

# **Perry Community School District**



## **Paraeducator Handbook**

Updated August 2023

## Definition of a Paraeducator

Paraeducators perform a vital role in the education of the students in the Perry Community School District. It is a job that many times presents great challenges and also provides great rewards. As a paraeducator you are a key member of an educational team that is dedicated to the intellectual, social, and emotional development of our students. While the tasks most of you will be asked to perform are not the always easily recognized, they are important to the students you work with. We thank you for your hard work and dedication to the Perry Community School District and its students.

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

All paraeducators are expected to fulfill the State of Iowa's Paraeducator Competencies:

1. Support a safe, positive teaching and learning environment.
2. Assist in physical and intellectual development.
3. Support social, emotional, and behavioral development.
4. Establish positive and productive relationships.
5. Integrate effective technology to support student learning.
6. Practice ethical and professional standards of conduct.

The paraeducator will...

- Interact with students in a manner that demonstrates respect and dignity
- Interact with educational staff and parents in a manner that demonstrates respect and professionalism
- Maintain confidentiality
- Demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth and development
- Use questions to involve the student and monitor understanding
- Raise questions and concerns in a professional and appropriate manner

## Contracted Hours

Contracts are written and distributed by the Business Office. Most paraeducator contracts are 7.25 hours Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 6 hours on Wednesdays, for a total of up to 35 hours per week.

**Most** paraeducators are scheduled are for 7:45am-3:30pm (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday) and 7:45am-2:15pm (Wednesday). However, based on individual duty assignments, additional bus duties, and building needs, some contract times may vary.

It is your responsibility to be clocked in and at your duty location by your contract time.

A few notes on contract times and duty schedules:

- If assisting with special transportation, it is your responsibility to be clocked in and at the bus pick-up location by the time established between Troy Griffith (Transportation Director), Laura Skeel (Director of Learning Supports) and the bus driver.
  - Being late to board or greet students from the bus causes delay in the transportation schedule. It is imperative that you are at your assigned duty on time to ensure that all students can get to and from school on time.
- It is your responsibility to clock in and out based on the hours you are contracted to work. If there are emergencies that require you to work over your contracted hours, notify Laura Skeel and your building principal as soon as possible.
- All paras (regardless of the number of hours on your contract) are required to take a 30 minute lunch daily. Please note this is a mandated requirement and working through lunch is not permitted per federal regulations. Your lunch must be during the school day, and not after student dismissal. You do not need to clock out, but rather will have 30 minutes auto-deducted daily from your timecard. You will coordinate with your special education teacher and general education teacher to determine what time works best for the students that you serve, for you to take your lunch daily.

## Daily Schedule

Because the needs of students can change throughout the year, maintaining an accurate schedule is critical for the success of students and the efficiency of all staff. Each paraeducator will work with their supervising teacher to develop a schedule that meets the needs of the student(s) they are assigned as well as covers necessary duties, and have time for their personal lunch. Please provide a copy of your daily schedule to Laura Skeel, and your building office no later than Friday September 1, 2023.

In order to be cost-effective and ensure that all students' needs are covered and met by their IEP, we sometimes have students whose need for para support services are faded as they develop the skills necessary to be successful independently. In the event that the student you are 'assigned' to is being faded, you may be asked to support other students throughout the day. Please know that the ultimate goal for all students is to have the least restrictive level of support. It is the responsibility of the special education teacher and the paraeducator to notify Laura Skeel and your building principal if you are being faded and have time available in your schedule to support additional needs.

Also, In the event that your assigned student is absent on a given day, it is your responsibility to notify your building principal, secretary and/or Laura Skeel as soon as possible to learn of an alternative assignment for that day.

## Sub Plans

Every paraeducator must complete a substitute folder to be given to the secretary in their building office. These folders are to aid substitute paraeducators in maintaining a consistent day and expectations for students supervised by the regular paraeducator. This folder should include a detailed schedule and all duties that need to be covered. Make sure that this folder is updated as schedules change.

- All paras should create a daily schedule no later than Friday September 1, 2023, and shared with your building office, in the event of your absence. Any changes or updates to your schedule

throughout the year must also be submitted to Laura Skeel and a copy in your sub folder throughout the year.

## Job Duties and Expectations

While the role of paraeducators can vary between students, grade levels, and buildings, the general premise for all paras is to support students to provide access to a safe and secure learning environment in the least restrictive environment. While paraeducators are typically assigned to 1 or 2 students to work with, you may support students other than those you are specifically assigned. Work with the classroom teacher and supervising special education teacher to establish roles and responsibilities within the classrooms that you work. Each classroom may function slightly differently than the next. It is your responsibility to communicate with the teachers that you work with to establish expectations within that classroom, and how to best support the student and the teacher in that room.

General responsibilities and expectations may include:

- Repeating, re-teaching, or re-phrasing instruction that was initially provided by a classroom teacher.
- Charting or documenting behaviors as outlined on a student's behavior chart or behavior intervention plan.
- Modeling appropriate social skills and interactions with adults and students.
- Providing accommodations including modification, breaks, and prompting as outlined in the student's IEPs.
- Supervise all students in common areas, including hallways, lunchrooms, playgrounds, while maintaining line of sight on your assigned student (if applicable). Remember that your job is to monitor all students when supervising an area. Do not huddle in one area or focus on conversations with other staff members. Instead, circulate around the common area, to provide line of sight supervision to your assigned students, while also ensuring the safety and well-being of all students.

## Professionalism and Attire

As an employee of the Perry Community School District, you are expected to act as a professional at all times. The things you do at work, in the community, or on social media are a reflection on the school district as a whole. Your role as a paraeducator is to provide support to teachers and administrators throughout the school day. As part of the educational team you are not only valued for the services you provide, but also for your observations and input into each student's progress and educational needs. As a member of a team you must understand that while your input is valued, the teachers and administrators will serve as the final decision makers in regards to how student needs are addressed.

We expect all staff to display an appearance of professionalism in their attire, adhering to a "Business Casual" dress throughout the week. Business casual can be broadly defined to include a more relaxed style, while maintaining professionalism that is appropriate for the workplace.

Fridays are considered 'Spirit Days', where staff members may choose to wear blue jeans and a shirt that shows their Perry Pride. While denim can be found in several colors, denim may be worn throughout the

week, as long as pants and top are professional and appropriate for the educational setting. Blue jeans may only be worn on Friday, or with a Jean’s Day pass/event.

<b>Business Casual Is.....</b> (not an inclusive list, merely examples)	<b>Business Casual Is Not.....</b> (not an inclusive list, merely examples)
Slacks or dress pants, khakis, dark (not blue) jeans without holes	Blue jeans, sweatpants, yoga pants
Button down shirts, sweaters, blouses, polo shirts	Sweatshirts, t-shirts with holes
Knee-length or maxi dress	Shorts or dresses shorter than finger-tip length
Cardigan, blazer or jacket	Spaghetti strap tank top (without jacket/blazer)

## Confidentiality

Working with students with special needs exposes you to confidential information about a student and their educational history. What you see, hear, and/or experience each day in regards to working with a student is considered confidential information, and cannot be shared with those who do not have a specific interest in that student’s education.

- Be mindful of who is around when discussing student issues. Other staff members, parent volunteers, or other students should not overhear discussions about student behaviors, needs, or personal matters.
- A student should not overhear adult discussions about their own behaviors, unless that student is directly involved in the conversation. Be sensitive to how a child might interpret (or misinterpret) an adult’s words or expression.
- E-Mail and text message are not secure formats, especially if sending information to multiple recipients at the same time. Face-to-face contact is most effective for sharing pertinent and confidential information.
- Teachers should be the direct source of communication to parents. If parents ask questions about progress, grades, specific incidents etc., the paraeducator should defer to the teacher(s) to share that information with parents.
- As a 1:1, 1:2, or grade-level paraeducator, you may need to review a student’s record or individualized education plan. As a paraeducator, you are responsible for knowing the student’s behavior intervention plan. Ask the student’s special education teacher for clarification or direction if you are unsure of what it means or what your responsibilities are. Be mindful that all information in a student’s IEP is confidential. Although you have an educational right to access that information, it cannot be shared or removed from a student’s file.

## Attendance

As a vital team member, it is of utmost importance that you attend work on a regular and timely basis. Students require consistency and depend on you being here each day to support their learning. Refer to your master contract regarding types of absences and the number of absences available to you.

- All absences must be recorded in AESOP, and should be entered no later than 7:00am the morning on the requested absence. While emergencies may arise, please make it a priority to enter absences into AESOP no later than 7:00am.

- Your number of sick days remaining for the year can be found on your paystub. If you are not sure how many days you have remaining, please contact the business office or your building secretary to verify that information for you.
- Leave without pay will not be permitted without prior approval. If you are out of sick days or personal days and need to be absent, it is your responsibility to seek approval from Laura Skeel or your building principal prior to your absence of leave without pay.
- Excessive numbers of absences will be reviewed and may result in documentation. Continued excessive absences may result in the recommendation for termination.
- Failure to report to work or notify Laura Skeel or building administrators of your absence or tardiness on a given day may result in the recommendation for termination.

## Chapter 103 Seclusion and Restraint

There are times working with students when they may become escalated or upset. Students with behavior goals have a behavior plan in their IEP that outlines what supports they might need to de-escalate. If a student continues to be physically escalated, despite attempts to de-escalate the situation seclusion and/or restraint may be used in accordance with Chapter 103 guidelines.

Under Chapter 103, seclusion or restraint may be used to prevent or terminate an imminent threat of bodily injury to the student or others, or to prevent serious damage to property of significant monetary value. Only those trained with current Crisis Prevention and Intervention (CPI) certification may assist or support in the seclusion and restraint of students, and must adhere to all Chapter 103 guidelines.

## E-Mail and Cell Phone Usage

As a school district we are making a commitment to doing as much paperless communication as possible. It is expected that you will check your school email on a daily basis to be kept up to date on schedule changes and important information. When working with students or in a classroom, your cellphone should remain put away and out of sight of students. If you need a timer or to communicate with a teacher, clarify what is acceptable use with your supervising special education teacher.

In the event that you need to have access to your cellphone during the school day for a personal/emergency use, it is your responsibility to communicate with Laura Skeel, your building principal, and/or your supervising teacher.

## Evaluations

All paraeducators will be evaluated at least once every three years, on a rotating basis. Evaluations will be completed by the paraeducators cooperating teacher, in collaboration with the building principal and Director of Learning Supports. See pages 7-8 for a copy of the paraeducator evaluation. Those who are due for evaluation this school year will be notified by their building principal or Laura Skeel.



## Perry Community School District Paraeducator Evaluation

Employee Name: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Observation Date: [Click here to enter a date.](#)

Position/Building: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Evaluator: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Definition of Performance Ratings:

<b>Exceeds Expectations (E)</b>	<b>Meets Expectations (M)</b>	<b>Needs Improvement (I)</b>
Performs assigned duties in a manner indicating exceptional understanding of essential functions. Work performance consistently meets and often exceeds all standards and expectations.	Performs assigned duties at an acceptable level through demonstrated application of skills. Employee has achieved the expected level of performance specified in their job description.	Even under close direction, performance does not indicate the ability and/or willingness to produce required results.

<b>General Performance:</b> Employee provides services within the school to improve student learning and well-being.	E	M	I	N/A
Works with children in a friendly manner.				
Maintains confidentiality of school related business.				
Completes work assignments according to job description.				
Approaches assignments in a positive manner.				
Responds appropriately to, and acts on, constructive feedback.				
Cooperates and communicates effectively with team members.				
Is dependable, punctual, and regular in attendance.				
Focuses on assigned tasks while on duty.				
Provides effective supervision.				
Adheres to classroom, school, and district policy and procedures.				
Comments:				

Areas of Strength: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Areas for Growth: [Click here to enter text.](#)

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Employee Signature

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Date

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Administrator Signature

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Date

*The employee shall have the right to respond to the written evaluation in writing and have the response placed in his/her personnel file. The employee's signature on the written evaluation shall in no way signify agreement with the evaluation, and shall serve only as an acknowledgement of receipt of the written evaluation.*