

STANDARDS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

State and federal law requires paraprofessionals who assist in the provision of special education and related services have the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of students with disabilities. To this end, the State Department of Education has developed “Standards for Paraprofessionals Supporting Special Needs”

Orientation and training in the paraprofessional’s first year of employment target entry-level standards to ensure that all paraprofessionals are knowledgeable, have the skills needed to support the programs to which they are assigned, and comply with legal and policy requirements. Training to address intermediate standards can extend over a two-year period and is planned according to the needs of the paraprofessional, as determined by the annual evaluation. Training to address advanced standards is not required.

(E) = Entry Level

(I) = Intermediate

(A) = Advanced

Principle 1: The paraprofessional has a basic knowledge of the discipline(s) taught and supports the teacher/provider in creating learning experiences that make the subject matter meaningful for students.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional has the basic academic skills needed to perform his or her assignments. (E)
2. The paraprofessional possesses basic educational terminology regarding students, programs, roles, and instructional activities. (I)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional realizes how the application of learning is useful in life.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional demonstrates the academic skills needed to perform his or her assignment(s). (E)
2. The paraprofessional is able to use basic educational terminology to understand assigned tasks. (I)
3. The paraprofessional presents subject area content accurately to students. (I)

Principle 2: The Paraprofessional has a basic knowledge of how students learn and develop and assists in providing opportunities that support the students’ intellectual, social, and personal development.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional understands which materials and activities are chronologically age appropriate. (I)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional appreciates individual variations within each domain of development.

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Performance

1. The paraprofessional uses developmentally-appropriate and age-appropriate strategies, equipment, materials, and technologies as directed by the teacher/provider. (I)

Principle 3: The paraprofessional knows that students differ in their approaches to learning and assists in creating instructional opportunities that are adapted to students with diverse needs.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional understands the impact that a disability or a combination of disabilities may have on a student's life. (E)
2. The paraprofessional knows about different methods that are used by teacher/providers to accommodate individual student learning needs. (I)
3. The paraprofessional has a basic knowledge of the strategies used to support the learning of students whose first language is not English. (I)
4. The paraprofessional has an awareness of common assistive technology devices used to accommodate student learner needs. (I)
5. The paraprofessional understands, in general terms, Idaho's special education requirements, including definitions, qualifications, and services. (I)
6. The paraprofessional knows about areas of exceptionality, such as learning disabilities, visual and perceptual difficulties, emotional and behavioral problems, physical and cognitive delays, and giftedness. (I)
7. The paraprofessional understands variations of beliefs, traditions, and values regarding disability across cultures and their effect on relationships among the student, the family, and school personnel. (A)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional has an appreciation of programs for students with diverse needs.
2. The paraprofessional believes that all students can learn.
3. The paraprofessional believes his or her role includes advocating for, encouraging, motivating, and facilitating individual learning.
4. The paraprofessional respects students as individuals with differing backgrounds, skills, talents, and interests.
5. The paraprofessional is sensitive to community and cultural norms.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional uses his or her understanding of program requirements to carry out assignments. (E)
2. The paraprofessional persists in helping all students achieve success. (E)
3. The paraprofessional assists in adapting instructional strategies and materials according to student needs and ability levels. (I)

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4. The paraprofessional assists the teacher/provider to maintain assistive/adaptive/medical services. (I)
5. The paraprofessional demonstrates the ability to carry out a variety of teacher/provider directed accommodations and adaptations to address the individual student's needs. (I)
6. The paraprofessional demonstrates proper lifting, carrying, and transferring techniques. (I)
7. The paraprofessional uses a number of teacher/provider directed strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English. (I)

Principle 4: The paraprofessional understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to assist the teacher/provider.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional knows where to access a variety of learning resources. (E)
2. The paraprofessional understands that students from diverse experiential, cultural, economic, and language backgrounds may need different strategies for learning. (I)
3. The paraprofessional has a basic understanding of a variety of instructional techniques used by the teacher/provider. (I)
4. The paraprofessional understands basic instructional, remedial, and accelerated methods, techniques, and materials for teaching a variety of students. (A)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional believes that a variety of instructional strategies may be necessary to meet individual needs.
2. The paraprofessional values flexibility and resourcefulness in supporting the teacher/provider in adapting and modifying instruction to address student needs.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional uses a variety of instructional techniques as modeled by the teacher/provider. (I)
2. The paraprofessional locates and maintains a variety of instructional resources as directed by the teacher/provider. (I)

Principle 5: The paraprofessional understands the impact of the educational environment on student learning, self-motivation, and positive social interaction and assists in creating a positive learning environment.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional understands district guidelines for protecting the safety, health, and well-being of students and staff (e.g., universal precautions for preventing illnesses and infections, the proper body mechanics for lifting students and heavy objects, CPR, and first aid). (E)

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2. The paraprofessional understands how social groups function and influence people and how people influence groups. (I)
3. The paraprofessional recognizes factors and situations that are likely to promote or diminish intrinsic motivation and knows how to help students become self-motivated. (I)
4. The paraprofessional understands the goal of promoting student self-determination and self-advocacy skills and his or her role in supporting that goal. (I)
5. The paraprofessional has a general understanding of positive behavioral supports. (I)
6. The paraprofessional understands the demands of various classroom and nonclassroom environments on individuals with diverse learning needs. (A)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional values the role of students in promoting one another's learning and recognizes the importance of peer relationships in establishing a climate of learning.
2. The paraprofessional recognizes the value of intrinsic motivation to students' lifelong growth and learning.
3. The paraprofessional values and understands student independence and the "dignity of risk."
4. The paraprofessional respects a wide diversity of beliefs, traditions, and values found across cultures and environments.
5. The paraprofessional is committed to helping students develop self-confidence and competence.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional carries out school behavior management policies and practices. (E)
2. The paraprofessional uses positive behavioral supports, crisis intervention, and restraint techniques consistent with the district/agency policy. (E)
3. The paraprofessional assists in establishing a positive climate in the classroom and participates in maintaining such a climate in the school as a whole. (E)
4. The paraprofessional plans for smooth transitions between activities and environments. (E)
5. The paraprofessional maintains a safe and effective learning environment for academic and nonacademic settings (e.g., lunchrooms, study halls, playgrounds, and buses). (E)
6. The paraprofessional supports a learning community in which individual differences are respected and valued. (E)
7. The paraprofessional assists in creating a learning community in which students assume responsibility for themselves and one another, participate in decision making, work collaboratively and independently, resolve conflicts, and engage in purposeful learning activities. (I)

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8. The paraprofessional assists in modifying the learning environment to manage behavior. (I)
9. The paraprofessional implements behavioral prevention, intervention, and reinforcement plans that have been developed by the teacher/provider. (I)

Principle 6: The paraprofessional uses a variety of communication techniques, including verbal, nonverbal, and media in and beyond the classroom.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional is aware of effective communication styles. (I)
2. The paraprofessional understands how diversity affects community in the classroom. (I)
3. The paraprofessional has an understanding of verbal and nonverbal communication. (I)
4. The paraprofessional has knowledge of the basic functions of multimedia technology (e.g., computer, video, recorder, projector). (I)
5. The paraprofessional has knowledge of basic computer software and functions, e-mail, and the Internet. (I)
6. The paraprofessional knows strategies and techniques that facilitate communication for students with diverse needs. (A)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional values the ways in which people seek to communicate and encourages various modes of communication in the classroom.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional effectively communicates with team members. (E)
2. The paraprofessional is a thoughtful and responsive listener. (E)
3. The paraprofessional demonstrates sensitivity to cultural and other differences in communication methods (e.g., appropriate use of eye contact, interpretation of body language and verbal statements, acknowledgement of and responsiveness to different modes of communication and participation). (I)
4. The paraprofessional uses a variety of media communication tools, including audiovisual aids and computers, to enrich learning opportunities. (I)

Principle 7: The paraprofessional implements teacher/provider designed instructional plans based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional understands that instruction is more effective when designed around student strengths, interests, and abilities. (I)

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2. The paraprofessional knows that a variety of elements (instructional materials, individual student interests, needs, aptitudes, and community resources) are considered when planning instruction for students. (I)
3. The paraprofessional understands that curriculum and instructional planning are based on learning theory and child and adolescent development. (A)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional believes that plans shall always be open to adjustment and revision, as directed by the teacher/provider, based on student needs, student input, and changing circumstances.
2. The paraprofessional values planning as a collegial and collaborative activity.
3. The paraprofessional values both long-term and short-term planning.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional follows teacher/provider written and verbal plans, seeking clarification as needed. (E)

Principle 8: The paraprofessional supports the teacher/provider in evaluating the intellectual, social, and physical development of the student.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional understands the purposes of formative and summative assessment and evaluation. (I)
2. The paraprofessional realizes the need to use multiple strategies to assess individual student progress. (I)
3. The paraprofessional understands the distinctions in the roles of teachers/providers, other licensed district/agency professionals, and paraprofessionals in assessing student strengths and needs. (I)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional values ongoing assessment as essential to the instructional process and recognizes that many different assessment strategies, accurately and systematically used, are necessary for monitoring and promoting student learning.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional assists teachers/providers with maintaining student records required by the state or the district. (E)
2. The paraprofessional gathers information by using informal and functional assessment methods under teacher/provider direction. (I)
3. The paraprofessional objectively shares relevant information about student performance to assist the teacher/provider in the planning process. (I)
4. The paraprofessional assists in providing assessment accommodations and adaptations as designed by the teacher/provider. (I)

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5. The paraprofessional administers formal assessments when given appropriate training and supervision. (A)

Principle 9: The paraprofessional engages in continued professional improvement toward an identified goal.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional has an awareness of his or her professional strengths and needs. (E)
2. The paraprofessional is aware of the personal biases and differences that affect job performance. (I)
3. The paraprofessional is knowledgeable about resources that provide opportunities for professional growth. (I)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional embraces lifelong learning.
2. The paraprofessional is committed to ongoing reflection, assessment, and learning as a process.
3. The paraprofessional is committed to seeking, developing, and continually refining practices.
4. The paraprofessional values constructive feedback as a learning tool.
5. The paraprofessional values competency and integrity.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional uses self-reflection as a means of improving job performance. (E)
2. The paraprofessional asks for and accepts feedback from the teacher/provider. (E)
3. The paraprofessional documents progress toward his or her professional development. (I)
4. The paraprofessional participates in meaningful professional development opportunities in order to demonstrate current, effective practices. (I)

Principle 10: The paraprofessional interacts in a professional, effective manner with colleagues, parents, and other members of the community to support students' learning and well-being.

Knowledge

1. The paraprofessional understands the distinction between the roles of all team members in support of student learning. (E)
2. The paraprofessional understands the relationships among school personnel, families, and the larger community and how such partnerships foster student learning. (E)
3. The paraprofessional understands the common concerns that the parents of students with diverse needs may have. (E)

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4. The paraprofessional knows how to respond respectfully to a parent, the community, or another educator in conflict situations. (E)
5. The paraprofessional knows the rights and responsibilities of parents, students, teachers, professionals, and schools as they relate to students with learning needs. (E)
6. The paraprofessional knows signs of emotional distress, child abuse, substance abuse, and neglect in students and how to follow the procedures to report known or suspected abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. (E)
7. The paraprofessional understands the expectations for professional conduct, policies, procedures, and laws with regard to student and parent rights. (E)

Disposition

1. The paraprofessional respects the need for beneficial relationships among families, school personnel, and community members.
2. The paraprofessional is concerned about all aspects of the student's well-being and is alert to signs of difficulties.
3. The paraprofessional respects the dignity, rights, and privacy of students and families.
4. The paraprofessional is respectful of distinctions among the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals, professionals, and other team members.

Performance

1. The paraprofessional respects student privacy, student rights, and the confidentiality of information. (E)
2. The paraprofessional effectively collaborates with team members. (E)
3. The paraprofessional follows teacher/provider instructions and honors team decisions in daily practice. (E)
4. The paraprofessional provides positive representation of the student, school, and district. (E)
5. The paraprofessional develops a rapport with students (e.g., talks with and listens to students) is sensitive and responsive to clues of distress, and seeks outside help as needed. (E)
6. The paraprofessional demonstrates professional conduct in accordance with district policies and state laws. (E)
7. The paraprofessional exercises objective and prudent judgment. (E)
8. The paraprofessional follows policy regarding reporting suspected child abuse, neglect, or threat of harm to the student or others.