

Tacoma Public Schools Program for WASHINGTON STATE CORE COMPETENCIES FOR PARAEDUCATORS

Summary of Competencies:

To work in education and related services programs for children and youth with disabilities, paraeducators will demonstrate:

1. understanding the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities;
2. understanding the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators;
3. knowledge of (a) patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages, and (b) risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development;
4. ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality;
5. ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem solving and other skills that will enable the paraeducator to work as an effective member of the instructional team;
6. ability to provide positive behavioral support and management;
7. knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families;
8. awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families, and colleagues with whom they work;
9. knowledge and application of the elements of effective instruction to assist teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff in a variety of settings;
10. ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff;
11. ability to motivate and assist children and youth;
12. knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed;
13. awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning;
14. awareness of personal care and/or health related support.

Adapted from the OSPI Website.....

Background:

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction Special Education designed the Paraeducator Project with the objective of developing competencies for paraeducators working in special education settings. The need for this project is based on the federal requirements mandating qualifications and training for paraeducators and the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 392-172-200 (3) Staff Qualifications. An Advisory Group was established and has developed a list of competencies with statewide input gathered from meetings with paraeducators, Educational Service District and local school district personnel, families, and other groups.

WAC 392-172-200 Staff Qualifications (for reference only)

“All employees of a school district of other public agency funded in whole or part with state or federal special education excess cost funds shall be qualified as follows (except as provided for in subsection (4) of this section);”

“(1) All employees shall hold such credentials, certificates of permits as are now or hereafter required by the state board of education for the particular position of employment and shall meet such supplemental standards as may be established by the [sic] school district of [sic] other public agency of employment.”

“(2) In addition to the requirement of subsection (1) of this section all teachers shall possess "substantial professional [sic] training" and support personnel shall meet standards established under the educational staff associate rules of the state board of education, as now or hereafter amended . . .”

“(3) **Classified staff shall present evidence of either formal and/or adequate in-service training or successful experience in working with special education students.** The office of superintendent of public instruction, through the special education comprehensive system of personnel development, shall identify the minimum competencies classified staff must possess and develop in-service training strategies to meet staff needs.” *(Bolding is ours)*

OSPI Definition of Paraeducator:

A paraeducator is a school employee who works under the supervision of a certificated/licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to children and youth with disabilities, and their families. The certificated/licensed staff member remains responsible for the overall conduct and management of the classroom or program, including the design, implementation, and evaluation of the instructional programs and student progress.

Paraeducators are an integral part of the delivery of instructional and other services to students with disabilities. Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of paraeducators in

the education system and an expansion of their roles and responsibilities. Improved identification of students with disabilities, research on best practices in instruction, increase in the number of high risk students, and inclusionary practices are some of the factors that influenced the necessity for additional support staff to assure student success. As a result, there is a need to develop systems that support paraeducators to guarantee quality instruction and services for all children and youth with disabilities, and their families.

Influencing factors:

- ethical and professional considerations;
- paraeducator and certificated/licensed staff identified needs;
- family concerns;
- federal and state requirements;
- legal liabilities for school districts and certificated/licensed staff;
- professional associations.

Training of all paraeducators will contribute towards:

- improved student learning;
- increased skills and knowledge;
- enhanced partnerships within the educational community;
- increased flexibility of staffing assignments;
- increased recruitment and retention.

Training Resources:

Programs across the state that presently support training for paraeducators include:

- Professional Excellence Program (PEP) at Tacoma Public Schools;
- ESD Paraeducator Training Programs;
- community and technical college Instructional Paraprofessional Curriculum;
- four year colleges and universities;
- the Classified Employees Apprenticeship program;
- early childhood training programs;
- community and other training opportunities;
- labor unions and professional associations.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: Are all paraeducators required to take the PEP classes/training?

A: No. You're not required to do anything except be competent as determined, at present, by you and your supervisor. We believe that there are many ways to learn, including on the job. Many of you have said "I've been a paraeducator for x years and taken many PEP classes. I believe I'm already competent." We agree that's possible. That is why the training is not mandatory.

Q: Who should take the training?

A: We encourage all paraeducators to take the training - especially the first three overview classes. In the training classes, many of your questions will be answered and fears laid to rest. Those who have taken the classes report that they greatly enjoyed the sessions and that they believe it should be required for all new paraeducators.

Q: How long do I have to complete the training?

A: Because it is not required, there is no limit to the time you can take to complete the three basic classes once you decide to take them.

Q: Will I get paid for my class time?

A: The three basic classes are PEP classes and pay for class time is the same as any other PEP class. The assessment workshops are open attendance and there is no pay for this time unless your supervisor authorizes it under your school budget.

Q: What are the Tacoma School District Paraeducator Core Competency Assessments?

A: The assessments are much like PEP assignments. They are called "assessments" to avoid confusing them with PEP "assignments." PEP credits can be earned for taking the Core Competency PEP class and completing the "PEP assignment." No PEP credit is earned for the "Core Competency assessments." See page 9 for a complete outline of the assessments.

Q: Do I have to take the PEP classes to complete the competency assessments?

A: No. The classes are not required. You can simply ask for the assessment package, complete them at your own pace. You may complete them in writing and submit them to the Classified Professional Development office or you may complete them verbally or any other appropriate medium at the assessment "workshops." You may use your notes to complete the assessments.

Q: Where do I get the assessments and when will they be available?

A: You can see them beginning on page 9 - that's it. They aren't a secret. As you can see, they're very straight forward and tied directly to the core-competencies. Also, you can request them from the Classified Professional Development Office by calling extension 2160.

Q: How can I get help understanding or completing the Core Competency Assessments?

A: You may attend any one or more of the assessment workshops. They are open attendance - in other words, you may come and go as you please. You may work with one of the trainers or with your

peers. You may complete the assessment in the workshop or just get a little help in a particular area. These workshops are free and completely optional.

Tacoma Public Schools Core Competency Program

The State of Washington requires all Paraeducators working with students with disabilities to be competent. **State regulations may, but do not currently, require Districts to make training mandatory.** Therefore participation in the Tacoma Public Schools Core Competency Program is currently voluntary. Paraeducators determination for themselves how to achieve competency and whether they have done so.

Program Description:

1. There are three introductory classes addressing the 14 competencies which are taught at the awareness and knowledge levels:
 - Competencies 1 -6
 - Competencies 7-11 and 13
 - Competency 12 and 14
2. The introductory classes are taught by ESD-certified Tacoma School District trainers.
3. Classes beyond the introductory level will be regular and new PEP classes and will be referenced as such in the newsletter.
4. Introductory classes are also eligible for PEP credit.
5. Fourteen basic competency “assessments” have been developed (one for each competency) to allow each program participant to earn recognition for having achieved competency. These assessments are optional and can be taken individually at the participant’s own pace. Upon completion of all 14 assessments, the participant will earn a recognition award from Tacoma Public Schools. The assessments, for your reference, begin on page 9.
6. Three advanced competency assessments are being developed (to cover the six competencies identified, in pairs, as requiring demonstration of skills.) They are also optional and allow each participant to earn recognition for having achieved competency at the highest level (ability). Upon completion of the final three assessments, the participant will earn a second recognition award.
7. Periodic competency workshops are held at Willard Staff Resource Center and staffed by program trainers and subject-matter experts to assist participants in completing their competency assessments. These workshops do not require a registration fee, do not earn PEP credit, and are not required. Attendance is open for participants to come and go as they wish.

For more information about the program please contact the Classified Professional Development office at 571-2160.

Comprehensive Outline of Washington State Core Competencies

NOTE: Competency standards are arranged in the following order:

- a) awareness - knowing or realization; a simple recognition
- b) knowledge - acknowledgment; familiarity; acquaintance with facts; being informed
- c) understanding - having a clear perception of the meaning
- d) ability. - able to apply or demonstrate

To work in education and related services programs for children and youth with disabilities, paraeducators will demonstrate:

- 1. understanding the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities:**
 - A. Awareness of historical perspective of students with disabilities, including IDEA, 504, ADA; value and benefit to schools, staff, students and general community; modeling an integrated community.
 - B. Knowledge of the purpose of Special Education (SE) programs and education for students with disabilities.
 - C. Understanding of the philosophy that all students can learn and contribute.
- 2. understanding the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators:**
 - A. Knowledge of certificated /licensed staff roles and responsibilities for program development, evaluation and for instructional supervision of paraeducators, including legal requirements and district policies and procedures.
 - B. Understanding of district chain of command and paraeducator role in relation to other school employees.
 - C. Understanding of the value of paraeducators in educational programs.
 - D. Understanding of paraeducator roles and responsibilities, including legal requirements and district policies and procedures.
 - E. Understanding of shared roles and responsibilities, including teaming and collaboration.
 - F. Understanding how to do self evaluation and/ or reflection as it applies to the paraeducator role.
- 3. knowledge of (a) patterns of human development and milestones typically achieved at different ages, and (b) risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development:**
 - A. Awareness of learning theory and different approaches certificated staff may use.
 - B. Awareness of and respect for the impact on families having children with disabilities.
 - C. Knowledge of the developmental continuum birth to 21 years in the following areas: communication, self-help, physical development, and social/emotional and cognitive development.
 - D. Knowledge of and respect for the influence that families have on student learning and development.

E. Knowledge of issues and requirements surrounding transitions for students and families.

- 4. ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality:**
 - A. Ability to comply with the requirements of confidentiality for educational and medical records.
 - B. Ability to comply with legal requirements regarding the reporting of abuse, discipline, and inappropriate conduct such as touching.
 - C. Ability to comply with district policies and procedures regarding delegation and supervision, and issues of insubordination.

- 5. ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem solving and other skills that will enable the paraeducator to work as an effective member of the instructional team:**
 - A. Ability to use communication methods to increase understanding.
 - B. Ability to use techniques/strategies for problem solving and negotiation.
 - C. Ability to recognize learning and communication styles.
 - D. Ability to do self-evaluation and reflection as it pertains to working as an effective member of the instructional team.
 - E. Ability to advocate for oneself.

- 6. ability to provide positive behavioral support and management:**
 - A. Understanding of the use of crisis intervention and restraint techniques.
 - B. Understanding of how disabilities can impact on behavior.
 - C. Understanding of the legal requirements and district policies and procedures for discipline.
 - D. Ability to promote the development of social skills.
 - E. Ability to use prevention and intervention skills.
 - F. Ability to use reinforcement strategies.
 - G. Ability to use data collection and observation techniques.

- 7. knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families:**
 - A. Knowledge of the intent of IDEA, including historical perspective, impact of legal decisions, and value of legislation.
 - B. Knowledge of IDEA - parts B and C, ADA and 504.
 - C. Knowledge of definitions, such as LRE, IEP, 504, written plans, and the implications for paraeducators in relation to legal requirements and district policies and procedures and contract provisions.
 - D. Knowledge of Washington's special education requirements in general terms including definitions, qualifications, and service options.

- 8. awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families, and colleagues with whom they work:**
 - A. Awareness of how the different aspects of diversity enhance opportunities for learning.
 - B. Awareness of cultural biases and personal differences that affect working with students,

families and other team members.

9. knowledge and application of the elements of effective instruction to assist teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff in a variety of settings:

- A. Ability to use reinforcement strategies.
- B. Ability to use instructional techniques.
- C. Ability to use data collection and observation techniques.

10. ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff:

- A. Ability to apply small group instructional techniques for management and support of student learning.
- B. Ability to apply specific instructional techniques to support academic areas.
- C. Ability to apply techniques that support instruction in academic areas.

11. ability to motivate and assist children and youth:

- A. Ability to use appropriate interest and ability level material, and to modify materials as necessary.
- B. Ability to use appropriate reinforcement strategies.

12. knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety, and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed:

- A. Understanding of district policies and procedures, contract provisions contract and state requirements.
- B. Understanding of the legal requirements of delegation and supervision.
- C. Understanding of the legal requirements and district policies and procedures for chain of command.
- D. Ability to perform basic first aid.
- E. Ability to use infection control and universal precautions.
- F. Ability to use lifting, carrying and transferring techniques.

13. awareness of the ways in which technology can assist teaching and learning:

- A. Awareness of assistive communication.
- B. Awareness of technological equipment.

14. awareness of personal care and/or health related support:

- A. Awareness of district polices and procedures, and the legal requirements for delegation, training and supervision, and the issues of insubordination.
- B. Awareness of legal requirements for providing health related care in the schools.
- C. Awareness of types of personal care and health related support tasks.

Para Educator Competency Assessments Assessment Framework

Competency 1

Understand the value of providing instructional and other direct services to all children and youth with disabilities.

Imagine yourself in a social situation where someone asks you why you work with “those kinds of kids”, and why do we have to have “those kinds of kids” in our schools... what is your response?

Consider these things:

- a. historical perspective of students with disabilities (i.e. 504, IDEA, ADA, etc.)
- b. purpose of special education programs
- c. philosophy that all students can learn and contribute

Competency 2

Understand the roles and responsibilities of certificated/licensed staff and paraeducators.

A person has come into your school and is interested in becoming a paraeducator. How would you describe your role in regards to providing services to students, the certificated staff's role in regards to your job, and the shared roles and responsibilities of your jobs

Consider these things:

- a. your role and responsibility
- b. certificated/licensed staff roles and responsibilities for program development;
- c. self advocacy.

Competency 3

Knowledge of a) patterns of human of development and milestones typically achieved at different ages and b) risk factors that may prohibit or impede typical development.

- 1) You are working in a school with a student who has a disability. Of what developmental areas should you be aware?
- 2) A child with whom you are working is struggling to make friends. What might be some of the causes for this struggle, and what are some strategies you may teach

this student?

Consider these things:

- a. learning theory for the students with whom you work
- b. different approaches that have been modeled by others
- c. impact on families of children with disabilities
- d. developmental continuum birth to twenty-one in the following areas:
 - communication
 - self-help
 - physical
 - social/emotional
 - cognitive
- e. knowledge of and respect for the influence that families have on student learning and development
- f. issues and requirements surrounding transitions for students and families

Competency 4

Ability to practice ethical and professional standards of conduct, including the requirements of confidentiality.

- 1) You are at an after school parent get together, and Mrs. Smith comes over and says “I see that Johnny Jones is in your class. He is my neighbor, and I see lots of things happening at that house that I think are not right. His daddy is always yelling at him, and I have seen the mom hit him a few times. What can you tell me about him?” What do you say?

Consider these things:

- a. confidentiality for educational and medical records/information
- b. legal requirements regarding the reporting of abuse, discipline and inappropriate conduct such as touching

- 2) A student misbehaves and the para is asked to take the student home in a personal car. What do you do knowing that this is not allowed by the district?

Consider these things

- a. district policies and procedures regarding delegation and supervision and issues of insubordination.
- b. appropriate people to contact regarding your concerns.

Competency 5

Ability to communicate with colleagues, follow instructions, and use problem solving and other

skills that will enable you to work as an effective member of the instructional team.

Your supervising teacher has asked you to do a particular activity with a student; however, your experience with this student tells you that this will not be successful. What are your next steps?

Consider these things:

- a. communication methods to increase understanding
- b. techniques/strategies for problem solving and negotiation
- c. learning and communication styles
- d. self-evaluation and reflection as it pertains to working as an effective member of the instructional team
- e. advocacy for oneself

Competency 6

Ability to provide positive behavioral support and management.

Describe a special education student who is having some behavioral issues that are becoming issues for you or others. How are these behavioral issues affecting her learning? What strategies will you use to diminish the behavior? What replacement behaviors will you teach? How will you know that these strategies are working?

Consider these things:

- a. how disabilities can impact behavior
- b. legal requirements and district policies and procedures for discipline
- c. prevention and intervention
- d. reinforcement strategies
- e. data collection

Competency 7

Knowledge of the legal issues related to the education of children and youth with disabilities and their families.

Your neighbor tells you that she is concerned about her granddaughter who is having some difficulties in school. She asks, “What is special education?” and “How do I know if my granddaughter would qualify?”

Consider these things:

- a. referral process
- b. resources/additional information

Competency 8

Awareness of diversity among the children, youth, families and colleagues.

You are part of the committee who is planning a diversity day to raise awareness of the strengths of the differences in all of your students. What aspects your school community should you consider?

Consider these things:

- a. different aspects of diversity enhance opportunities for learning
- b. cultural biases and personal differences that affect working with students, families and other team members.

Competency 9

Knowledge and application of the elements of effective instruction to assist teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff in a variety of settings.

As a member of the instructional team, you are asked to share a student's progress with the Student Review Team(SRT). The items you are asked to cover are: how is the student progressing in relationship to the other students in the class; what strategies work best in teaching him in the classroom environment; what behavioral strategies are you using with that student.

Consider these things:

- a. reinforcement strategies
- b. instructional techniques
- c. data collection

Competency 10

Ability to utilize appropriate strategies and techniques to provide instructional support in teaching and learning as developed by the certificated/licensed staff.

For Thanksgiving, the classroom teacher is planning to have the students read a book and do certain related activities which may include: writing a story, drawing a picture, creating a play based on the book, making a Halloween related item, etc. How might you support these activities both in the large group, and individually with specific students?

Consider these things:

- a. small group instructional techniques for management and support

- b. specific instructional techniques to support academic areas
- c. techniques that support instruction (i.e. setting up the activity)

Competency 11

Ability to motivate and assist children and youth.

The supervising teacher has asked you to introduce a new portion of a lesson in which you know the students are not particularly interested (i.e. long division, history of the long division process). What are some strategies that you could use to make this information more fun?

Consider these things:

- a. appropriate interest and ability level material
- b. modification of materials
- c. appropriate reinforcement strategies

Competency 12

Knowledge of and ability to follow health, safety and emergency procedures of the agency where they are employed.

- 1) A fire drill is planned for 11:30. What procedures do you need to follow to keep yourself safe and the students safe?
- 2) A student in your school known to have seizures, has a seizure in the lunchroom while you are on duty. What do you do?

Consider these things:

- a. district policies and procedures
- b. contract provisions
- c. contract and state requirements
- d. legal requirements of delegation and supervision; chain of command
- e. basic first aid
- f. infection control and universal precautions
- g. lifting, carrying and transferring techniques

Competency 13

Awareness of the ways technology can assist teaching and learning.

If you had the opportunity to have an unlimited budget for the purchase of technology in your school, what would you buy, and how would you see it being used?

Consider these things

- a. assistive communication
- b. technological equipment (i.e. computers, alpha smarts, tape recorders, VCRs, etc.)

Competency 14

Awareness of personal care and/or health related support.

1) You are told to dispense medication to the students who typically take it before lunch. Can you, and if so, what are the necessary procedures you must follow?

2) A child needs assistance with toileting, you are asked to be the person she contacts for that assistance. What do you need to know?

Consider these things:

- a. district policies and procedures
- b. legal requirements of delegation, training and supervision
- c. issues of insubordination
- d. legal requirements for providing health related care in the schools
- e. types of personal care and health related support tasks