

The PAR²A Center
Policy & Research Special Interest Group
Skills Standards for Paraeducators in Colorado
8/30/2005

Preamble: In the year 2004-05, at the request of the Colorado Department of Education (CDE), the PAR²A Center to coordinate three Paraeducator Special Interest Groups: *Paraeducator Training SIG*, *Paraeducator Career Ladder SIG* and *Research, Policy and Guidance SIG*. The *Research, Policy and Guidance SIG* included representatives from the CO-TOP SIG and the Career ladder SIG, representatives from the Colorado Department of Education and others who are actively involved/ interested in training and employment issues of paraeducators. This SIG acted as an advisory body to Colorado Department of Education and its deliberations resulted in this document, *Paraeducator Skills Standards*. The purpose of this document is to identify the skills paraeducators in Colorado should have, depending on the nature of the responsibilities they hold in their positions. In addition, we are offering a listing of possible training materials and programs to help districts provide training to paraeducators so they can meet these skill standards. We believe that all paraeducators (see definitions and differentiations below) should demonstrate high levels of knowledge and skill in:

1. the use of instructional techniques and student instruction methods,
2. adult communication, interpersonal and teamwork skills,
3. ethical practices,
4. behavior management and behavior support skills, as well as
5. the required NCLB academic proficiencies, as specified in the attached table.

Definitions:

Clerical Aides/School Assistants: School employees who primarily do clerical work such as filing, typing, copying, mailing, phone calls and scheduling appointments or meetings.

Paraeducators: School employees who provide instruction and related services under the direction of a professional who holds ultimate responsibility for the outcomes of the program and of the students.

Library / Media Assistants: School employees who provide instruction on the use of the library, manage circulation, help teachers and students locate books and resource materials, literacy skills, computer skills, use of other instructional equipment.

Health Aides: School employees, who do not provide instruction, but provide personal, custodial, or health assistance to students under the direction of a school nurse or other health professional.

Highly qualified paraeducators: Paraeducators who:

- 1) Meet the academic requirements of NCLB and
- 2) Demonstrate all of the skills listed in column 1, and
- 3) Demonstrate all of the skills appropriate to their particular assignments, listed in Part II.

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Ongoing: Continuing training.

		Skills for All Paraeducators	Skills Definitions
No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)	<u>Academic</u>	Literacy Skills	Equivalent to 2 years of college (48 semester credit hours), an Associates degree, or passing score on a state approved test.
		Math Skills	Equivalent to 2 years of college (48 semester credit hours), an Associates degree, or passing score on a state approved test.
	<u>Ability to Assist in Literacy & Math</u>	Instructional Techniques and Methods of Assisting with Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Uses research-based practices in literacy instruction. ➤ Defines and describes the pillars of literacy: phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency. ➤ Demonstrates research-based indirect, direct and systematic teaching of phonics, decoding, comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency skills. ➤ Explains typical human acquisition of literacy skills ➤ Describes the relationship between comprehension and vocabulary. ➤ Identifies literacy assessments and the paraeducator’s role in assessment. ➤ Contrasts the characteristics of fluent and non-fluent readers. ➤ Calculates the relative difficulty of a reading passage.

Skill s for All Paraeducators		Skills Definitions
Recommended Colorado Standards that go beyond NCLB <u>General & Remedial Instruction</u>	Instructional Techniques and Methods of Assisting with Math	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Describes the development of problem-solving. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach number theory, factors and multiples, place-value, rational / irrational number concepts. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach use of number sense to justify the reasonableness of solutions for a variety of computation and problem solving situations. ➤ Uses concrete materials to teach fractional concepts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, division. ➤ Uses concrete materials to develop decimal and percent concepts and the connection between them. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students to convert fractions, decimals, and percents. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students linear and non-linear functions. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students to interpret linear graphs as rates of change ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students to sketch graphs that represent real-life situations. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students to classify relationships between 2-D and 3-D geometric shapes ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students to use concrete methods to determine perimeter and area. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students to develop perimeter and area formulas for geometric shapes. ➤ Demonstrates how to teach students how scale factor and dimensions affect perimeter and area.
	General Instructional Techniques and Methods Behavior Management / Behavior Support Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identifies major cognitive, affective, physical, and communicative milestones of typically developing children and youth. ➤ Describes the risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development. ➤ Identifies basic styles of human learning. ➤ Portrays subject area content accurately to students in all relevant subject areas. ➤ Demonstrates ability to follow lesson plans completely and accurately, ➤ Carries out individual adaptation plans, changing and managing materials according to plan ➤ Carries out health plans and/ or behavior plans provided by supervising professional(s). ➤ Fosters independence through the use of appropriate levels of cues and prompts / student assistance. ➤ Documents student progress and performance using tools provided by supervising professional. ➤ Demonstrates how to employ components of direct instruction lessons. ➤ Demonstrates appropriate student assistance in cooperative learning lessons. ➤ Uses peer-teaching appropriately. ➤ Follows written lesson plans. ➤ Demonstrates cognitive modeling and coaching. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Uses techniques that are appropriate to the social-emotional development of students. ➤ Uses rules, routines, procedures established by supervising professional(s). ➤ Establishes rules, routines, procedures for small groups consistent with supervising professional ➤ Provides positive behavior supports to students. ➤ Provides instruction in appropriate social interactions among students and promotes friendships.

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Skill s for All Paraeducators		Skills Definitions
<u>Working on an Educational Team</u>	Legal & Ethical Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understands how culture affects social relationships and student behaviors. ➤ Demonstrates basic principles of behavior modification. ➤ Demonstrates how to observe and record behaviors for use in functional assessments. ➤ Demonstrates effective communication with students. ➤ Demonstrates effective strategies for minor behavior problems.
	Adult Interpersonal, Communication and Teamwork skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Serves as a positive role model for students. ➤ Maintains the safety, dignity, privacy and confidentiality of students ➤ Practices within local district policies and procedures as well as legal limits of the paraeducator role. ➤ Carries out health, safety, and emergency procedures and practices of the school and /or district. ➤ Knows how and when to report child abuse, suicidal ideation and/or dangerous behavior. ➤ Demonstrates sensitivity to the beliefs, traditions, and values of other cultures. ➤ Performs legal and ethical tasks as directed by supervising professional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonstrates effective problem solving, flexibility, and conflict resolution / management skills. ➤ Communicates thoughts, ideas, information and messages clearly through speech and writing. ➤ Demonstrates a positive regard for the differences among roles of team members ➤ Establishes and maintains rapport with all members of the educational team. ➤ Participates in ongoing professional development congruent with personal and job-related needs. ➤ Participates effectively in team meetings as scheduled and led by the supervising professional(s). ➤ Uses appropriate timing in addressing team members ➤ Uses tactful approaches regarding the use of effective instructional practices that are not evident in the classroom.

Part II – Special Tasks or Job Assignments and Related Skills

	Job or Task Assignments	Paraeducator Skills Required for Assignment
Recommended Colorado Standards that go beyond NCLB	Assists with Developing Initial Language and Communication Skills in Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recognizes the components of typical language development. ➤ Identifies the basic components of human communication. ➤ Names the ecological components of communication. ➤ Demonstrates behaviors that facilitate communication with students. ➤ Recognizes the communicative intent of human behavior. ➤ Defines processing and comprehension difficulties. ➤ Describes the process of communication without speech. ➤ Identifies the role of the paraeducator in facilitating student communication ➤ Explains the conceptual basis behind the use of augmentative communication systems. ➤ Creates and operates low tech systems according to student-specific goals ➤ Programs and maintains high-tech assistive devices ➤ Instructs student in use of low and high tech assistive devices

	Job or Task Assignments	Paraeducator Skills Required for Assignment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Follows directions of Speech Language Pathologist as appropriate
	Assists with Positive Behavior Supports for Students with Atypical Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identifies challenging behavior. ➤ Analyzes behavior management and behavior support approaches. ➤ Names the dangers of labeling behaviors. ➤ Describes how behaviors communicate needs or wants. ➤ Recognizes that when behaviors are eliminated they are replaced with other behaviors. ➤ Describes the relationship between communication and challenging behaviors. ➤ Demonstrates response validation. ➤ Provides choices to children with disabilities. ➤ Facilitates friendships among students ➤ Identifies the role of the paraeducator in assessment. ➤ Conducts behavioral observations and collects behavior data. ➤ Identifies the elements of a behavior support plan. ➤ Describes the role of the paraeducator in a behavior support plan. ➤ Demonstrates appropriate techniques for dealing with challenging behaviors. ➤ Uses appropriate crisis prevention and intervention techniques
	Assists with Instruction in Functional, Life Skills or Community Based Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Describes the implications of a life-skills curriculum ➤ Describes how community-based training coincides with inclusion. ➤ Identifies domain areas and embedded skills as they apply to elementary and middle school students. ➤ Demonstrates how to assist students conduct self-analyses. ➤ Demonstrates how to present choices to students and encourage choice-making. ➤ Demonstrates the use of effective communication skills when coaching students. ➤ Demonstrates how to coach students in the use of effective communication skills. ➤ Demonstrates how to encourage students' exploration of interest areas. ➤ Demonstrates how to support students in their efforts to set goals, create plans, solve problems, identify and access resources, and make decisions. ➤ Identifies domain areas and embedded skills for high school and transition students.

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Describes a person-centered planning process and how it determines what students are taught. ➤ Carries out IEP-based instruction in community settings. ➤ Defines transition. ➤ Identifies forms, agencies, and supports necessary for transition and how to access them. ➤ Defines the rationale for providing vocational instruction. ➤ Recognizes formal and informal vocational assessments and the role of the paraeducator in using them. ➤ Conducts a job site analysis, ecological inventory, task analysis, and discrepancy analysis. ➤ Demonstrates job matching procedures, modifications, and adaptations. ➤ Identifies the embedded skills necessary for successful job performance. ➤ Identifies natural supports for stability and maintenance of jobs.
	<p>Assists with English language acquisition for students who are speakers of other languages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonstrates the use of techniques and strategies characteristic of sheltered language instruction. ➤ Recognizes a variety of lesson plan formats for English language learners. ➤ Identifies ways to improve language learning in lessons for English language learners. ➤ Identifies ways to use a variety of materials to promote classroom diversity. ➤ Recognizes the process of primary language development. ➤ Identifies the principles, key concepts, and components of language. ➤ Identifies the major second language acquisition belief systems operating in schools today. ➤ Identify the stages of second language acquisition. ➤ Describe the factors that influence how students acquire English as an additional language in schools. ➤ Demonstrates the development of social language and academic language proficiency. ➤ Recognizes instructional methods used in bilingual education classrooms. ➤ Demonstrates a variety of ways to monitor learning and progress in language acquisition. ➤ Knows major laws and court rulings that have shaped education for English language learners. ➤ Knows the processes in providing appropriate educational services for English language learners. ➤ Knows key terminology in working with students who are learning English as a second language. ➤ Knows the legal rights of English language learners. ➤ Recognizes the features of ESL and/or bilingual models and philosophies being used in schools. ➤ Knows the relationship between culture and schooling. ➤ Defines culture and understand ways in which culture may be viewed. ➤ Explains how cultural differences affect teaching and learning. ➤ Demonstrates techniques to ease newcomers into the routines of the class.
	<p>Assists with Health, Personal Care, & Mobility Needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identifies laws that guide health-related services in schools. ➤ Identifies services designed for students with significant health support needs. ➤ Performs health-related tasks in safe ways that demonstrate legal and ethical role limitations, training, and risk-management. ➤ Knows the process of developing a health care plan. ➤ Facilitates levels of participation appropriate to student capability. ➤ Identify the role of the school nurse in health-related services. ➤ Identify the role of the paraeducator in health-related services. ➤ Identify body systems and symptoms that require referral to the school nurse. ➤ Identify guidelines related to infectious diseases in school-age children. ➤ Demonstrate correct eating procedures for students with special eating needs.

	Job or Task Assignments	Paraeducator Skills Required for Assignment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Demonstrates basic first aid skills ➤ Demonstrates CPR skills ➤ Uses and maintains adaptive equipment appropriately (e.g. wheelchairs, hearing aids, standers) ➤ Completes individualized OT, PT, and health related services as directed by the appropriate professional
	Assists Students in Use of Library / Media Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Instructs students on locating library / media resources ➤ Assists with circulation of library materials ➤ Reads to and with students using research-based vocabulary, comprehension and fluency methods ➤ Teaches students to use computers to locate reference material ➤ Assists students in finding appropriate literature for their developmental and reading levels ➤ Locates and arranges for use of instructional and curriculum support materials as requested by teachers ➤ Manages and maintains media technology ➤ Creates instructional materials using appropriate machines and according to teacher directions
	Assists with including Special Education students in general education classrooms and other school settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Know special education law. ➤ Implement inclusive practices ➤ Respect rights of students / families under special education law. ➤ Articulates the values and rationale for inclusion of students with disabilities into general education. ➤ Promotes interactions and facilitates friendships among students with and without disabilities ➤ Carries out the goals and purposes of inclusion for each student ➤ Fosters independence and partial participation of students in typical school settings and activities ➤ Knows major laws and court rulings that have helped shape special education services. ➤ Knows the legal rights of students with disabilities and the qualification processes for special education services and 504 plans. ➤ Describes the processes of special education services in Colorado. ➤ Knows how beliefs about people with disabilities are related to life experiences. ➤ Uses people-first language by talking and writing about people with disabilities in ways that honor their dignity and respect their value. ➤ Knows categories and general characteristics of exceptionality according to state and national laws. ➤ Recognizes the cognitive, communicative, physical, and affective needs that students may have as a result of a disability. ➤ Knows how to access information about specific disabilities, syndromes, and medical conditions on the internet, through libraries, and other sources.
	Assists students with autism spectrum disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤
	Assists students with hearing impairments / deafness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understands typical language acquisition and child development and the typical differences for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. ➤ Communicates fluently in American Sign Language or other language used by students ➤ Uses electronic equipment and systems (e.g. relay, pagers,) to communicate with deaf and hard of hearing students and/or parents

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Knows the educational implications of ‘deaf culture’ ➤ Locates curricular materials in alternative formats ➤ Corrects language errors of deaf and hard of hearing students appropriately ➤ Demonstrates teaching techniques appropriate to deaf and hard of hearing students
	Supervises common areas of the school (e.g. playground, hall, bus loading)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Describes rules and procedures for emergency situations in common settings. ➤ Establishes rules and carries out discipline plans as directed by supervisor. ➤ Identifies the role of the paraeducator in lunchroom, hall, playground, bus loading area supervision. ➤ Demonstrates signals for getting students’ attention in large group situations. ➤ Conducts an ecological inventory to determine natural supports available in common settings ➤ Demonstrates instructional methods for teaching pro-social behaviors in common settings. ➤ Fosters relationships among students in common settings ➤ Explains standard rules and instructional methods for typical playground games. ➤ Explains safety precautions for children using playground equipment. ➤ Conduct an ecological inventory of natural supports available in common settings ➤ Appropriately manages conflicts among students in common settings. ➤ Mediates conflicts among students on the playground. ➤ Demonstrates appropriate methods for teaching students to resolve conflict. ➤ Explain how to initiate, maintain, and supervise peer mediation programs. ➤ Explain how to maintain order on the bus.
	Assists students with vision impairments and blindness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Locates curricular materials in alternative formats