



**Grinnell-Newburg Community School
District
*Paraeducator Handbook***

GRINNELL-NEWBURG COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Notice of Non-Discrimination

The school district does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age (except students), religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in admission or access to, or treatment in, its hiring and employment practices. Any person having inquiries concerning the school district's compliance with the regulations implementing Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), § 504 or *Iowa Code* § 280.3 is directed to contact: Equity Coordinator, Heidi Durbin at (641) 236-2725.

The Grinnell-Newburg School district and all its employees aim to develop and implement the district's educational program in a multicultural and nonsexist manner, free from discriminatory practices of any kind. Inquiries regarding compliance with a multicultural nonsexist approach to education shall be directed to the Equity Coordinator, Heidi Durbin at (641) 236-2725.

Welcome!

You are now part of the Grinnell-Newburg Community School District (GNCS D). Our goal is to create a successful and positive educational experience where every child may thrive. You will be an essential component to help directly and indirectly improve student success, and ultimately, student achievement. Welcome aboard.

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE:

The purpose of this guide is to help you acclimate yourself to your new job. It is written with a newly hired associate in mind, but will also give valuable guidance to our veteran associates. While it will never answer every question, it should give you a broad overview of your duties and where to go to find answers. When in doubt, however, don't hesitate to ask.

DEFINITION OF AN EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATE (PARAEDUCATOR):

"An employee who works under the supervision of teachers and other licensed personnel who have the ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of education and related service programs. An employee whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers other direct or indirect services to children, youth and /or their parents."

**Iowa Department of Education; 1998*

PARAEDUCATOR CODE OF ETHICS:

The paraeducator will

- * interact with students in a manner that demonstrates respect and dignity
- * interact with educational staff and parents in a manner that demonstrates respect and professionalism
- * maintain confidentiality
- * demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth & development
- * use questions to involve the student and monitor understanding
- * raise questions and concerns in a professional & appropriate manner

THE MANY ROLES OF A G-NCSD PARAEDUCATOR:

The primary benefit of paraeducator use is the improvement of instruction and services to students. Paraeducators play a significant role in the delivery of instructional activities to students. Associates in the GNCS D are asked to wear a variety of "hats" within the course of each day. In addition to your "main duties", you will be asked to assist in other ways when time allows. This might include office work, classroom work, assisting specific students, organizing special projects or events or simply looking around to see what needs to be done. It is important to remember, however, that your main duty is the reason why you were hired and should come first.

DO'S & DON'TS FOR PARAEDUCATORS

Paraeducators May . . .	Paraeducators May Not . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be left alone in the classroom, in a planned way when the supervising teacher is called away.- Work without direct supervision with individuals or groups of students on concepts introduced by the supervising teacher or other teachers.- Have specific instructional and management responsibility for an individual student or groups of students.- Be involved in student IEP meetings- Support the inclusion of children with disabilities into general education activities such as taking notes, tutoring, giving tests orally, or supporting behavioral interventions.- Maintain records relevant to classroom assignments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Be used as a substitute for licensed teachers unless the paraeducator has the appropriate teaching license and has been directed by the administrator to serve as a substitute teacher.- Teach completely new concepts and skills.- Be given the primary responsibility for the education of an individual student.- Be assigned to attend student IEP meetings in place of the supervising teacher.- Be given the primary responsibility for teaching curriculum content to students with or without disabilities.- Carry out clerical responsibilities that are assigned to other staff members.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Because you will be working with a variety of teachers, it is important to know what is expected of you in each "setting." Expectations may differ from room to room or even from day to day. When you have questions or should a conflict occur, it is best to go directly to the teacher in that "setting" and try to solve it together. If you are a child-specific associate with a student in a special education program, the special education teacher (instructional strategist) should at least be made aware of the student issues even if he/she is not directly involved. If you continue to have questions or if the conflict persists, speak with the building principal.

COMMUNICATION WITH TEACHERS

TEACHING STYLES. Teachers, like everyone else, have unique characteristics and ways of doing things. These characteristics are rarely given much thought by the teacher because they are such an integral part of the individual's teaching style, but for paraeducators who are in support roles it is imperative that they know as much about these characteristics as possible. Without mutual awareness and understanding of these idiosyncrasies, the effectiveness of the team will be undermined. Every teacher has a style of his or her own. The style may be flexible, controlling, permissive, and/or a combination of all of these and more. Most teachers have an array of teaching strategies they like to use in a specific situation or with a specific student. They may be topic related, skill related, or concept related. For other teachers structured behavior management methods may serve as the basic approach for teaching skills and helping students learn to monitor and maintain effective behavior. Some teachers may rely on self-instruction whereas others will rely on incidental types of learning centers or various types of group or individual projects. No matter what method a teacher uses, it is important for the paraeducator to know what teaching strategies the teacher uses and the reasons why they are used with a specific group or individual student.

SUPERVISORY STYLES. Just as teachers have teaching styles they also have different types of supervisory styles. One person may be very structured and provide specific directions based on rules, procedures, and program and classroom structures developed by the teacher. Another person may ask the paraeducator to share ideas and information and participate in the decision making/planning process. Still a third person may tend to be non-directive and prefer the paraeducator to learn by observing what the teacher does and then model the behavior.

DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES. Discipline is for most teachers something that they hold very close and very dear to themselves. How they discipline and why they discipline is known many times only to them. It is important for the paraeducator to understand why one student requires one disciplinary strategy and another does not.

USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS. Teachers, almost like good mechanics, have their favorite tool. Teachers in the selection and use of teaching materials very often will rely more on one type of teaching material than on another, even though either one might work in the particular learning situation. Like discipline, it is important for the paraeducator to know why that particular material was selected and is of value in a particular learning situation.

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND RULES. Both structure and rules are integral to the strategy of discipline and behavior management used in classrooms. Structure or a lack of it *will* very often determine the type of discipline that is experienced by the youngster in the classroom. The old adage that rules are made to be broken is not a procedure that is going to produce positive results in any education setting. The paraeducator needs to know why a particular structure has been chosen by the teacher and why and how it complements the instructional delivery and/or processes.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Accepting Responsibilities:

- * Engage only in instructional and non-instructional activities for which you are qualified or trained.
- * Refer concerns expressed by parents, students or others to your supervising teacher.
- * Recognize the supervisor has the ultimate responsibility for instruction and management and follow the prescribed directions.
- * Help to see the best interests of individual students are met.
- * Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents.

Relationships with Students and Parents:

- * Discuss a child's progress, limitations and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher in an appropriate setting.
- * Express differences of opinion with your supervising teacher only when students are absent from the room.
- * Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel.
- * Respect the dignity, privacy and individuality of all students, parents and staff members.
- * Do not engage in discriminatory practices.

The Paraeducator will make a conscious effort to avoid engaging in the following behaviors:

- * Failure to begin work at starting time.
- * Frequent tardiness, absenteeism, or leaving work early without authorization or just cause.
- * Working unauthorized hours or violation of working hours, rest periods, or lunch periods.
- * Leaving your workplace during work hours without authorization.
- * Unauthorized extension of break and/or lunch periods.
- * Unnecessary visiting or extended visiting during work hours.
- * Loitering or wasting time during working hours.
- * Obscene or abusive language.
- * Poor grooming or hygiene.
- * Smoking on district property or district vehicles.
- * Inefficiency.
- * Violation of safety and health rules.
- * Negligence, careless errors, or abuse of equipment.

The Paraeducator will make a conscious effort to avoid engaging in the following behaviors and failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to but not limited to termination:

- * Dishonesty
- * Deliberately falsifying, altering, or supplying false information on School District records. This includes false sick leave claims and falsifying time sheets.
- * Sleeping during work hours.
- * Fighting; disorderly, subversive, insubordinate, immoral or indecent conduct during working hours or on School District premises.
- * Working on personal jobs or carrying on secondary employment on School District time.
- * Deliberate failure to complete School District records.
- * Inappropriate communication with parents and students via social media.
- * Violation of safety and health rules which may endanger the employee, other employees or the public.
- * Excessive absenteeism.
- * Failure to notify your supervisor that you will be absent from work.
- * Failure to perform duties as outlined in the employee's job description or carry out reasonable assignments or instructions.
- * Failure to follow the proper procedures or policies of the School District.
- * Incompetence.

- * Two written warnings for any combination of offenses during a twelve (12) month period.
- * Theft, willful destruction and/or unauthorized use or altering of property or equipment belonging to the School District or any employee.
- * Violation of any provisions of the School District's policy regarding alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.
- * Obtaining employment promotions under false pretenses.
- * Conviction of, plea of guilty to, plea of nolo contendere (no contest) to, or deferred judgment or adjudication regarding a crime carrying a penitentiary sentence, regardless of whether a penitentiary sentence is imposed.
- * Disobedience, insubordination, or refusal to comply with reasonable instructions or authorized supervision.
- * Failure to keep current and valid any necessary licenses and/or certifications.
- * Violation of any provision of the School District's policy concerning Sexual and Other Prohibited Harassment.
- * Habitual offenders of various School District rules.

SUCCESSFUL PARAEDUCATORS WILL:

1. Communicate with the teachers daily.
2. Offer suggestions, although some may not be used.
3. Ask the teacher's opinion on your performance.
4. Discuss problems now. Don't let them grow by ignoring them.
5. Try to follow instructions exactly as they are given to you.
6. Remember all final decisions are up to the classroom teacher.
7. Maintain confidentiality.
8. Offer the teacher feedback.
9. Let teachers know your strengths.
10. Ask questions, the teacher may assume that you understand his/her directions.
11. Share responsibilities - work as a team, plan together.
12. Be patient with yourself, with the teacher(s), and with the children.
13. Become familiar with every child in the classroom.

CHILD SPECIFIC ASSOCIATES

If you are a "child specific" associate, you will most likely spend the majority of your day with one student. Your main responsibility is the safety and academic advancement (under the direction of a classroom or special education teacher) of that particular child. You will accompany and help him/her in everything he/she does throughout the day. This will probably include work in the classroom, traveling to special classes such as P.E. and music, bus loading/unloading, recess, lunch, assemblies and field trips.

* HOW CLOSE SHOULD I STAY? If you have been assigned to work one-on-one with a student, there is most likely a sincere concern for that child's safety, the safety of others, or a wide range of other issues. Constant and direct attention can help prevent a variety of problems. Therefore, it is very important to stay within close proximity of your student at all times. (A good rule of thumb: five feet or less*). It only takes a second for a catastrophe to occur. Some students are quick, like to run and will exhaust you "running after them" all day. Don't do it. Remind and enforce the rule that it is "*their job to stay with you*", not the other way around (this skill could be practiced). As you establish a routine with your student, it will be easier to "loosen the reins" a little and know when to give him/her the independence he/she needs and deserves.

* SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: Your student may receive services under their IEP where academic work is specifically tailored to his or her needs. If so, you will be working as a team with the Special Education Teacher. The teachers will rely on you to communicate to them how the student is doing "as a whole" throughout the day and in all school settings. Please report any problems to Special Education Teachers and use them as a resource for behavior management, communicating with other teachers and

communicating with parents. Also, because you are with that student all day long, feel free to share areas of concern and suggestions that you see would make the student's day better. Please ask before making changes on your own.

* **WHAT IS AN IEP?** An IEP is an *Individual Education Plan* written by Special Education Staff to pinpoint specific areas of concern for a student. The curriculum should then address these areas. It is important for you to know the student's goals, modifications, and accommodations as listed in the IEP in order to support the student and the Special Education Teacher in every way. Goals may be either academic or behavioral in nature. Examples of IEP goals:

"In 36 weeks, John will read at an H level book with 90% accuracy. "

"In 36 weeks, Sara will complete basic addition facts to 18 with 85% accuracy. "

"In 36 weeks, Chad will reduce tantrums to one or less/day. "

Smaller benchmarks or objectives may also be included. At times, you may be asked to chart or record behaviors. As with all school information, confidentiality is required.

* **WHAT IS AN IEP MEETING?** An IEP meeting is held once a year (sometimes more often) for teachers, parents, administration, the Area Education Agency and a variety of others to "touch base" and monitor the overall progress of a student in Special Needs Programs. You may or may not be asked to attend, but your observations and concerns are important either way. An IEP meeting may also be called to address a new problem.

* **WALKING A FINE LINE:** Please be careful not to do for the students any tasks that they are able to do themselves. It is often hard to know when to help and when to expect independence. The goal, however, is independence so under your watchful eye, students should be encouraged to carry their own supplies, turn in homework, lunch money or notes from home, zip coats, put on shoes, communicate with teachers, etc. Strive for slightly more independence each day.

* **HOW TO DEAL WITH BEHAVIOR ISSUES - The Basics:** Entire textbooks are devoted to behavior problems in children that are "beyond the ordinary". However, if you're just getting started, you'll want to remember the very basics. *The ultimate goal is getting students to be in charge of their own (positive) actions or accepting consequences for their misbehavior.*

1. **Consistency:** All children need consistency. This is especially true for children who have behavioral issues. Decide how best to deal with a given situation (sometimes this takes several tries) and then stick with it. While it is tempting to make exceptions at times, it is best not to. Of course, each student will be different and you will have to make your own common sense calls.
2. **Set Consequences:** With the help of the teacher, set specific consequences for specific problems. Then, deliver those consequences each time the negative behavior occurs. It is best to do this in a calm, matter-of-fact way and remind the student that he or she "chose" the consequence.
3. **Reward / Praise:** It is important to frequently notice expected/acceptable behavior and encourage it to continue. This can be done formally with charts or tangible rewards. Informally, it can be done with simple (but sincere) statements like *"What a great job you're doing today"*, or *"Wow, you are doing that even better than yesterday"*. Sometimes rewards need to be immediate in order to help modify a behavior. Over a period of time, the positive behavior should become more automatic and the reward can be less frequent. The classroom or Special Education teacher should develop the program as necessary.
4. **Humor:** One of the best ways of dealing with difficult children is the use of humor. Most students respond to happy adults who show they care in a variety of ways. Many students like

innocent teasing and it will often put them in a good frame of mind for learning. Over time, humor can help establish a good two-way relationship. Be careful not to use sarcasm or let the teasing get out of hand.

5. **The Adult is in Charge:** You are in charge of the student. It is important to convey this message to him/her in a respectful, yet firm manner. Often, children with behavioral problems are "asking" for someone to set and enforce boundaries. That does not mean, however, that they won't challenge them. If you are perceived as being someone who is easy to "run over", it is likely you will be. Remember: FACT (Firm and Consistent Tactics).

6. **Never Argue:** Because it is easy to fall into the "argument trap", make a conscious effort to distinguish between explaining (okay) and arguing (not okay). Ignore statements intended to prolong issues that need to be dropped and try redirection.

Suggestions for Interacting with Students

1. Establish a positive relationship with the students (respect, courtesy, friendship).
2. Our job is to encourage students rather than to control.
3. Be positive in speaking to the students, avoid "putting them down."
4. When possible organize ahead of time. think before speaking.
5. Use the students' names.
6. When giving directions, first get the student's attention.
7. Speak in a calm manner.
8. Try to maintain eye contact with the student.
9. Minimize distractions.
10. Let them know why the topic is important.
11. Let them know that you are talking to them for their benefit.
12. Use questions to involve the student and monitor understanding.
13. Include examples from the student's experience.
14. Avoid discussing student's personal problems when you are uncomfortable about it.
15. If frustration, anger, or boredom occurs, stop.
16. Reinforce and support students for listening.

Physical Restraint of Students

State law forbids school employees from using corporal punishment against any student. Certain actions by school employees are not considered corporal punishment. Additionally, school employees may use "reasonable and necessary force, not designed or intended to cause pain" to do certain things, such as prevent harm to persons or property.

State law also places limits on school employees' abilities to restrain or confine and detain any student. The law limits why, how, where, and for how long a school employee may restrain or confine and detain a child. If a child is restrained or confined and detained, the school must maintain documentation and must provide certain types of notice to the child's parent.

GRINNELL-NEWBURG COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Support Staff Evaluation

The Grinnell-Newburg Community School District system of evaluation has been developed on the premise that all school support staff employees are evaluated. Regardless of how formal the system for evaluation is, what evidence is collected or analyzed, or how often formal reports are written, school support staff employees are evaluated and they are evaluated often. Students, parents, teachers, administrators, peers, and the general public all evaluate school employees.

The adopted system of formal evaluation for support staff personnel, including paraprofessionals, secretaries, food service employees, physical plant employees, and transportation employees, establishes District standards expected of all support personnel and uses those standards and employee assignment descriptions to judge individual performance. Evaluation procedures will identify areas of employee strengths and weaknesses and utilize those areas to establish goals to be reached for the subsequent evaluation period.

Each support staff employee will be evaluated twice each contract year by the appropriate supervisor(s), administrator(s), or designee(s). An initial, informal evaluation will be conducted prior to December 1 to assess current year progress and to change or modify goals for the year. The evaluator may, or may not, use the adopted evaluation instrument for this evaluation. A formal evaluation will be held prior to the issuance of contracts for the subsequent year, at which time the employee's performance will be assessed using the adopted evaluation form, and goals for the subsequent year will be established. At the beginning of the contract year the employee will be given a copy of the adopted evaluation form and appropriate assignment description and notified of who will be conducting his or her evaluation.

**EVALUATION INSTRUMENT FOR:
SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONAL**

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Evaluator/Title: _____

Reason for Evaluation: _____ Probationary _____ Annual _____ Other

Please rate on the following factors as follows (1 = Low through 4 = High; N/A= Not Applicable)[1]

Rating Factor	1	2	3	4	N/A	Comments
A) Performance Responsibilities						
1) Reinforces desired student behavior						
2) Anticipates student needs and reacts accordingly						
3) Quality of work is consistently high (neatness, creativity, accuracy, timeliness)						
4) Consistently follows supervisor's directions						
5) Properly operates and cares for equipment and materials						
6) Shares with teacher all relevant information concerning students in a timely manner						
7) Follows established discipline and reinforcement procedures; including individual behavior/health plans						
8) Makes self available to students during school hours and/or before/after school hours as assigned						
9) Keeps students motivated and engaged in learning objective						

10) Effectively redirects students who are losing focus						
11) Assists in maintaining a consistent behavior program as established by the classroom teacher						
12) Performs clerical services (i.e., typing, proofing, filing, checking records, etc.)						
13) Consistently and effectively assists with non-instructional classroom duties (i.e., snack, toilet, clothing routines, etc.)						
14) Assists in transporting students on community mobility experiences, as necessary and as assigned						
<i>B) Quality of Work/ Work Habits</i>						
1) Completes assignments accurately, efficiently and in accordance with school/department standards						
2) Finishes assignments within a reasonable time frame						
3) Plans and organizes work well, follows procedures and makes efficient use of work time						
4) Demonstrates ability to perform tasks with little or no supervision						
5) Presents professional appearance						
6) Maintains respect for confidential information						
<i>C) Safety/</i>						

Environment						
1) Keeps work area and/or warehouse in a clean, orderly and safe condition						
2) Wears protective equipment and clothing as necessary						
D) Punctuality/ Attendance						
1) Daily attendance						
2) Follows leave procedures						
E) Work Relationships						
1) Demonstrates respectful, courteous and considerate conduct						
2) Interacts well with others						
3) Performs duties with a positive attitude						
4) Accepts criticism, direction and/or changes						

Attached to this document is the narrative explanation to any ratings of 1 or 2.

Employee Signature/ Date

Evaluator Signature/ Date

Signature of the *employee* attests to the fact that the contents of this evaluation have been discussed.

[1] Definition of Ratings: (Note: any ratings of 1 or 2 require narrative comments to explain)

- (1) *Unacceptable* = needs immediate improvement
- (2) *Needs Improvement* = action must be taken to correct and/or improve deficiency
- (3) *Average* = work is acceptable
- (4) *Exceed Expectations* = employee's performance is rated at the top 20% of all staff

**EVALUATION INSTRUMENT FOR:
MEDIA CENTER PARAPROFESSIONAL**

Name: _____

Position: _____

Date: _____

Evaluator/Title: _____

Reason for Evaluation: _____ Probationary _____ Annual _____ Other

Please rate on the following factors as follows (1 = Low through 4 = High; N/A= Not Applicable)[1]

Rating Factor	1	2	3	4	N/A	Comments
A) Performance Responsibilities						
1) Assists District faculty in finding information in books, audio/visuals, Internet or via catalog						
2) Anticipates student needs and reacts accordingly						
3) Quality of work is consistently high (neatness, creativity, accuracy, timeliness)						
4) Consistently follows supervisor's directions						
5) Properly operates and cares for equipment and materials						
6) Processes new materials in a timely fashion						
7) Follows established discipline and reinforcement procedures						
8) Makes self available to students during school hours and/or before/after school hours as assigned						
9) Keeps students motivated and engaged in learning objective						
10) Performs librarian tasks (i.e.,						

checks books in/out, shelves books, inventories books, run overdue book notices, catalogue all media materials, etc.)						
<i>B) Quality of Work/ Work Habits</i>						
1) Completes assignments accurately, efficiently and in accordance with school/department standards						
2) Finishes assignments within a reasonable time frame						
3) Plans and organizes work well, follows procedures and makes efficient use of work time						
4) Demonstrates ability to perform tasks with little or no supervision						
5) Presents professional appearance						
6) Maintains respect for confidential information						
<i>C) Safety/ Environment</i>						
1) Keeps work area and/or warehouse in a clean, orderly and safe condition						
2) Wears protective equipment and clothing as necessary						
<i>D) Punctuality/ Attendance</i>						
1) Daily attendance						
2) Follows leave procedures						
<i>E) Work Relationships</i>						
1) Demonstrates respectful, courteous and considerate conduct						
2) Interacts well with others						

3) Performs duties with a positive attitude						
4) Accepts criticism, direction and/or changes						

Attached to this document is the narrative explanation to any ratings of 1 or 2.

Employee Signature/ Date

Evaluator Signature/ Date

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 - (3) *Average* = work is acceptable
 - (4) *Exceed Expectations* = employee’s performance is rated at the top 20% of all staff