Paraeducator Manual

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Utah State Board of Education

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Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to explain and clarify the roles and responsibilities of a paraeducator and his or her supervising educator.

- The term paraprofessional is used for an individual who performs a non-instructional supporting role in various educational settings. A paraprofessional may give support in a non-instructional role such as a translator or providing parental involvement activities, or in a non-instructional setting such as the playground or lunchroom.
- The term paraeducator is used for an individual who provides instructional support under the direct supervision of a licensed educator or other licensed/certified professional.

Both a paraprofessional or a paraeducator may be referred to as a teaching assistant, aide, instructor, or other similar title in school districts and charter schools (local education agencies [LEAs]). The term paraeducator is used throughout this manual to give guidance for those individuals who are providing instructional support in educational settings under the direct supervision of a licensed educator or other licensed/certified professional.

The Role of a Paraeducator and the Supervising Educator

A paraeducator may serve students on all grade levels from preschool to post-high school. According to the Utah State Administrative Rule R277-524, a paraeducator may be expected to do the following:

- Provide individual or small group assistance or instruction to students under the direct supervision of a licensed professional during times when students would not otherwise be receiving instruction from an educator
- Assist with classroom organization and management, such as organizing instructional or other materials
- Provide assistance in a computer lab
- Conduct parental involvement activities
- Provide support in a library or media center
- Implement behavior support
- Act as a translator
- Supervise students in non-instructional settings such as the playground and lunchroom

LEAs are responsible to assign a licensed educator or other licensed/certified professional to supervise the paraeducator. The supervising educator prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities that the paraeducator will implement. The supervising educator also evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraeducator works. The paraeducator and supervising educator work together in close proximity.

To supervise a paraeducator, the supervising educator should have specialized training in providing students with quality educational experiences linked to the Utah Core Standards (https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/areasprograms), Essential Elements, Extended Core Science Standards, and Extended Science with Engineering Education (SEEd) Standards (https://www.schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/programs/cognitivedisabilities?mid=3739&tid=1), and Early Childhood Standards (https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/preschool?mid=1181&tid=2).

These standards provide a framework for quality instruction. They outline for the supervising educator and paraeducator, the essential knowledge, concepts, and skills students should acquire in a given subject area and grade level. The supervising educator designs and implements instruction based on these standards.

Utah Standards for Instructional Paraeducators

The content of this manual is based on the Utah Standards for Instructional Paraeducators (http://www.utahparas.org/UtahParaStandards.pdf). These standards and corresponding knowledge and skill competencies provide approved performance expectations for the paraeducator. These performance expectations are designed to be used in any setting across all LEAs.

There are four standards that define the paraeducator's instructional priorities. These standards include:
1. Support instructional opportunities
2. Demonstrate professional and ethical practices
3. Support a positive learning environment
4. Communicate effectively and participate in the team process

The standards are divided into two sections:
1. **Core Competencies.** These are the essential knowledge and skills required for effective performance as a paraeducator. Core Competencies are based on the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the 2016 Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules (USBE SER).
2. **Supporting Competencies**. These are additional knowledge and skills needed by the paraeducator. Some supporting competencies may only be required for specific roles. LEAs may provide additional training to outline exact duties that utilize the supporting competencies.

Standard 1: Support Instructional Opportunities

A paraeducator supports instructional opportunities by collaborating with the supervising educator to increase student success and improve outcomes.

Core Competencies of Standard 1

A paraeducator requires essential knowledge and skills to effectively assist and deliver instruction, implement interventions, collect data, and organize instructional materials.

Have knowledge and proficiency in assigned instructional areas

A paraeducator may assist in teaching reading, mathematics, writing, and other subject areas. Training may be available through the LEA and/or the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) to increase knowledge and skills related to a specific content area. On a regular basis, the supervising educator will provide direction to the paraeducator regarding the content that will be taught to students.

Have knowledge of strategies, techniques, and delivery methods of instruction

To effectively transfer knowledge and information to students, a paraeducator must have a basic knowledge of instructional strategies and the skills to implement them. A paraeducator

implements instructional strategies as directed by the supervising educator. Instructional strategies may include direct instruction, explicit instruction, and center-based instruction. The chart below provides information on these instructional strategies.

Instructional Strategy	Description
Direct Instruction	- Provides teacher-directed instruction - Focuses on mastery teaching and immediate error correction - Maintains a highly structured environment - Determines learning goals for students
Explicit Instruction	- Focuses on how students learn - Provides prompts and models - Highlights concepts through multiple methods (manipulatives, models, graphic organizers) - Implements interactive supports (pairing with partners, small groups, cooperative learning structures) - Designs language experiences to build students' background knowledge and vocabulary - Requires students to engage in goal setting and self-evaluation
Center-Based Instruction	- Differentiates instruction to meet student's individual needs - Offers a range of activities and learning opportunities - Targets student readiness levels, interests, or learning profiles - Provides flexible groupings (small group, partners, and independent work)

Assist in delivering instruction according to supervisor's lesson plans

A paraeducator may assist the supervising educator in implementing instructional strategies (see table above), monitoring student work, supporting positive behavior systems, answering student questions, and helping the supervising educator with distributing a variety of instructional materials. A paraeducator is not responsible for creating lesson plans or planning instruction independently; the paraeducator is a support to the supervising educator who is responsible for student learning.

Use basic interventions to adapt to student needs, learning styles, and skills

Utah Multi-Tiered System of Supports (UMTSS) is a framework for implementing systemic, evidence-based practices to ensure student academic and behavioral success in preparation for and leading to college and career readiness. UMTSS can be implemented throughout all educational settings to meet students' diverse needs.

The eight critical components of UMTSS are:
1. High-quality instruction
2. Data-based decision-making
3. Team-based problem solving
4. Equitable education for all
5. College and career readiness
6. Proactive school climate and structure

7. Parent and community involvement
8. Supportive leadership

Tier 3
Intensive

Tier 2
Targeted
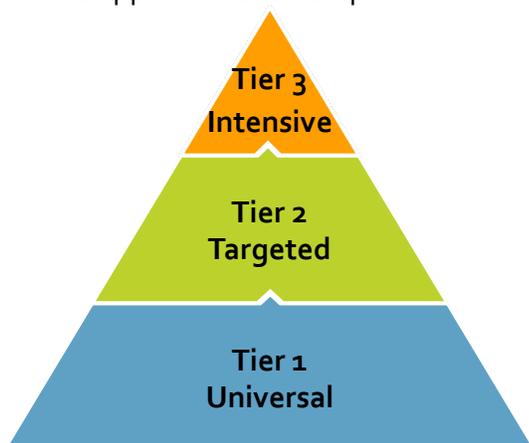
Tier 1
Universal

UMTSS includes the three tiers of instruction shown to the left which are described as follows:

- **Tier 1:** All students receive rigorous grade-level content instruction using evidence-based curriculum and instructional strategies.
- **Tier 2:** Some students receive supplemental instruction and supports systematically delivered in addition to and aligned with the grade-level content. These supports address the needs of students who have not responded sufficiently to Tier 1 instruction.
- **Tier 3:** A few students receive individually responsive instruction and supports delivered in addition to and aligned with grade-level content. These supports address specific needs of students who are most at risk or who have not responded to Tier 2 interventions.

A paraeducator may provide interventions in any tier of instruction based on direction from the supervising educator. It is important to know that the tiers refer to the type of instruction and supports, and not the students receiving the instruction. The supervising educator determines the specific interventions and strategies needed to differentiate instruction based on the individual needs of students. The paraeducator helps implement the chosen interventions.

Demonstrate the ability to record relevant information/data about students
The supervising educator trains the paraeducator on specific data collection procedures. The paraeducator may monitor and record student progress using an assortment of methods and tools. Examples of progress monitoring include counting or tallying the frequency of specific behaviors; recording scores; timing of a student's reading fluency rates, or duration of a behavior; recording data for curriculum-based measures; and/or writing anecdotal notes about academic performance or behaviors (USBE, 2015a).

Use assessment instruments specified by supervisor to document and maintain data
A paraeducator might administer a variety of assessments and document relevant data under the supervision of a licensed professional, as outlined in each assessment's administration policy. A paraeducator must follow administration procedures given by the supervising educator. Assessments should be delivered in a way that ensures students will demonstrate knowledge and skills independently. A paraeducator must avoid practices that interfere with a student's independent response to items during assessments. The supervising educator informs the paraeducator of the appropriate accommodations needed for individual students during assessments.

Organize materials and be prepared to support learning and the instructional process
The supervising educator shares lesson plans with the paraeducator in advance to provide enough time for the paraeducator to organize and prepare materials. The supervising educator also makes sure the paraeducator knows how to prepare materials, including how to use the copy machine and where to locate instructional materials.

Supporting Competencies of Standard 1

A paraeducator facilitates the integration of students into unfamiliar settings. The paraeducator utilizes technology to support students and complete work duties and may assist in observing and monitoring student behavior.

Use strategies to facilitate effective integration into various settings
(e.g., libraries, computer labs, learning centers, playgrounds, community, and assorted modes of transportation)

A paraeducator may assist students during transitions from one educational setting to another by implementing the strategies determined by the supervising educator. Examples of strategies that facilitate effective integration are:

- **Pre-teaching** provides instruction of a skill before the students are required to perform the skill independently. For example, a paraeducator may teach students how to walk from the library to the classroom before the students walk with their class.
- **Generalization** teaches students to take skills learned in one setting and apply them in another. For example, a paraeducator may help students to understand that just as there are behavioral expectations in the library, there are similar behavioral expectations in the computer lab.

Use basic educational technology

A paraeducator may use an electronic device to problem solve, support student learning, and complete work-related duties. Training on the use of basic educational technology should be provided by the supervising educator. Some of the ways a paraeducator may use educational technology include:

- Operating digital devices and technologies required for job duties (e.g., computer, tablet, printer, email, internet, and online professional development)
- Operating standard office equipment (e.g., copy machine and laminator)
- Inputting data (e.g., timecards, leave requests, and student scores)
- Learning and using new technology
- Modeling safe internet and technology use

Assist in providing objective documentation for observations and functional assessments

A paraeducator may assist in observing students and collecting data on their behavior. This data may be part of a functional assessment which gives information about why the students are engaging in specific behaviors. The supervising educator will inform the paraeducator of what behaviors to look for, what type of data to collect, and the appropriate procedure for collecting the data.

Common types of behavioral data collection are:

- **Frequency** – the observer records each time the identified behavior occurs
- **Duration** – the observer records how long the identified behavior occurs
- **Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC)** – the observer records what happens directly before the behavior, what the behavior looks like, and what happens directly after the behavior

Standard 2: Demonstrate Professionalism and Ethical Practices

A paraeducator demonstrates professionalism and ethical practices by being aware of assigned responsibilities; maintaining appropriate relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and the supervising educator; and respecting the privacy of all individuals within the educational setting.

Core Competencies of Standard 2

A paraeducator recognizes the difference between his or her role and those of other individuals in the educational setting. A paraeducator understands and carries out job duties according to the laws and guidelines provided and maintains the confidentiality of student information.

Have knowledge of and adhere to the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers/providers, paraeducators, administrators, families, and other team members

The LEA provides a job description outlining the paraeducator's position and ensures that the paraeducator is aware of his or her role and responsibilities. The supervising educator is ultimately responsible for classroom management and instruction. If parents have questions or concerns, the paraeducator directs the parents to the supervising educator whose role is to communicate with parents. It is important for a paraeducator to immediately notify the supervising educator of any concerns. The paraeducator must only engage in activities for which he or she has received training.

Carry out responsibilities in a manner consistent with all pertinent laws, regulations, policies, and procedures

Schools follow federal and state laws, regulations, policies, and procedures. Additionally, LEAs have policies and procedures specific to their schools. It is pertinent for the supervising educator and paraeducator to be familiar with and adhere to all requirements regarding their work in educational settings.

Like any school employee, a paraeducator is always expected to act in an ethical manner. The paraeducator must avoid actions that adversely affect the performance of assigned duties. In addition, a paraeducator maintains a professional demeanor, appearance, and appropriate relationships with students, parents, and colleagues, as defined by the LEA.

Respect confidentiality

A paraeducator must maintain confidentiality in matters concerning students. Personally identifiable data, information, and educational records collected or maintained by schools must not be shared with others.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of students' educational records. Personally identifiable information (PII) is confidential and includes students' names, parents' names, addresses, social security numbers, personal characteristics, and any other information that makes students easily identifiable. Report cards, transcripts, and discipline records must not be shared. Specific information about students' medical needs or any other services, including special education services, must be kept confidential as well.

Have reliable attendance, punctuality, and dependability

The paraeducator and supervising educator maintain consistent communication regarding schedules and job expectations. It is important to be on time and to notify the supervising

educator of an absence as soon as possible. The supervising educator informs the paraeducator about who is responsible for finding a substitute in times of absence.

Exhibit sensitivity to cultural differences, individual differences, and disabilities

To understand and promote equity, a paraeducator can examine his or her own culture, seek to understand other cultures, and interact across cultural contexts with sensitivity to differences (e.g., socioeconomic status, race, gender, and disability).

Some ways to promote equity are:
- Give all students an opportunity to respond to questions (remember to wait for a response from students who need extra think time)
- Phrase questions so that all students are accountable to respond
- Incorporate multiple methods of learning (e.g., writing, speaking, demonstrating, or role playing, etc.)
- Track who is called on to ensure everyone participates
- Point out and celebrate student strengths
- Encourage and support student participation in areas of both strength and need
- Become familiar with students' cultures

Adhere to the civil and human rights of children, youth, and their families

All students who enroll in school districts and charter schools, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, or national origin have the right to participate in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, recess, school lunch, and any extracurricular activities. A paraeducator can promote participation for all students regardless of their abilities and encourage learning from mistakes or failures as well as from their successes.

A paraeducator considers each student's family circumstance, home life, cultural background, language barriers, strengths and weaknesses, and need for accommodation. This is a proactive way to address all students' right to learn.

Have knowledge of health, safety, and emergency procedures

An effective paraeducator knows the health, safety, and emergency procedures of the LEA and/or school in which he or she works. The paraeducator will be provided with employee guidelines containing information regarding the policies and practices against possessing alcohol, drugs, illegal substances, and pornography on school grounds. A paraeducator may be expected to know:
- Basic safety, first aid, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) information as required by the paraeducator's job duties
- Assigned and designated functions during practice and active emergency evacuation procedures
- Worksite policies and procedures for students and staff related to safety and codes of conduct
- Security and safety procedures regarding visitors in the building
- Protocols for addressing behaviors that a student may exhibit during emergency situations such as following a student's behavior plan, using visual cues to support student's understanding of expectations during an emergency, or giving advanced warning and review of procedures for upcoming practice drills.

- Correct use of adaptive equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, positioning chairs, personal needs devices, etc.)
- Procedures for providing a student's medical and self-care needs such as toilet training/diapering, feeding and administering medication

Health

LEAs follow OSHA guidelines that require personnel to wear gloves in the presence of blood or body fluids and require first aid kits at convenient locations throughout the school and on buses. A paraeducator may be required to follow additional safety and emergency procedures. It is the responsibility of the LEA to train a paraeducator on health and safety policies.

Safety

All schools have procedures that must be followed to help ensure the safety of students and staff. These procedures range from daily proactive strategies such as wearing identification badges to emergency procedures in the event of a serious situation such as an earthquake. Safety at school is discussed with students at age-appropriate levels under the direction of the supervising educator. It is vital that the paraeducator is familiar with and follows the LEA's policies and procedures. Some examples of safety and emergency procedures might include:
- Check-in and check-out procedures for students
- Requirements for wearing identification badges
- School-wide discipline procedures
- Safety procedures outlined in a student's behavior intervention plan (BIP)
- Procedures to follow if staff feels threatened or harassed
- Procedures to follow in the event of a fire, earthquake, or flood
- Lockdown procedures if there is a perceived threat on or near school grounds

Supporting Competencies of Standard 2

A paraeducator can have a positive impact on the educational environment by maintaining positive relationships, finding solutions to problems, and participating in professional development opportunities.

Have a positive attitude and contribute to a positive work environment

A paraeducator contributes to the school environment by supporting the instructional team and thinking of solutions to problems as they arise. To contribute to a positive work environment, a paraeducator develops positive working relationships with other staff members and responds respectfully and appropriately to feedback. A paraeducator and supervising educator work together to develop strategies to improve instruction with a focus on improving student outcomes.

Pursue and participate in staff development and learning opportunities

The LEA provides training opportunities for a paraeducator directly related to his or her daily work and responsibilities (e.g., learning strategies for working with students with disabilities or teaching specific content areas). A paraeducator may seek out training opportunities through the LEA, colleges, universities, or the USBE.

Standard 3: Support a Positive Learning Environment

A supportive environment encourages student engagement and learning. A positive and consistent classroom management plan that includes clear expectations and reinforcements helps to promote student inquiry, participation, and group collaboration.

Core Competencies of Standard 3

A paraeducator is involved in creating a positive learning environment by supporting behavior plans, becoming familiar with each student's background and abilities, and implementing proactive behavioral management and engagement strategies.

Support the supervisor's behavior management plan

It is the responsibility of the supervising educator to create and implement behavior management plans. A behavior management plan, also known as a classroom management plan, refers to a wide variety of skills and techniques that the professional uses to help students to be organized, stay on task, and demonstrate socially appropriate behavior. It is the role of the supervising educator to train the paraeducator on how to best implement behavior plans.

Some examples of supporting a behavior management plan are:
- Helping students follow classroom procedures and routines
- Reinforcing positive student behavior
- Redirecting students, when needed
- Collecting data on student behavior and academic progress

Have knowledge of student characteristics and factors that influence behavior

It is important for a supervising educator to understand how a student's background and abilities affect learning and expected school behavior. This may include a student's disability, academic performance, culture, language, and home life. The supervising educator should discuss individual student's unique characteristics and needs with the paraeducator, as needed. Some student information may be confidential and not shared with the paraeducator.

Use proactive management strategies to engage students

Using proactive management strategies means taking the necessary steps to eliminate or prevent problems before they arise. Positive learning experiences are more likely to occur when the supervising educator and paraeducator anticipate and are prepared to implement safety and emergency procedures, and to address instructional questions or students' challenging behavior.

A few effective proactive management strategies are reinforcement, pre-teaching, behavior momentum and environmental engineering.

Strategy	Description	Examples
Reinforcement	- Follows desired student behavior - Is immediate, frequent, enthusiastic, descriptive, varied, and paired with eye contact - Increases the likelihood that the behavior will occur again	Give verbal praise, social praise (e.g., high five, thumbs up), and/or access to motivating activities or items

Strategy	Description	Examples
Pre-teaching	• Teaches students desired behavior or academic skill before they need to use it • Follows the pattern of teach, model, and practice to reinforce	• Pre-teach science concepts before the science lesson, if there are anticipated concerns
Behavior Momentum	• Increases student compliance and desire to follow directions	• Start with an easy or motivating task before asking a student to perform a more challenging task
Environmental Engineering	• Arrange the physical environment of the classroom to enhance student learning and behavior	• Arrange student seating • Limit distractions

The supervising educator may train the paraeducator on how to implement these strategies. Some behaviors may require simple strategies, such as talking to a student about a problem or a situation. Other behaviors are more complex and may require an individual student behavior management plan. Positive behavior is more likely to increase when instructional teams respond to all student behavior in a consistent manner.

Assist in maintaining an environment conducive to the learning process
A paraeducator should model expected school behavior through his or her own actions. Here are some examples of how a paraeducator can support the learning process throughout the day.
- Before
  - Arrive on time and ready to work
  - Be prepared
  - Be familiar with lesson plan and materials
  - Be aware of the daily schedule and assigned tasks
  - Greet and welcome the students to establish a safe learning environment
- During
  - Begin promptly
  - Eliminate distractions
  - Encourage students to stay on task
  - Remain focused
- Closing
  - End on time
  - Help students make a smooth transition to the next activity
  - Leave the work area clean and organized
- Review
  - Take time to reflect by considering, "What went well? Should I do anything differently? Were the students engaged?"
  - Accept feedback and suggestions graciously, then implement them

Some additional strategies for increasing student engagement are proximity, providing effective directions and giving specific praise.

Strategy	Definition	Example
Proximity	• Being physically near students improves their behavior and focus	• If two students are talking at an inappropriate time, stand next to the students and they will likely stop talking
Effective Directions	• Be specific and explicit when telling students what to do	• Give directions through statements rather than questions (Say, "It is time for math," instead of, "Should we do math now?")
Specific Praise	• Deliver specific feedback regarding observed student success, informing the student of exactly what was done correctly and praising success	• When complimenting a student for following directions say, "Ally, I like how you got out your pencil and you are looking at me, ready to work."

Assist in monitoring students and make appropriate decisions while coaching or tutoring in different settings

It is important for a paraeducator to understand and confirm the supervising educator's expectations before coaching or tutoring. It is better to ask questions before beginning an activity with students rather than to assume or incorrectly interpret the supervisor's intentions. A paraeducator is expected to monitor and intervene with students using the techniques and plans that the supervising educator has outlined.

Supporting Competencies of Standard 3

A paraeducator promotes positive behavior by teaching social skills to students. He or she may also assist students in using self-control, self-management, and self-care to foster a positive learning environment.

Assist in teaching children and youth social skills

Social skills, like academic skills, are taught in the school setting. While some students may learn social skills through observation, other students require more explicit instruction. A paraeducator may assist in teaching social skills through modeling expected behavior or as part of specific instruction or curriculum outlined by the supervising educator.

Below are some examples of social skills that might be taught in the school setting:
- Greeting or introducing oneself
- Sharing
- Following directions
- Asking for and making clarification
- Negotiating
- Accepting criticism

Assist students in using self-control and self-management strategies

Lack of self-control and self-management can affect a student's performance and interpersonal relationships at school.

Some strategies a supervising educator may ask a paraeducator to use when teaching or assisting students with self-management are role play, modeling, pre-teaching, or reinforcement.

Strategy	Description	Examples
Role Play	● A technique that allows students to explore realistic situations by interacting with other people in a structured environment	● Help students practice asking peers to play at recess ● Help the students practice asking teachers to explain their grades
Modeling	● A demonstration of self-control and self-management skills throughout the day to model desired student behavior	● Greet students at the door in a friendly manner ● Calmly express frustration or confusion about an undesired situation
Pre-teaching	● A technique that prepares the students for activities that may be academically or behaviorally challenging	● Teach key vocabulary words before reading a story ● Help students practice walking to the library from the classroom using expected hallway behavior
Reinforcement	● A delivery of a reward or verbal praise to increase positive behavior	● Give the students stickers or points when they engage in positive behavior ● Thank students and give them specific, positive feedback such as, "Thank you for sitting quietly and raising your hand."

Assist in providing medical care and/or teaching self-care

Some students require medical care or assistance in learning self-care during the school day. An individual student's medical and self-care needs can vary and may include toilet training/diapering, tying shoelaces, putting on a coat, using eating utensils, feeding, and administering medication.

A paraeducator must be properly trained before aiding with medical or self-care needs. Training for these procedures may be provided by the supervising educator or a licensed nurse. The school nurse can train school staff and thus delegate his or her nursing responsibilities to other school staff. The American Nurses Association (2012) explains delegation as the transferring of authority to a competent individual to perform a nursing task. The school nurse retains ultimate responsibility for deciding which tasks can be delegated and to whom and must ensure the procedures are performed and documented correctly throughout the school year.

Standard 4: Communicate Effectively & Participate in the Team Process

Paraeducators are important members of instructional teams. A team is more effective when the paraeducator understands the job expectations of team members, as well as the process for problem-solving and communicating.

Core Competencies of Standard 4

As an active member of an educational team, a paraeducator solves problems, communicates effectively, and gives the supervising educator relevant feedback about students. The paraeducator uses the appropriate channels to resolve conflict and report concerns.

Participate as an effective member of an instructional team utilizing a problem-solving process

Good instructional teams focus on serving students. As a member of an instructional team, the paraeducator may work with several educational professionals (e.g., general education teacher, special education teacher, principal, related service provider, other paraeducator). Each team member will have a different role and responsibilities.

The paraeducator plays different roles with varying responsibilities depending on where he or she is working and the specific job description for the position. The supervising educator will provide information and training regarding job expectations for a paraeducator to be an effective member of the educational team.

It is important to know and support the policies and procedures of the school and LEA. A problem-solving process is usually included in the LEA's policies and procedures which outlines steps to take and team members to involve, if problems arise. A paraeducator can ask the supervising educator for direction and clarification if the problem-solving process has not been shared.

Examples of instructional teams may include:
- Classroom teacher and a paraeducator
- Job coach or employment specialist and the special education teachers of a school
- Title I tutor and supervisor
- Paraeducator providing direct services (e.g., physical therapy, mobility aide, speech therapy) and a supervising licensed professional
- Special education teacher, personal care assistant, and student
- Special education teacher, general education teacher, school counselor, and paraeducator
- Special education teacher with multiple paraeducators under his or her supervision
- Afterschool paraeducators and their supervisors

Use effective communication skills (written, verbal, nonverbal)

Effective communicators are valued employees in all professions and situations. The way a paraeducator communicates with his or her supervising educator, other staff, and students provides a role model for students. A paraeducator may communicate verbally and/or in writing.

An effective communicator:
- Demonstrates professionalism
  - o Uses correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization

- o Speaks and writes clearly and professionally
- o Avoids slang, swearing, and profanity
- o Avoids gossip and negative talk about other staff members, students, and their families
- o Keeps personally identifiable information confidential
- Listens with the intent of understanding the message
- Asks questions
  - o Paraphrases to check the meaning of the message
  - o Seeks clarification and additional information
  - o Encourages others to talk and share
- Explains problems or gives information in a concise, factual manner
- Stays calm and cool
- Shares information in a timely, appropriate manner
- Acknowledges the contributions, knowledge, and expertise of others

Provide relevant feedback regarding student performance and instruction to supervisor

Because a paraeducator works directly with students, he or she has good insight on an individual student's academic and behavioral performance. It is important that the paraeducator communicates timely, comprehensive, and accurate information regarding each student's performance with the supervising educator.

A paraeducator may have opportunities to provide feedback when:
- Instructing students in reading or mathematics while the classroom teacher instructs the rest of the class
- Teaching students to use public transportation to access job sites or community services
- Monitoring students' behavior in various unstructured situations such as on the bus, before and after school, at recess, or during lunch

A paraeducator must share all pertinent facts and information related to students with the supervising educator. It is important to only report actual data and to avoid making assumptions or sharing personal interpretations.

Some anecdotal examples of providing relevant feedback to a supervising educator are as follows:
- When James worked with his group on a multiplication math task, he was able to draw models for one-digit by one-digit problems independently, but he asked for help two times when solving the two-digit by two-digit problems.
- Sarah threw her pencil during spelling practice after yelling, "This is too hard." When given the direction, "Go pick up the pencil, sit back down at your desk, and raise your hand for help," she did as instructed.
- The paraeducator shadowed from 10 feet away as Henry walked through the halls to the bathroom independently. He kept his hands to himself and did not ask for help. He said, "Hi!" to three peers on the way.

When sharing performance feedback regarding students, a paraeducator may be asked to use a tracking sheet or a data form provided by the supervising educator.

Use appropriate channels for resolving concerns or conflicts

The supervising educator will provide information to the paraeducator about steps to take when resolving concerns or conflicts.

A paraeducator should try to resolve concerns or conflicts with the individual(s) involved. For example, if a paraeducator has a problem with another paraeducator, he or she should try to resolve the problem before going immediately to the supervising educator.

Most educational systems follow a "chain of command" to facilitate communication and problem solving among staff members. A paraeducator is responsible to know the "chain of command" so when there is a need for information, directions, or help in solving a problem, it is clear who to approach first and then who to approach next if the situation has not been resolved.

Typically, the chain of command is as follows:
1. The immediate supervising educator (classroom teacher or licensed professional)
2. The administrator (principal, assistant principal, or program administrator)
3. The program director (special education director, Title I director, or human resource director)

Supporting Competencies of Standard 4

A paraeducator participates in team meetings and attends conferences with families when needed. A paraeducator has a key role in cultivating positive relationships with staff members and students and building strong learning communities in his or her educational setting.

Participate in instructional team meetings

A paraeducator is expected to participate in different types of instructional team meetings. A paraeducator may participate in meetings to plan and discuss students' needs. The paraeducator and supervising educator should work together prior to these meetings to discuss the purpose of the meeting and prepare needed information. At other times, the supervising educator may ask a paraeducator to meet formally for department or staff meetings that includes receiving specific training or access to job-related information. Some meetings may be less formal. For example, a paraeducator may meet with the supervising educator to plan learning activities.

Participate in conferences with families or primary care givers when requested

As a member of an instructional team, the paraeducator may be asked to attend Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, parent teacher conferences, or other informal meetings to discuss the educational program of a student. It is appropriate to attend when invited with consent from the supervising educator. This is an opportunity to demonstrate confidentiality involving student information as well as effective communication and problem-solving skills.

Foster beneficial relationships between agency/school, families, children/youth, and community

Practicing and following all the standards and competencies outlined in this document will help a paraeducator to foster positive relationships with others in all educational settings.

Agency/School Relationships

A paraeducator can help to foster beneficial relationships with the agency/school by proficiently performing expected duties. A paraeducator shows that he or she is trustworthy and adds value to

an educational organization by following outlined policies and procedures, respecting instructional team members, and complying with the supervising educator's requests.

Family Relationships

A paraeducator builds positive relationships with families by respecting different cultures and parenting styles, honoring confidentiality, and deferring to a licensed educator for parent/family communication.

Children/Youth Relationships

A paraeducator typically works with a diverse population of students who have different strengths and challenges. Developing positive relationships with students helps the supervising educator to be more effective. Therefore, the supervising educator may share information with the paraeducator about students' learning styles and ways to best to support and assist them. A paraeducator can foster beneficial relationships with students by following the guidance of the supervising educator and respecting the personal circumstances of all students.

Community Relationships

A paraeducator can help build community support for educational programs by building positive relationships within the community. Depending on the job description or role, a paraeducator may be required to interact with the following individuals in the community:

- Employers of students
- Outside agencies such as:
    - Vocational Rehabilitation
    - Boys and Girls Club
    - Job Corps
    - Big Brothers Big Sisters
    - Community rehabilitation providers (CRPs)
    - Department of Workforce Services
    - Pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) providers
- Social Security Income (SSI) providers
- Medicaid personnel
- Vocational training programs

Additional Resources

- [Essential Elements, Extended Core Science Standards, Extended Science with Engineering Education (SEEd) Standards](https://www.schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/programs/cognitivedisabilities?mid=3739&tid=1) (https://www.schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/programs/cognitivedisabilities?mid=3739&tid=1)
- *Functional Assessment and Program Development for Problem Behavior: A Practical Handbook (3rd Ed.)* by R.E. O'Neill, R.W. Albin, K. Storey, R.H. Horner, & J.R. Sprague, 2014
- [Least Restrictive Behavior Interventions (LRBI) Technical Assistance Manual](https://schools.utah.gov/file/156f0eca-0b4f-434a-a780-8335eea603f7) (https://schools.utah.gov/file/156f0eca-0b4f-434a-a780-8335eea603f7)
- *Preventing Child and Adolescent Problem Behavior: Evidence-Based Strategies in Schools* by J.M. Jenson & K.A. Bender, 2014
- *Response to Intervention: A Practical Guide for Every Teacher* by W.N. Bender & C. Shores, 2007
- [Special Education: Paraeducators](https://schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/programs/paraeducator) (https://schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/programs/paraeducator)
- *Supporting and Supervising Your Teaching Assistant* by J. Morgan, & B.Y. Ashbaker, 2009
- [Utah Multi-Tiered System of Supports](https://schools.utah.gov/curr/umtss) (https://schools.utah.gov/curr/umtss)
- [Utah Core Standards](https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/areasprograms) (https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/areasprograms)
- [Utah Paras](http://www.utahparas.org/) (http://www.utahparas.org/)
- [Utah State Board of Education Special Education Rules](https://schools.utah.gov/file/bff61848-ae42-4265-a654-6dae5f398507) (https://schools.utah.gov/file/bff61848-ae42-4265-a654-6dae5f398507)
- [Utah's Early Childhood Core Standards with Teaching Strategies and Activities](https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/preschool?mid=1181&tid=2) (https://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/preschool?mid=1181&tid=2)

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