a child's progress, limitations, and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher
- ★ Discuss school problems, confidential matters, and administrative and school problems only when students are absent from the room
- ★ Respect the dignity and self worth of all teachers
- ★ Do not engage in discriminatory practices based on a student's handicap, race, sex, cultural background, or religion
- ★ Be responsible to see that the best interests of individual students are met
- ★ Serve as a positive role model
- ★ Engage in behavior management strategies which are consistent with standards established by the local school district
- ★ Follow the grievance procedures outlines by the local school district
- ★ Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents unless it is part of the student's IEP for you to provide daily feedback