



# 2

## Responsibilities & Ethics

### Roles of Teachers and Paraprofessionals

**The role of the paraprofessional is defined in part by a job description.** Paraprofessionals perform specific duties, tasks, and other responsibilities defined in their job description. The job description may also identify the physical locations where these responsibilities will be performed, such as the name of the school, school building, and specific classrooms. It may also describe any unique qualifications required for the job, such as the ability to lift a specific weight level or any additional training needed. The job description may identify the supervisor(s) of the paraprofessional.

School districts usually maintain written job descriptions for every job in the district. The format of the job description varies with each district.



Learn more about the role of the paraprofessional by watching this video:  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=INnGHazHT60](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INnGHazHT60)

**In addition to the job description, the role of the paraprofessional is also defined by the working relationship between the paraprofessional and the supervising teacher.** Paraprofessionals work under the direction and guidance of a supervising teacher. The teacher also monitors and evaluates the performance of the paraprofessional and provides feedback to improve performance. The ideal relationship between the teacher and the paraprofessional may be described as a team of dedicated professionals collaborating to serve the needs of each student. *Although the job description may not say so directly, a key requirement for success as a paraprofessional is to keep in motion.* For example, students' lunch time is not a time for the paraprofessional to visit with other staff. Instead, it should be a time to support students' social skills. It is impossible to adequately assist the teacher and effectively meet the needs of individual students while remaining seated for long periods. The importance of the paraprofessional remaining visible and in motion is evident in the list of responsibilities below.

**Teacher and paraprofessional roles are different, but some responsibilities may be shared.** The chart below lists some common responsibilities of a supervising teacher and a paraprofessional. Although the supervising teacher frequently assigns specific tasks to the paraprofessional, within the boundaries of the job description, both may perform the paraprofessional's tasks as needed. Sharing of the paraprofessional's responsibilities may reflect the paraprofessional's level of training and experience, the specific skills needed, the requirements of individual instructional activities, as well as the type of classroom or instructional setting itself. The personalities of the teacher and the paraprofessional may also play a role, as well as the teacher's preferences. Every school and situation is different, so it is important for the paraprofessional to communicate with the supervising teacher and ask questions as they arise.

- Provide some job applications if available.
- Preview the video in advance. Find an alternate video if the link has changed. The duration of this video is 3:05.
- Reinforce this point (in italics).

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The paraprofessional frequently works with and assists students in a wide variety of settings, including the classroom, lab facilities, off-campus or community-based settings, hallways, on playgrounds, and in transportation situations. In some of these settings, the supervising teacher may not always be present. However, the paraprofessional's role does not replace the role of the teacher; the school will designate certified personnel to whom the paraprofessional can report.

- Compare the roles of the supervising teacher and the paraprofessional.

Supervising Teacher	Paraprofessional
<b>Planning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plans the weekly class schedule.</li> <li>• Plans instruction for the entire class and for individual students: goals, lessons, activities.</li> <li>• Assigns responsibilities to paraprofessionals.</li> <li>• Develops and implements the IEP for individual students as a member of the IEP team.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assists with planning; takes notes, makes copies, creates files and handouts, etc.</li> <li>• Carries out the instructional plan; asks questions as needed.</li> <li>• Maintains student records in accordance with job description.</li> <li>• Assists in implementing the IEP goals and objectives for individual students. May be a member of the IEP team.</li> </ul>
<b>Delivering Instruction</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops objectives appropriate for the entire class and for individual students.</li> <li>• Chooses and/or creates instructional materials.</li> <li>• Leads lessons for the entire class, for small groups, and for individual students.</li> <li>• Uses computers and other appropriate technologies</li> <li>• Supervises the work of paraprofessionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivers and reinforces lessons developed by the supervising teacher.</li> <li>• Follows the directions of the supervising teacher.</li> <li>• Gathers recommended or required instructional materials.</li> <li>• Leads lessons for small groups and for individual students.</li> <li>• Uses computers and other appropriate technologies</li> </ul>
<b>Using Behavior Support Strategies</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applies techniques for classroom management.</li> <li>• Plans and implements behavior support strategies for the entire class and for individual students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implements positive behavior support strategies appropriate for the abilities and disabilities of individual students.</li> <li>• Gathers data and updates student records in accordance with job description.</li> </ul>
<b>Assessing Student Performance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administers assessments to the entire class.</li> <li>• Grades and evaluates individual student performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitors individual student's progress according to the student's IEP and communicates findings to the supervising teacher.</li> <li>• Assists with assessment procedures and data collection.</li> <li>• Assists in checking and scoring students' work.</li> </ul>

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Supervising Teacher	Paraprofessional
<b>Communicating with Family Members</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates and meets directly with family members or guardians of individual students.</li> <li>Plans and conducts conferences concerning individual students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicates and meets with family members or guardians of individual students only in accordance with job description and under the direction of the supervising teacher.</li> </ul>
<b>Developing as a Professional</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepts personal responsibility for building professional skills.</li> <li>Attends appropriate professional development and in-service activities.</li> <li>Monitors and evaluates the performance of paraprofessionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepts personal responsibility for building professional skills.</li> <li>Attends appropriate professional development and in-service activities.</li> <li>Responds to feedback about personal performance from the supervising teacher.</li> </ul>
<b>Other Duties</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.</li> <li>Complies with all FERPA requirements and school district policies to maintain the confidentiality of student information.</li> <li>Communicates upward to the next level higher in the hierarchy of responsibility: the appropriate school department head or coordinator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into the general education classroom.</li> <li>Assists individual students with self-care and health-related needs as assigned and in accordance with job description.</li> <li>Assists in monitoring playgrounds, lunch rooms, and buses as assigned and in accordance with job description.</li> <li>Complies with all FERPA requirements and school district policies to maintain the confidentiality of student information.</li> <li>Communicates upward to the next level higher in the hierarchy of responsibility: the supervising teacher.</li> </ul>

- Discuss the difference in the chain of communication.

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- Preview the activity in advance.



**Activity 2.1**  
**Roles Comparison**

**Directions:** What key words would you use to describe the differences and the similarities between the jobs of the supervising teacher and the paraprofessional? Write them in the space provided.

Role Similarities — \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Role Differences — \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Discuss the importance of the teacher’s expectations.

**Other Paraprofessional Responsibilities**

In addition to responsibilities relating to instruction, paraprofessionals often have many non-instructional duties relating to their assigned students. It is important to communicate with the supervising teacher about these duties, including any policies and rules that may apply and the teacher’s expectations of your performance.

- Accompanying students between classrooms and other facilities
- Assisting students during off-school and community-based activities
- Assisting students with transportation-related needs, such as:
  - waiting with students
  - making sure students board the right bus
  - helping the bus driver with a student’s adaptive equipment
- Assisting in transferring or moving students
- Assisting individual students with self-care needs (such as positioning, feeding, toileting)
- Assisting individual students with health-related and physical therapy needs
- Taking students to and from the lunch room, having lunch with the students, and assisting with lunch line supervision
- Supervising students during recess periods and while on field trips
- Taking attendance, maintaining records, and similar tasks
- Maintaining classroom equipment and supplies

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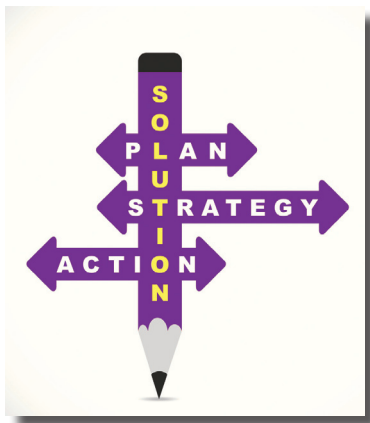
- Working with students' assistive devices
- Assisting teachers with discipline procedures and in emergency situations
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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



Learn more about the role of the paraprofessional by reading Section 2, "What Is a Paraprofessional?," in the guide *Effectively Utilizing and Supporting Paraprofessionals* at the link below. (Look for the link to the resource titled "Paraprofessional Manual—Ionia County.") [www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/start-resources-55.htm](http://www.gvsu.edu/autismcenter/start-resources-55.htm)

**Week One Action Plan**

- Arrive on time and ready to work.
- Learn the names of your students.
- Introduce yourself to key staff members and other paraprofessionals.
- Get copies of:
  - school personnel directory (or locate its online edition)
  - school organizational chart
  - school policies and procedures handbook
  - school calendar
- Become familiar with the layout of the school by taking a tour and/or using a school map. Locate:
  - buildings
  - offices
  - classrooms and labs
  - library
  - restrooms
  - entrances and exits
  - cafeteria
  - recess areas
  - bus drop-off area
  - staff parking areas



- Identify examples of assistive devices.
- Preview the website in advance. Find an alternate resource if the link has changed.
- Ask for suggestions to add to this list.

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- Learn emergency procedures and the locations of shelters.
- Recognize the routine of the school day.
- Discuss with the supervising teacher the expectations for your performance and the classroom routine.
- Identify and learn to use learning technologies.
- Observe your students and the supervising teacher.
- Note anything to follow up on later: questions, reminders, etc.

**Strategies for Career Success**

- Ask questions when you are unsure about what to do or how to do it.
- Keep a personal journal to keep track of questions you want to answer, training you want to pursue, and reflections on your performance.
- Take responsibility for building your skills. This includes:
  - Taking advantage of professional development opportunities offered by the school district.
  - Staying up-to-date about district policies and procedures through newsletters and other sources.
  - Learning more about special education issues from respected sources, including organization websites and professional publications.
  - Asking for feedback about your performance in addition to the formal performance evaluation process.
- Strive to make a good first impression with everyone you meet.
- Discuss the value of keeping a daily journal. Ask if anyone keeps a journal, and what it means to them.



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### 50 WAYS TO LEAD

#### Everyday Actions that Set an Example

1. Invest in yourself—Never stop learning.
2. Teach others.
3. Look for leadership skills in others.
4. Cultivate a positive environment.
5. Stick to your principles.
6. Be buoyant.
7. Think first.
8. Be a good follower.
9. Be confident.
10. Always be your true self.
11. Learn to like people.
12. Earn the respect and trust of others.
13. Choose good role models.
14. Recognize the accomplishments of others.
15. Let your excitement show.
16. Expect the best of others.
17. Keep your cool.
18. Be humble but proud of your achievements.
19. Be tactful.
20. Work hard at listening well.
21. Learn from others—their successes and their mistakes.
22. Search for answers.
23. Show a sincere interest.
24. Give more credit than you take.
25. Be consistent.
26. Be a team player.
27. Act as you believe.
28. Criticize constructively.
29. Take responsibility.
30. Learn from your own mistakes.
31. Share the ball.
32. Hear more than you say.
33. Stay positive.
34. Give praise in public, criticize in private.
35. Reach your own opinions about people.
36. Keep a confidence.
37. Be ready with reasons.
38. Say what you mean and mean what you say.
39. Take acceptable risks.
40. Appreciate a sense of humor.
41. Be ready to compromise.
42. Eat lots of moral fiber.
43. Lend a hand.
44. Know when to apologize—and do it.
45. Do the worst, first.
46. Show respect for different opinions.
47. Do the math on your own ideas.
48. Keep your promises.
49. Know when to change course.
50. Accept new challenges.

Source: Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center, Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, [www.okcimc.com](http://www.okcimc.com)

- What are ways that the paraprofessional can set an example every day? For example, “keep in motion” would be one way.



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**Activity 2.2**  
**Interview a Paraprofessional**

**Directions:** Interview a working paraprofessional. Get responses to the questions below, as well as any that you create. Be sure to have the permission of the paraprofessional and the supervising teacher in advance.

1. What is most rewarding about your job?

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2. What is most challenging about your job?

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3. How would you advise someone wanting to be a paraprofessional?

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- Supplement these directions with additional guidelines as appropriate.

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**Activity 2.3**  
**Ideal Job Description**

**Directions:** Based on your interviews and the information in this module, write the responsibilities in your ideal job description.

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- Ask for volunteers to share their ideal job descriptions. How are they similar and different?

## Ethics

As members of a team which serves the unique needs of individual students, paraprofessionals also have a responsibility to behave ethically in regard to those students. Ethical considerations for paraprofessionals affect daily responsibilities, interactions with students and parents/guardians, the paraprofessional as a representative of the school, and the working relationship of the paraprofessional with the supervising teacher. Paraprofessionals must develop their personal understanding about possible situations and the appropriate and ethical responses. Teachers and administrators can assist paraprofessionals in recognizing these responses as well. Another tool for building a framework for ethical behavior is a school or school district code of ethics for employees. Such codes of ethics may address the paraprofessional's relationship with teachers, with students and their parents or guardians, and with the school itself.



- Reference the discussion of FERPA from Module 1.
- Provide potential scenarios to which FERPA requirements would apply.

A key component of ethical behavior for paraprofessionals is maintaining confidentiality about students and related information. A federal law that applies to paraprofessionals is FERPA, or the *Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*. FERPA protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. (Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students.") Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to specific parties or under specific conditions. (See the module, "Legal Foundations of Special Education.") **Paraprofessionals must be cautious when it comes to all information about students. They must apply FERPA requirements in response to any request for such information.**

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### Activity 2.4 Ethical Issues for Paraprofessionals

**Directions:** Paraprofessionals may find themselves in situations that challenge their ethical judgment. At the website below, read each situation carefully. Then, identify the ethical issue involved and the appropriate response of the paraprofessional. Discuss your responses in a team or group setting to compare responses. You can also compare your responses to those on the website.



<http://para.unl.edu/legacy/Ethics/lesson5.php>

- Preview the activity in advance.



### Activity 2.5 Field Experience Activities

**Directions:** Write a 250-word summary for each activity below.

1. Observe a severe/profound special education classroom. Describe how the paraprofessional supports the behavior, academic, and other related needs in the classroom.
2. Observe a mild/moderate special education classroom or inclusion program. Describe how the paraprofessional supports students, the special education teacher, and/or the general education teacher.
3. Interview a special education teacher, general education teacher, and related services professional regarding their roles and responsibilities related to their job description working with students with disabilities and paraprofessionals.
4. Interview a paraprofessional regarding their roles and responsibilities related to their job description in their current assignment.

- Ask for volunteers to share their experiences.

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- Ask for volunteers to share their reflections.
- Discuss the context of each task — when, where, and how often might a paraprofessional perform each task?



**Activity 2.6**  
**Observe, Discuss and Reflect Upon Specific Tasks of Paraprofessionals**

**Directions:** Observe each of the following tasks as it is performed. Discuss each task with a supervising teacher, then reflect upon each task. Complete each rubric below.

1. Task — Lifting a student

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task — What can you take away from your observation and discussion? How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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2. Task — Feeding a student

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task — What can you take away from your observation and discussion? How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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3. Task — Changing diapers

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task —What can you take away from your observation and discussion?  
How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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4. Task — Potty training

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task —What can you take away from your observation and discussion?  
How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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5. Task — Reading a lesson plan involving a small group activity

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task — What can you take away from your observation and discussion? How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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6. Task — Leading a small group

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task — What can you take away from your observation and discussion? How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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7. Task — Using circle time

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task —What can you take away from your observation and discussion?  
How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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8. Task — Supervising students on a playground

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task —What can you take away from your observation and discussion?  
How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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9. Task — Performing routines

- Observe the task being performed.
- Discuss the task with supervising teacher.
- Reflect upon the task — What can you take away from your observation and discussion? How will you use this experience in your current or future assignments?

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- Ask learners to complete the module review questions. Discuss the responses as a group.

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