

**Handbook  
for  
Special Education  
Paraprofessionals**

**PECATONICA CUSD #321**



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## **Your Role and Responsibilities**

Your job title is paraprofessional, but that doesn't adequately describe all that you do for our students! You are a highly valued and integral member of the school team. Your position is to support and assist the teachers and administration in meeting the needs of students with disabilities and to provide direct support and assistance to students with disabilities. Your role is to communicate with other school staff to assist, implement and follow through with all plans as a member of the school team who provide student instruction and support.

Your job responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Becoming familiar with students' behavior management needs and responding appropriately
- Monitoring and/or charting behavior
- Providing reinforcement of instruction
- Facilitating small group practice and reinforcement
- Modeling appropriate behavior and attitude
- Refocusing and redirecting students
- Implementing program accommodations of student's IEP under direction of teacher
- Assisting students with technology
- Assisting students with personal hygiene
- Assisting with the implementation of curricular modifications
- Supervising students in transitions from class to class and in unstructured activities (Lunch and recess)
- Assisting with implementing instructional plans under the direction of the teacher
- Collecting student data
- Preparing instructional materials and modifications under the direction of the teacher
- Providing clerical assistance such as copying, collating, data collection, and manipulation
- Participating in planning meetings
- Providing testing accommodations to students
- Performing other various duties as assigned by supervising teachers and building administration

Paraprofessionals may be asked to support the provisions of a student's IEP program or classroom accommodations. Here is a list of common assistance provided by paraprofessionals:

- Prompt to attend to task ( look, listen, read, write)
- Provide repetition of directions and instructions
- Paraphrase/simplify directions and questions
- Have students paraphrase directions and instructions
- Provide additional examples
- Underline or highlight keywords in text, worksheets, etc.
- Use questioning to provide cues to problem solving
- Use questioning to prompt organization skills (recording assignments, putting papers away, remembering materials)
- Prompt to slow down to recheck work
- Provide immediate feedback (positive for correct response, corrective for incorrect response)
- Provide positive feedback for appropriate behavior every \_\_\_ minutes
- Provide redirection for inappropriate behavior
- Record specific behaviors and time of occurrences
- Model social skills
- Encourage participation in group activities
- Encourage student to answer questions from teacher
- Prompt/encourage student to take notes

- Provide assistance with reading, such as assisting with decoding or comprehension
- Provide assistance with math, such as assisting with calculation
- Cue appropriate social interaction
- Preset for changes/ transitions
- Assist students with pairing and grouping
- Prompt students to write down assignments
- Check to ensure assignment is recorded completely and accurately
- Prompt to hand in homework
- Read materials for students that are above reading level
- Provide cues for spelling
- Use questions to guide students in research
- Explain content area vocabulary
- Obtain note outline from teacher for student to use
- Provide visual cues for role in team/ group activities
- Encourage and praise social interaction
- Encourage use of writing strategies taught in Reading Recovery or Title I
- Encourage student to use assistive technology, such as AlphaSmart, spell check, etc.
- Monitor for safety with equipment
- Read and explain worksheets
- Encourage student to ask teacher for clarification
- Have students restate directions in their own words prior to starting activity
- Redirect and refocus to task
- Remove from room for break as indicated by teacher
- Make sure student is seated close to teacher, near “model” student
- Remind teacher of student’s class accommodations/ test accommodations
- Provide clear, concise statement of expectations
- At start of each class, remind student of classroom expectations for class participation/ behavior
- Provide multi-step direction, one step at a time
- Monitor for task completion
- Follow behavior plan, remind teacher of behavior plan
- Assist with fine motor tasks

### **Student Specific Responsibilities**

Students receive the support of a paraprofessional because the student is in a program with built in paraprofessional support or because the student’s IEP identifies the student’s need for a health aide/ paraprofessional. Most students receive support in a group, but some students require an individual paraprofessional. The student’s IEP case manager, with team input, provides direction to the paraprofessional on the types of support the student will need, ideas on how to help the student be socially integrated on the class, and ideas on how to help the student develop more independence.

The student’s IEP lists accommodations based on the student’s disabilities such as time student is entitled to have, health and allergies, diagnosis/ code for Medicaid, any known behavior/ triggers, and current Medicaid eligibility status. The classroom teacher may determine other supports the student needs based on the teacher’s differentiation of instruction in the class. You and the teacher share responsibility for providing this assistance and support.

You should read your students’ IEP accommodations with the student’s case manager and/or Resource Room Paraprofessional. You should discuss the entire IEP, but pay particular attention to the Program Modifications, Assistive Tech supports, and Test Accommodations. Most likely, you will have direct

responsibility for providing some of these supports. You can also help the regular education teacher by reminding the teacher of the supports and instructional modification needed for your students.

Although you may be assigned to support specific students with IEPs, you may help other students, as well. Unless the para is a health aide, it is actually preferred that the paraprofessional not focus solely on students with disabilities as this may socially isolate these students. You should work with the classroom teacher and case manager to determine how you can assist the teacher in meeting the needs of all students in the classroom to maximize learning for all children.

## **Attendance**

### **Purpose**

In order to accomplish the above goals with students, attendance of the paraprofessional at school each day is imperative. We truly cannot accomplish all that needs to be accomplished in a day with students without you at school! This policy is designed to provide Attendance standards for special education paraprofessional and outlines the appropriate procedures for reporting absences in accordance with the Pecatonica Community Unit School Educational Support Personnel (ESP) Handbook.

### **Procedures**

- Special education paraprofessionals shall obtain their work schedule, including hours of assignment, break, and meal periods, from their supervisor or administrator.
- These assignments are subject to change based on student needs and the ability for the school district to maximize Medicaid billing.
- Special education paraprofessional she'll be responsible for following district and School site procedures regarding reporting absences.
- Special education paraprofessional who work in support of moderate-to-severe programs or in support of students with significant health or behavioral needs, may be required to adhere to special absence reporting requirements.
- Special education paraprofessionals are required to turn in absence forms to the resource room to allow for accurate Medicaid billing, and to record all absences into Skyward within one school day whenever possible.
- All employees are Required to submit a signed physician statement or appropriate Health form to their administrator after the third consecutive absence. However administrators may require employees to provide additional documentation at any time. Advance notification should be provided in accordance with the ESP Handbook for various absences. Additionally, employees typically have advance notice of the following types of absences, and should notify administration in advance So uninterrupted service can be provided to our students.
  - Doctor appointments
  - Dentist appointments
  - Jury Duty, whether you are certain you must serve or not
  - Vacation requests
  - Subpoenaed court appearances
  - Military leave

### **Expectations**

With the exception of emergency situations, the following is required:

- Paraprofessionals are required to punch in at the beginning of their shift and proceed immediately to their work area. If an employee is unable to report to work by the designated time, the employee must contact the supervisor and or designated individual responsible for receiving Collins prior to the start of the work day, including late arrival. Please follow your building specific procedures for reporting absences.
- Paraprofessionals must return to their work area following designate meal periods on time, and most also transition efficiently from one assignment to the other.
- Paraprofessionals must notify in an administrator or individual providing work direction if there regularly assigned lunch. Needs to be adjusted due to work-related duties.

- Paraprofessionals are expected to complete their entire shift, daily.
- Paraprofessionals may not leave work early unless excused by an administrator or designee assigned by the administrator. Required documentation must be turned into the administrator for the portion of the absence to be considered excused.
- Paraprofessionals are expected to complete assigned hours and leave promptly at the end of the shift. Additional time or overtime must be pre-approved by the administrator.
- Paraprofessionals are not permitted to alter their work schedule unless approved by their supervisor in advance.
- Paraprofessionals who work a full day, or a minimum of 5 hours, will receive a 30 minute duty-free lunch period.

### **Pecatonica Community Unit Special Education Program Principles**

Pecatonica School District is committed to the following principles for special education services and programs. As a special education paraprofessional, you can help support these principles in your work with our students and staff.

- *We provide special education services that meet the individual needs of the child, are developmentally appropriate and strength-based. These services are planned in collaboration with all the child-serving systems involved in the child's life and are provided in a supportive learning environment.*
- *We recognize that the child's family is the primary support system for the child and participates in all stages of the decision-making and planning process.*
- *We recognize and respect the behavior, ideas, attitudes, values, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies and practices characteristic of the child's and family's ethnic group.*
- *We will bring special education expertise to the student in the general education learning environment to the greatest extent possible.*
- *All special education instruction will be based on the Illinois State Learning Standards for each content area.*
- *Student data will be used to inform and improve instruction.*
- *Related services provided to special education students will be educationally relevant, evidence-based and will support the student's learning. These services will be provided to the student in manner that is least disruptive to the child's learning.*
- *Special education services and supports will be based on peer-reviewed research and will be evaluated regularly to ensure that they continuously improve.*

### **Confidentiality**

You have a duty to maintain confidentiality. This is not simply a matter of not using names, but rather of maintaining silence. As a paraprofessional you will be privy to information that affects the privacy of students and staff. You have a legal obligation to maintain the privacy of student and their families. As a general rule, you should never share information about a student with whom you work with anyone other than the student's team. This would include the student's special education teachers, therapists, school psychologist, social worker, school counselor, school nurse, and principal. Check with the students' teacher(s) and IEP case manager before you share information with any other individuals, and for any conversations you have with the student's parent, a teacher or case manager must be present. If you are uncomfortable when someone asks you about a student, you can direct the individual to the student's case manager.

- C** Control information about the students.
- O** Only share information with those who have a need to know who have proper authorization.
- N** Never discuss school information regarding students.
- F** Forward inquires regarding students to the student's IEP manager or administration if you are approached about confidential information.
- I** Interact with those who inquire in a manner keeping with your responsibilities.
- D** Don't discuss student situations in the faculty room (or anywhere that is not private).
- E** Explanations for not discussing student are easier that explanations for breaching confidential information.
- N** Not sharing is caring.
- T** Think about privacy and what you may lose if you breach a student or family's confidentiality.
- I** It's important that things that happen at school stay at school.
- A** Access to student information carries with it responsibility.
- L** Learn how to handle uncomfortable inquiries in a positive and courteous but confidential manner.
- I** Identify acceptable ways that people who need to know can access information.
- T** Treat confidential information as if your job depended on it...because it does.
- Y** You are a part of a professional community. Confidentiality is a cornerstone. Protect it.

**Any breach of confidentiality is unacceptable and may be grounds for termination.**  
**When in doubt, silence is golden.**

### **Sharing Information with Parents**

You may be asked to write a log to the parents regarding their child's day in school. Make sure the teacher reviews the log before it is sent home. Paraprofessionals may not communicate with parents regarding students' performance without the oversight of the teacher. The teacher has the ultimate responsibility for evaluating and documenting student performance. Paraprofessionals are often asked to assist with this task. Protect yourself by always having the teacher and case manager review any documentation before it is sent to parents. This includes what you may think is a quick, informal note.

If a parent asks to speak with you about his/her child, you should tell the parent you will refer his/her question or concern to the child's teacher and/or case manager. If the parent insists that he/she wants your perspective, you can tell the parent that you would be happy to meet with him or her with the teacher and/or case manager. Immediately refer the issue to the student's case manager.

### **Cell Phones**

During the school day while working with students, please do not use your cell phone for text messaging, making/receiving phone calls, social media, and internet surfing. For most of the school day, your cell phone should be off and out of sight unless you are using it for a timer while working with students. You may use your cell phone for other communications and purposes during your lunch period, but please do not use it throughout the day while students are present. While we understand that family emergencies

may arise from time to time where you must excuse yourself to make or receive communication, excessive use of cell phone communication while students are present will result in disciplinary action. With regard to using your personal cell phone for taking pictures of students and sending texts to other staff with identifying student information (even the student's initials), this is strictly forbidden due to privacy concerns, and all uses of your personal phone related to sending student information become subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. It is in your best interest personally and professionally to safeguard your privacy and to ensure that you keep your personal cell phone personal.

### **Social Media**

Posting on social media during the school day is not permitted, unless it is during your duty-free lunch period. Paraprofessionals are not allowed to post pictures of students at school or to write posts about students to their personal social media accounts. Taking and sharing photos of students during the school day with your personal cell phone device or camera is also not acceptable for paraprofessional staff due to student privacy concerns.

### **Fostering Student Independence**

Paraprofessionals have a major role in defining what independence means for each student. You are assigned to a student or group of students because they require support or assistance in accomplishing common school tasks. Remember, your role is to facilitate the student's independence in accomplishing tasks by supporting the student, not by doing things for the student.

Ideas for promoting independence in students:

1. Ask questions in response to the student's question. For example, when a student asks what to do, ask, "What do you think the next step is?" Other common questions you can use to help a student reflect or discover the answer to his or her question:
  - a. "Do you remember what the teacher said about this?"
  - b. "Can you see what other students are doing?"
  - c. "How do you think this is spelled?"
2. Wait for a response. Become a champion of the waiting game. Do not feel that you have to fill a silence or that the student needs to answer immediately. Give the student time to reflect and time to realize that you expect him or her to respond.
3. Keep control. Keep responses on the topic and don't allow the student to engage you in an argument or off task discussion.
4. Give recognition and reinforcement. As frequently as you can, reinforce the student with discrete comments or signals. Let him or her know that you recognize and appreciate appropriate behavior and work.
5. Help the student utilize peer resources. Help the student ask a friend. Help the student sit next to students who are good role models. Work with the teacher to facilitate the student's participation in groups with supportive students.

### **How do you and others know when you are doing a good job?**

***The less you are doing for a student, the better you are doing your job!*** Your job is to help the student learn how to do his/her work without the help of a paraprofessional. This is very hard at times. Some students will want you to be their personal assistant. Some students are afraid to try it on their own. Some students have learned to become dependent on others. Some students are obstinate and just don't want to do it. Your job is to help them learn to do more by themselves. This is very hard at times. Sometimes you will just want the student to be able to hand in the work with the other students or



before the due date. Remember, it doesn't help the student in the long run if you have done the work for him/her. Remember that if you are doing it for the student, no one will know that he or she can or cannot do something, and that will not allow the student to get the help needed on something since he or she wasn't able to do it on his or her own.

**Being able to see that your student becomes more independent and starts to rely on you less, you know that you have done your job to build the confidence of your student.** The student will feel less socially isolated and more like their peers when they are able to work and learn on their own. When proximity with paraprofessionals in "too close" this contributes to:

- The less the teacher takes ownership for the student's learning
- The more separated the student becomes from from his or her peers
- The more dependent the student becomes on adults
- The less the student initiates with his or her peers
- The less peers initiate interactions with the student
- The less attention the student receives from the classroom teacher
- The less the student feels in control of his learning
- The less the student takes responsibilities for him/herself
- The less the student develops socially and emotionally

**The better you are able to effectively prompt students, the better you are doing your job!**

Students can become very dependent on prompts from adults. While your job is to prompt the student to do his/her best work, you should always be moving to lower levels of prompts. Here is a prompt hierarchy, always use the lowest level prompt the student needs to be successful.

#### Prompt Hierarchy

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| Level 0: | Natural prompts: any ordinary clue for all the students. E.g., the teacher says, "take out your notebook," the bell rings to change classes, all the students start to move to the front of the room.                             |
| Level 1: | Gestural prompts: pointing to the schedule, pointing to the place on the page where everyone is reading, pointing to the rules posted in the classroom, pointing to the teacher who is giving directions to the class.            |
| Level 2: | Indirect verbal prompts: a verbal statement that prompts the student to attend a natural cue: "what are the other students doing?" "what did you forget?" "What is the next class on your schedule?"                              |
| Level 3: | Direct verbal prompts: giving specific verbal directs: "Please write down your assignment."<br>"Start your work." "Pay attention to the teacher"  |
| Level 4: | Modeling prompts: demonstrating what the student is supposed to be doing, starting a graphic organizer by putting in the first item , spelling the word for the student, demonstrating what the student has to do.                |
| Level 5: | Partial physical prompts: providing physical assistance for a portion of the activity: putting the pencil in the student's hand, putting the assignment binder on the desk for the student to open and record his/ her's homework |
| Level 6: | Full physical prompts: providing full physical assistance throughout the activity: hand over hand assistance with cutting.  |

Verbal prompts are easy for students and adults to become dependent on, and they are the hardest to fade. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, they are the easiest to give. It's hard for us to sit back and watch learners struggle to put it together. It's so easy for us to give them hints, guides, or outright tell them how to do it. The other reason is that some students have become very passive learners. They have learned to wait to be told how to do it and they have learned not to trust their own responses. Remember, you can wait. Wait and give the student plenty of time to respond. At first, provide the lowest prompt you can think will help the student. Gestural/ visual prompts are easier to fade, so if you can get an appropriate response with the use of a gesture, picture, or sign, use it in preference to verbal prompting. Wait, give them time to respond.

It is important to monitor your use of prompts. You want to make sure the student is learning the desired skill and not just learning to respond to prompts. Can the student complete the task without a prompt? That is the goal.

***The more the student understands his/hers strengths and limitations and can ask for help when needed, the better you are doing your job.*** The most important area of development for children is that of self determination. Research has shown us that student with disabilities who have developmental skills of self determination are more successful in college at in the working world, no matter how significant their disability and their limited skills in other areas. Children with skills of self determination:

- Understand that all the individuals have certain strengths and limitation sand they can describe their own strengths and limitations (self awareness).
- Know when they need help and can ask help from adults or peers (self advocating).
- Know that sometimes it is hard but when they focus and work, they can accomplish so much (self efficacy).
- Know that all choices have consequences, can think about the consequences of choices they might consider, and make choices in their best interest (choice and decision making).
- Have goals and know it takes planning and follow through on plans to achieve goals (goal setting and attainment).

While actualization of full self-determination is not usually achieved until adulthood, children actually start developing self-determination as early as kindergarten. Sometimes you might be inclined to hide the students limitations from others and even from the student to spare his or her feelings. This hinders the student's development of self-determination. You can help the student develop self-determination by helping him/her:

- Talk about his/her Limitations and his/her strengths
- Ask for help when needed (rather than waiting for help)
- Develop an " I can do it!" attitude
- Think about choices and what the natural consequences are for the choices made
- Make plans on how to accomplish tasks and self-monitor following through on those plans

***The less reliant students are on you, the better you are doing your job.*** Remember your job is to help your students develop the skills they need to become more independent. It is the ultimate goal of special education staff, teachers and paraprofessionals alike, to work ourselves OUT of a job. Fear not....there are always students who need our help, but for each individual child, the goal, like a good parent, is to teach them everything they need to know to be independent in every possible way.

## **Helping in the Regular Education Classroom**

Your role is to support the teacher in meeting the needs of the student. Here are some suggestions for working with the teacher to support the students' needs:

- Parallel the teacher's efforts. Ask the teacher about his/her classroom management plan, classroom routine, etc.
- Advocate your teacher's philosophy
- Refer parent questions to the teacher
- Attend to confidentiality
- Ask the teacher to share what has been planned for the day/week so that you can follow the plans and support the teacher and students
- Ask the teacher to provide you with copies of handouts a few days ahead of time so you can make any needed modifications with the teacher's oversight
- Plan a time when you and the teacher can meet to discuss ideas and concerns. Never engage in power struggles or contradict a teacher in front of the students.
- Identify the materials the student will need in the class and cue the student to bring the necessary materials. Ask the student, "What do you need for this class? Do you have all of your materials?" If the student does not have the required materials, use questioning to help the student problem solve.
- Observe the student when he or she is given instructions. Do not help too soon. Give the student time to respond. Use wait time. For example, observe the student when it is time to write down the assignment. If the student does not write the assignment after sufficient wait time, cue him to write it down. Use the hierarchy of prompts outlined above. Do not write it down for him. Check the assignment. When it is complete, determine if it is accurate and legible? If not, remind the student to write it properly.
- Supports the teacher's instruction. Do not talk or engage in other tasks while instructions are being given. It is important for the student to listen. Ask questions when the student does not seem to know what to do. Ask "What do you need to be doing right now?" or "What do you see other students doing?"
- Support group work. When students are working in a group, you may need to help the student select an appropriate group or to effectively engage with the assigned group. For example, select a group with positive role models and avoid working with a student or other students who may be distracting. Observe the group and "your student," but let the group problem solve before you jump in to help. Only assist when the group cannot solve the issue. You can help sometimes by guiding the group to break the task into smaller steps. Have them think about things like what they need to do first and what the next step might be.
- Support the group and student development of organizational skills. Do not "do" for the student, but cue the student to use the skills he/she is learning in class or the resource room. "Where does this paper go?" "Don't forget to use the binder." etc.

## **Helping in the Specialist's Classroom**

Expectations for your role in each teacher's classroom is specific to the individual teacher, and having open lines of communication with each teacher will help ensure that both teacher and para feel that they are working as a cohesive team for the betterment of each student. This is true from one classroom to the next, and across all learning environments, be it PE, Art, Music, Library, and SuccessMaker Lab. Some general guidelines for these environments include the following:

- Please bring your student on time to all classrooms every time. No one likes to have everyone look at them when they enter a room late, and students also miss out on important instruction, which is valuable for them to know what is expected for them in the class that day.
- Please ensure that your student arrives on time for services like speech, as a late arrival impacts the students' service minutes and/or the entire provider's schedule for the day.
- Please keep cell phones off and out of sight, as in all school environments, when students are present, whenever possible. If you must take a call or text, please excuse yourself from the learning environment. This sometimes seems like a less structured learning time, but the use of cell phones is distracting to everyone as it would be in a regular classroom. The use of cell phones as a timer, to ensure prompt arrival in classrooms, at services, and for medication, is encouraged as long as the cell phone is being used as a tool.
- Please do not leave the specialists' classrooms without notifying/checking in with the classroom teacher or supervisor.
- Please do not dismiss students from the classroom yourself, i.e. the gym, music, art classrooms, as the teacher is ultimately responsible for each individual student and must know where they are at all times, especially in cases of emergency, i.e. fire, tornado drill, etc.
- Please do not eat in the classroom unless it is an appropriate snack time for the entire class, i.e. sharing in birthday treats or snack milk break.
- Please refrain from exploring and "playing" during instruction, i.e. playing instruments in the music classroom or shooting hoops in the gym.
- Please do not "hover" over students, but allow them to receive instruction directly from the teacher in environments like art, music, and P.E. To eliminate any confusion of expectations, please discuss with the specialist teacher how to best support the students in their learning environment. For example, during art, please allow your student to express themselves creatively, and never complete a student's project for them!

## **Student Behavior**

**Classroom Management Plan:** Each teacher develops a plan for managing classroom routines and student Behavior. In most classrooms, the rules/expectations are posted for all students to see. Discuss the classroom management plan with each teacher. Make sure you know not only the class routine and student rules, but also the consequences for non-compliance and the teacher's desire for how you should respond to situations.

**Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP):** Some students will have an individualized behavioral intervention plan, sometimes less formally referred to as a behavioral contract. Ask your special education teachers or make note of your review of the student's IEP.

The BIP identifies:

- Targeted behaviors-the student behaviors targeted to be reduced or eliminated
- Prevention strategies- the actions staff will take to prevent the targeted behaviors
- Consequence strategies-the actions staff will take when the behaviors occur
- Reinforcement strategies- the actions staff will take to reinforce positive replacement behaviors or absence of targeted behaviors

- Skill training-teaching or therapy that staff will provide to eliminate skill deficits that may be causing the behaviors

It is very important for all staff who come in contact with the student to know and follow the BIP. Review the plan with the special education staff, and if you do not understand any aspect of the plan or are unsure of your role, clarify the questions with members of the student's special education team.

### **Some Common Behavior Management Strategies**

- Be consistent with rules /directions /routines
- Dispense encouragement and praise freely but fairly; help correct errors and reward corrections
- Praising and active ignoring: Appropriate behavior is rewarded by praise, and minor infractions such as calling out, pencil tapping, failure to start work are initially ignored. Planned ignoring means consciously ignoring the behavior, not showing any reaction to the behavior, and ignoring other students' responses to the behavior.
- Soft corrections: Quietly and discreetly telling the student the appropriate behavior he or she should be showing. After the correction, treat the issue as closed. Do not nag, harp, or repeat the correction multiple times.
- Modeling: Personally displaying the behaviors you expect from the student such as:
  - Listening to the teacher
  - Using a calm, neutral voice
  - Showing respectful behavior toward others at all times
  - Staying on task in class and not getting off task
- Give students choices. Some students use behaviors to gain control. You can prevent this by giving students choices whenever possible. This also teaches students responsibilities.
  - A common choice provided in behavior management plans is giving the students a choice between appropriate behavior and inappropriate behavior and reminding the student of the consequence of the inappropriate behavior. " Sue, you can sit down and start the worksheet or you can continue to bother the other students. it is your choice but you know that if you don't start your work now you will not earn your points."
  - Students can often choose what book to read.
  - Students can often choose what task to start with from the list of tasks.
  - Students can often choose with whom they wish to work or where they may work.

Maintaining order is essential to accomplishing goals for students in any school setting. By order, we don't mean total control of every student, every minute of the day. We do mean that paraprofessionals play a vital role in ensuring a healthy and safe environment in which all students can learn. It is important for you to prevent dangerous unacceptable behaviors whenever possible. Being visible to students and positively engaged with students is a first-line prevention of unacceptable behavior. Students who may have demonstrated the potential for negative activities in unstructured situations such as lunch, hallway passing times, immediately before and after school, or while attending various school sponsored events and activities, need to be approached BEFORE such behaviors occur. A friendly greeting lets the student know that you see him or her.

Even difficult to manage students can maintain acceptable social contacts if engaged positively prior to involvement in potentially undesirable situations. Showing some personal interest in individuals goes a long way toward building respect for authority and control.

Remaining in control of your own emotions helps a student maintain control. If you are ever in a situation where you perceive you cannot be in control of your own emotions, it is **ALWAYS** acceptable to “tag out” with another staff member. Students often read nonverbal cues, ie, facial expressions, body language, reddening of the face causing escalation in behavior.

When a student engages in undesirable and unacceptable behaviors, it is important to intervene immediately. Minor incidents can escalate. Intervention needs to occur calmly and without embarrassing or humiliating the students. It is important to be discreet and calm in your intervention. Physical or verbal reactions, such as grabbing, finger pointing, raising your voice, or using a harsh or negative tone of voice will most often trigger a similar response from the students and heighten the tension. These are not acceptable adult responses to students and should be avoided.

If at all possible, get the student to accompany you, without physical contact, to a nearby quiet or less congested location where you can help the student regain control of his or her behavior privately. Every effort should be made to avoid physical contact that may be perceived as threatening by the student. Calmly and quietly remind the student of the appropriate behavior he or she should be using. Give the student time and support in calming down.

If the student remains agitated, signal another adult to get support or get the student to accompany you to the office, classroom, motor room, guidance or social work office where additional support is available.

### **Therapeutic Physical Restraint Procedures**

While all students, including those with disabilities, are expected to behave and conduct themselves appropriately, it may be necessary for specifically trained staff members to provide a therapeutic physical restraint for students with disabilities who are in danger of harming themselves or others and staff have determined that less intrusive interventions are not likely to reduce the risk. Any restraint procedure should respect the students’ dignity and personal integrity. Therapeutic physical restraint may only be used in emergency situations or after a behavioral plan has been developed, reviewed and approved by the IEP team, including the parents.

This restraint is defined as a physical hold that lasts for several minutes. The force of the hold should be no greater than that which is absolutely necessary to prevent harm and should last no longer than is necessary to deescalate the situation and allow the student to regain self-control. All of the physical intervention techniques used in therapeutic crisis intervention are based on the principles of a maximum amount of caring with a minimum amount of force, with the goal of de-escalating the situation by reducing stimulation/agitation so that the student can regain self-control.

Therapeutic physical restraint is to be provided by staff members who have completed a training program approved by the district. Except in those situations where a delay would heighten the risk of harm, a therapeutic physical restraint shall not be undertaken with a student unless another staff member is present. This staff person shall remain until the student is released from the restraint. If another adult is not present and a delay of restraint would likely result in harm to the student or others, the individual using such restraint must take immediate steps to ensure the presence of another staff member.

A therapeutic physical restraint may be used on a student only after it has been determined that other less intrusive interventions have been tried and failed to prevent the harm or determination that the

attempted use of these other less intrusive interventions and the delay in the use of a therapeutic physical restraint would, in all likelihood, increase the probability of harm to self or others.

Restrictive behavioral interventions such as removal from the room or physical restraint may be used only in emergencies or with an approved behavioral intervention plan. The principal (or other district administrator) and case manager, if not already involved, should be notified immediately if a therapeutic physical restraint is used.

As soon as the student is released from the restraint, the nurse shall either be called to the site where the child is located or the child shall be escorted to the nurse's office. The nurse will conduct an examination of the child.

Following the therapeutic physical restraint:

- The principal or their designee must notify the parent immediately of the use of the therapeutic restraint.
- The staff member, nurse and principal must complete the district restraint form within 24 hours (if possible) and forward a copy to the parent.
- A copy will also be retained in the students special education folder.

### **Chain of Communication**

When people work together in close confines, conflict will happen. Whether it is about interpreting the IEP or following classroom procedures, two people are not always going to agree. While some situations which deal with safety must be taken care of immediately, others can wait. Ask yourself, "If this waits 24 hours, will it be a big deal?" After 24 hours, if it is still a big deal, you need to follow these steps. If you let your concern wait too long, it will fester and possibly cause more problems.

1. Talk to the person(s) involved first. After talking it out, you may need no further steps.
2. If there is still a problem, talk to the case manager, special education teacher, or resource room paraprofessional. He or she may be able to provide more insight, understanding, and another perspective to the issue. Hopefully, this will alleviate the need to go further.
3. If there is still a problem, please discuss with the building principal.

When issues arise, it often seems like the most important thing, and human nature sometimes causes us to spout at as many people as possible. Because of the professional setting in which we are working, you must remember to maintain dignity and respect, talking only to the people the situation directly affects. If one pulls more people into the situation, it confuses the problem or concern and may cause more problems. If after 24 hours you decide it is not a big deal, you need to let it go and move on. If you cannot, then maybe you need to treat it as if it were a big deal, and follow the chain of communication listed above.

### **Chain of Command for Pecatonica CUSD #321:**

1. Board of Education
2. Superintendent
3. Principal

4. Classroom teacher/ Special Ed teacher/ Case Manager/ Resource Room Paraprofessional (ES only)
5. Paraprofessionals

### **Para Do's**

*Do-*

- ❖ Facilitate learning.
- ❖ Encourage students to do their own work. They are not learning if we do it for them or turn the other cheek when they copy/cheat.
- ❖ Have high expectations for all students.
- ❖ Motivate students to do his or her personal best.
- ❖ Be pleasant and positive.
- ❖ Use non-verbal hints.
- ❖ Arrive on time.
- ❖ Follow classroom routines.
- ❖ Enforce classroom and school rules consistently and fairly.
- ❖ Observe confidentiality.
- ❖ Refocus off task students.
- ❖ Write down assignments.
- ❖ Take notes.
- ❖ Use the materials and activities along with the class, Do not engage in personal activities like reading magazines or books, sending/receiving text messages, coloring, or internet surfing.
- ❖ Relay information back to case manager and resource room teacher.
- ❖ Treat all students with respect and dignity. Sometimes students will “rub us the wrong way,” and we need to keep our personal feelings out of it.
- ❖ Remember to use a lower volume when working with kids in small groups in a regular classroom setting.
- ❖ Support teacher decisions and instructions, even if you disagree. If you have a concern, please follow the chain of communication discussed above.

While you may feel you are not “on stage” in class, students are aware of all adults in the classroom. It is important that you model appropriate dress, language and behavior. Students know when you are not doing what they are. Please, if you are bored in the classroom, participate in a manner that is appropriate and models engagement for students.

### **Building Procedures**

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the emergency procedures in your building and for any students assigned to you. Below you will find some of the most important information with which you are expected to be both familiar and competent:



- Fire drills and emergency evacuation procedures-Your building principal will provide you with opportunities to practice state-mandated drills. Each room has posters that show emergency evacuation and fire drill procedures.
- School code of conduct and discipline-Make sure you read the School Code of Conduct discipline procedures for your building. This information is found in each school handbook and is available at [www.pecschools.com](http://www.pecschools.com).
- Medical emergencies- Make sure that you are aware of the building procedures for medical emergencies. Also be sure to make note of any medical or alerts for the students for whom you are responsible. Medical alerts are noted in each school's confidential Health Concerns List. The school nurse and special education teacher can provide you with any additional information about the students' medical needs and procedures.

## **Helping with Testing Accommodations**

### **What are test accommodations?**

The appropriate provision of test accommodations provides students with disabilities and equitable opportunity to demonstrate acquired knowledge and abilities during the administration of state and local test. The provision of test accommodations is required by the individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **Who decides what accommodations a student will receive?**

Test accommodations to be afforded to a student are determined by the student's IEP team; the Section 504 team for 504 plans; and the Building Principal for students who become disabled immediately prior to administration of district, state or building level examinations.

### **Who administers test accommodations?**

Building principals must ensure that test accommodations are consistently administered to students with disabilities, as specified in the IEP or 504 Accommodation Plan. Individuals administering or proctoring tests must implement test accommodations exactly as stated on the students plan. Teachers administering tests and proctors may not provide additional accommodations to a student, nor can they decide that an accommodation is not appropriate.

### **How are specific accommodations implemented?**

The following are guidelines for the administration of specific test accommodations.

- **Directions read:** The proctor must read the directions from each section or item to the student. Only directions are read. For this accommodation, questions, passages, and response choices may not be read.
- **Directions clarified:** The proctor must simplify the language in the directions. The proctor may answer the student's question about the directions without giving clues to the answer. In addition, the proctor should be sure that the student understands the instructions, but should not provide any additional information.
- **Test Read:** The proctor must read the entire test, including directions, passages, questions, response choices, and words on graphs, tables, etc. Content must be read in a neutral manner, without intoning, emphasizing or otherwise drawing attention to keywords and phrases. Except for directions, passages and items must be read word for word, without clarification or

explanation. Questions can be read, but cannot be clarified or simplified. Only directions can be clarified. The content can be read more than once.

- **Read isolated words or content specific words:** The proctor must read words that are isolated, i. e. single words that are response choices, single words in analogies or similar type questions. The proctor must also read difficult words that are specific to the test subject. The proctor may read words that the student asks him or her to read so long as the word is isolated or is a word specific to the subject of the test, i.e. science, history, etc.
- **Use of word processor:** The proctor must ensure that the student has access to a word processor. The spell check and grammar check must be disabled on the word processor, unless the student also has test accommodations deleting requirements for spelling or grammar. Students may also have tools stated in their IEP that allow for such tools to be used.
- **Text to Speech:** This feature allows for text to be read to the student within the test itself.
- **Speech to Text:** This feature converts students' speaking into written words via an electronic device, such as Google Voice Text.
- **Use of scribe:** The proctor (scribe) records the response exactly as dictated by the student. The scribe must record the dictation of the student in a neutral manner, without questioning the student or using body language that will provide the student with cues to errors.
- **Frequent Breaks:** The proctor was notify the student when he or she is allowed to take a break as specified by the student's IEP. The proctor must ensure the integrity of the test by ensuring that the student is supervised during the break. The student is not to lose test administration time due to the breaks taken.

### **What to do if a student refuses an accommodation?**

If a student refuses an accommodation that is listed on his or her IEP or 504 plan, the proctor must explain to the student that the accommodation is provided to him or her due to his or her disability and will provide the student an equal opportunity to demonstrate his or her knowledge. If the student continues to refuse the accommodation, the proctor should document the refusal and notify the student's IEP case manager or school guidance counselor of the refusal. In the case of high-stakes tests such as state examinations or district-wide examinations, the special education teacher or school counselor should notify the building principal who may elect to contact the students parents.

**Paraprofessional Job Description  
Pecatonica Community Unit School District #321**

**TITLE:** Classroom or 1:1 Paraprofessional

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- High School Diploma
- Associate Degree, 60 college credit hours, OR pass the ETS (Educational Testing Service) Para PRO Assessment Test
- Illinois Professional Educator License with Stipulations (ELS) with a Paraprofessional Endorsement OR Illinois Professional Educator-Substitute Teaching License
- Experience and training to work effectively with students in an educational setting preferred
- Ability to read basic instructions, complete work independently, and possess basic computer skills
- Eagerness to work with students with disabilities and an ability to work well with others
- Flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to learn new things
- Able to lift 35 pounds, as well as non-ambulatory students of 50 pounds or more appropriately and with training

**REPORTS TO:** Resource Room Paraprofessional, Classroom/Special Education Teachers, and School Administrator

**SUPERVISOR:** School Administrator

**JOB GOAL:** Responsible for working with special education students on a daily basis, providing physical, emotional, behavioral, and academic support, assisting students in accessing the district's special education program.

**PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Models appropriate behavior and attitude, treating all people with respect, courtesy, and cheerfulness, where relationships with colleagues and supervisors are characterized by mutual support and cooperation
- Supports the school mission and philosophy, complying fully with school, district, and state regulations
- Observes the highest standards of honesty, integrity, confidentiality and privacy in all interactions with colleagues, students, and the public, sharing concerns or suggestions only to teachers, case managers, and administrators in a discreet way
- Maintains the highest professional standard of ethics, dress and presentation of self as a role model for students and as an ambassador for our school within the community
- Participates in meetings for planning instruction or intervention, as needed, to maximize a student's growth and achievement

- Alerts the teacher(s) immediately to any special information or concerns about individual students
- Participates in in-service training programs, as assigned, to include student related disabilities
- Completes and implements CPI Training
- Performs various duties as assigned by supervising staff members and school administrators
- Updates Medicaid billing records on a daily basis, entering billing into special education software each month, meeting monthly with resource paraprofessional to ensure billing accuracy prior to meeting with the qualified professional for supervision, the district nurse, for final billing approval
- Tolerates ambiguity and is flexible, understanding that the role of the paraprofessional is dynamic, ever changing, and position assignments change to best meet the needs of the students
- Demonstrates exemplary attendance and punctuality, as both are imperative to the continuity of student programming, growth, and success in school
- Prearranges absences with as much notice as possible, adhering to the district policies regarding absence, communicating those absences to the appropriate chain of command outlined in the paraprofessional handbook
- Welcomes feedback from colleagues and supervisors to grow in the role of paraprofessional to provide the best possible educational experience for students
- Other duties as assigned by building administrator

#### **CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Implements program accommodations of a student's IEP, including curricular modifications, under the direction of the case manager and the remaining members of the student's team, including teachers, related service providers, and the administration
- Familiarizes oneself with students' behavior management needs and responds appropriately, including refocusing and redirecting students, as well as monitoring and charting behavior
- Collects requested student data, under the direction of a case manager, related service provider, or teacher and accurately reporting this information for driving student programming
- Assists in providing a well-organized, smooth functioning class environment for maximum student learning and safety
- Works with individual and/or small groups in the reinforcement of skills
- Assists students with toileting, diapering, clothing, and personal hygiene in the school environment
- Monitors student for his/her specific medical condition
- Assists students, as appropriate, with preparation of student food, eating, feeding, and supervision for nutrition, food allergies, choking hazards, and/or behavior

- Assists with all manner of assessment, to include achievement, diagnostic, classroom, and standardized tests as assigned by the teacher
- Assists the teacher in implementing special strategies for reinforcing materials or skills based on individual needs, interests, and abilities, including assistive technology
- Assists in the supervision of students during transitions from class to class, uninstruced activities such as lunch and recess, during emergency drills, assemblies, play periods, field trips, and other non-instructional times.
- Serves as a resource person to the classroom teacher, substitute teacher, resource staff, and administration.
- Guides students in independent study, enrichment work, remedial work, and other instructional plans assigned by staff, to include preparing instructional materials and modifications under the direction of the teacher
- Offers guidance and encouragement as students learn new skills
- Assists in maintaining various classroom bulletin boards, displays, copying, cutting lamination, and any other tasks assigned by a teacher, case manager, or resource classroom paraprofessional. The needs of individual students will always be top priority over clerical tasks
- Other duties as assigned by building administrator

**TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT:**

Employee will work the days school is in session for students (175 days), to include the afternoons of early release days, as needed by supervising staff. Hours of employment are typically 7:40 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Employee will also report to work for the beginning of the year institute days for mandated trainings. Salary and work to be established by the Board.

**EVALUATION:**

Performance of this position will be evaluated annually in accordance with provisions of the Pecatonica School Board’s Policy on Evaluation of Non-Certified Staff.

The job description was reviewed and agreed to by:

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- The employee has received a copy of this job description
- The employee has received a work calendar for the school year.

**Elementary Resource Room Paraprofessional/Medicaid Billing Coordinator  
Job Description  
Pecatonica Community Unit School District #321**

**TITLE:** Elementary Resource Room Paraprofessional

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

- High School Diploma
- Associate Degree, 60 college credit hours, OR pass the ETS (Educational Testing Service) Para PRO Assessment Test
- Illinois Professional Educator License with Stipulations (ELS) with a Paraprofessional Endorsement OR Illinois Professional Educator-Substitute Teaching License
- Experience and training to work effectively with students in an educational setting preferred
- Ability to read basic instructions, complete work independently, and possess basic computer skills
- Eagerness to work with students with disabilities and an ability to work well with others
- Flexibility, adaptability, and a willingness to learn new things
- Able to lift 35 pounds, as well as non-ambulatory students of 50 pounds or more appropriately and with training

**REPORTS TO:** Classroom/Special Education Teachers and School Administrator

**SUPERVISOR:** School Administrator

**JOB GOAL:** Responsible for working with special education students on a daily basis, providing physical, emotional, behavioral, and academic support, assisting students in accessing the district's special education program. The resource room paraprofessional is also charged with oversight of medicaid billing logs, scheduling of resource room programming in conjunction with the resource room teachers, as well as oversight of day-to-day resource room operations and paraprofessional staff. It is the ultimate goal of the resource room paraprofessional that the smooth running of the classroom allows for the best possible learning environment for all special education students.

**PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Models appropriate behavior and attitude, treating all people with respect, courtesy, and cheerfulness, where relationships with colleagues and supervisors are characterized by mutual support and cooperation
- Supports the school mission and philosophy, complying fully with school, district, and state regulations

- Observes the highest standards of honesty, integrity, confidentiality and privacy in all interactions with colleagues, students, and the public, sharing concerns or suggestions only to teachers, case managers, and administrators in a discreet way
- Maintains the highest professional standard of ethics, dress and presentation of self as a role model for students and as an ambassador for our school within the community
- Participates in meetings for planning instruction or intervention, as needed, to maximize a student's growth and achievement
- Alerts the teacher(s) immediately to any special information or concerns about individual students
- Participates in in-service training programs, as assigned, to include student related disabilities
- Completes and implements CPI Training
- Performs various duties as assigned by supervising staff members and school administrators
- Updates Medicaid billing records on a daily basis, entering billing into special education software each month, meeting monthly with resource paraprofessional to ensure billing accuracy prior to meeting with the qualified professional for supervision, the district nurse, for final billing approval
- Tolerates ambiguity and is flexible, understanding that the role of the paraprofessional is dynamic, ever changing, and position assignments change to best meet the needs of the students
- Demonstrates exemplary attendance and punctuality, as both are imperative to the continuity of student programming, growth, and success in school
- Prearranges absences with as much notice as possible, adhering to the district policies regarding absence, communicating those absences to the appropriate chain of command outlined in the paraprofessional handbook
- Welcomes feedback from colleagues and supervisors to grow in the role of paraprofessional to provide the best possible educational experience for students
- Other duties as assigned by building administrator

#### **CLASSROOM RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- Implements program accommodations of a student's IEP, including curricular modifications, under the direction of the case manager and the remaining members of the student's team, including teachers, related service providers, and the administration
- Familiarizes oneself with students' behavior management needs and responds appropriately, including refocusing and redirecting students, as well as monitoring and charting behavior
- Collects requested student data, under the direction of a case manager, related service provider, or teacher and accurately reporting this information for driving student programming

- Assists in providing a well-organized, smooth functioning class environment for maximum student learning and safety
- Works with individual and/or small groups in the reinforcement of skills
- Assists students with toileting, diapering, clothing, and personal hygiene in the school environment
- Monitors student for his/her specific medical condition
- Assists students, as appropriate, with preparation of student food, eating, feeding, and supervision for nutrition, food allergies, choking hazards, and/or behavior
- Assists with all manner of assessment, to include achievement, diagnostic, classroom, and standardized tests as assigned by the teacher
- Assists the teacher in implementing special strategies for reinforcing materials or skills based on individual needs, interests, and abilities, including assistive technology
- Assists in the supervision of students during transitions from class to class, un instructed activities such as lunch and recess, during emergency drills, assemblies, play periods, field trips, and other non-instructional times.
- Serves as a resource person to the classroom teacher, substitute teacher, resource staff, and administration.
- Guides students in independent study, enrichment work, remedial work, and other instructional plans assigned by staff, to include preparing instructional materials and modifications under the direction of the teacher
- Offers guidance and encouragement as students learn new skills
- Assists in maintaining various classroom bulletin boards, displays, copying, cutting lamination, and any other tasks assigned by a teacher, case manager, or resource classroom paraprofessional. The needs of individual students will always be top priority over clerical tasks.
- Other duties as assigned by building administrator

**ADDITIONAL LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES (beyond other paraprofessionals):**

- Morning point of contact for paraprofessional tardies and absences, so that scheduling adjustments can be made to ensure coverages, appropriate supervision, and to maximize Medicaid billing
- Communicates all schedule changes and staffing adjustments to appropriate personnel
- Ensures accuracy of sub plans for all paraprofessional staff
- Provides Medicaid billing training for district paraprofessional staff
- Prepares and organizes Medicaid billing record keeping system for all resource students
- Double checks all Medicaid billing logs for accuracy and cross-references staff and student attendance records, as well as IEP minutes allocated for service
- Maintains an attendance record and lunch rotation for all paraprofessionals and adjusts accordingly
- Streamlines clerical operations of the resource room and serves as first line of communication for paraprofessionals to allow case managers to have students' educational minutes as their primary focus



- Serves as the primary point of contact for all paraprofessionals for any concerns that arise during the school day, i.e. scheduling, supervision questions, conflicts among themselves, and arranging in-house coverages when they arrive late or leave early
- Serves as a resource for teachers' requests for paraprofessional scheduling questions, coordinating testing accommodations/alternative location and the scheduling of tests.
- Provides support to case managers in the creation of testing schedules for district and state assessments to ensure that the appropriate number of staff is deployed during testing windows
- Assists with in-school suspensions, in concert with the resource classroom staff
- Provides support with crisis situations as a primary responder
- Other duties as assigned by building administrator

**TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT:**

Employee will work the days school is in session for students (175 days), to include the afternoons of early release days, as needed by supervising staff. Hours of employment are typically 7:25 a.m.-3:45 p.m. Employee will also report to work for the beginning of the year institute days for mandated trainings. Salary and work to be established by the Board.

**EVALUATION:**

Performance of this position will be evaluated annually in accordance with provisions of the Pecatonica School Board's Policy on Evaluation of Non-Certified Staff.

The job description was reviewed and agreed to by:

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- The employee has received a copy of this job description
- The employee has received a work calendar for the school year.