
SOWEGA STEM Charter
Exceptional Education
Paraprofessional Duties/Responsibilities

Paraprofessionals:

1. Will work with individual students or small groups of students to reinforce learning of materials or skills initially introduced and outlined by certified staff.
2. Will be punctual to work and all assigned duties.
3. Will assist the certified staff in devising special strategies for reinforcing learning materials and skills based on an understanding of individual students, their needs, interests, and abilities.
4. Will know what is in each student's IEP regarding goals, assistive technology, and accommodations.
5. Will keep a notebook to communicate effectively about the student's needs. The notebook will include but is not limited to:
 - a. Your Daily Schedule
 - b. Your Student's Daily Schedule
 - c. Student's Goals/Objectives working On
 - d. Progress Monitoring Notes for Goals
 - e. Testing/Classroom Accommodations or Modifications
 - f. As needed- A Short description of what goes on daily in the classrooms you attend (Skill working On/Homework assignments/Behavior Concerns, etc)
6. Will monitor work, collect progress monitoring data, correct papers, and supervise curriculum-based testing and makeup work as assigned by the certified staff.
7. Will serve as the chief source of information and help to a substitute assigned in the absence of the regular certified special education teacher.
8. Will perform clerical, classroom maintenance, and instructional duties as assigned by any certified staff whose classroom you provide assistance.
9. Will alert the certified staff to any problem or special information about an individual student.
10. Will perform assigned supervision of students during lunch periods, play periods, and on field trips.
11. Will perform assigned non-instructional classroom duties, such as snack time, toileting, feeding, changing, medical needs and clothing routines as assigned.
12. Will when requested, serves as a resource person to the General Education Intervention Team and/or IEP Team

13. Will demonstrates ethical behavior and confidentiality of information about students in school environment and community.
14. Will participate in in-service training programs as approved.
15. Will maintain safe working environment and encourages colleagues to be safety minded in the performance of all school-related duties.
16. Will perform other such duties / assignments as directed by the certified staff.
17. Will let the certified teacher know of any concerns that need to be addressed with the parent(s).
18. Will let others know if and when their schedule is changed.
19. Will be positive, persistent, patient and PROFESSIONAL.
20. Will use chain of command to report any incidents that are unethical or deemed inappropriate. Report to your supervising teacher and administrator.

Paraprofessionals:

1. **Will NOT share information regarding students with anyone other than those who directly provide a service to the student.**
2. **Will NOT contact parents or share information regarding current concerns or issues.**
3. **Will NOT sit in a classroom unless directly working with students.**
4. **Will NOT be on a computer or cell phone during instructional time unless working with a student.**
5. **Will NOT provide more help than stated in a student's IEP.**

Annual Evaluations:

I understand that I will be evaluated by building administrators and teachers that I work with on my duties and performances both in and out of the classroom.

Please initial statements 1-5 above, sign and return a copy to your supervising special education teacher and the Director of Special Education.

Signature of Certified Staff

Date

Signature of Paraprofessional

Southwest Georgia Stem Charter School

Para-Educator Handbook

2021-2022

Definition of Para Educator

According to the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Para-Educators are defined as employees: 1) whose positions are either instructional in nature or who deliver other indirect services to children, youth, and/or their parents; and

2) who work under the supervision of teachers or other professional personnel who have the ultimate responsibility for (a) the design and implementation of education and related services programs, and (b) the assessment of the impact on student progress and other education outcomes.

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission defines a Paraprofessional as a person who relates in role and function to a professional and who does a portion of the professional's job or task(s) under the supervision of a professional.

Employment and Certification All Georgia Para-Educators must hold a valid state certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

In January 2002, the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the "No Child Left Behind Act," established federal eligibility requirements for educational Para Educators. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed by President Obama on December 10, 2015, and represents good news for our nation's schools. This bipartisan measure reauthorizes the 50-year-old Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the nation's national education law and longstanding commitment to equal opportunity for all students.

Para-Educators are required to take and pass the Para Pro Assessment.

While in the performance of their duties, Para-Educators should be under the supervision and direction of a certified teacher. Therefore, legal questions should not become an issue if the Para Educator performs his/her required duties under supervision and **follows recognized procedures.** A Para Educator should fully understand his/her legal status and responsibilities before assuming the job. **Negligence or failure to follow all school policies may result in legal action.** Do not assume that protection is given in all situations. Do not perform tasks involving supervision of students unless under the direct supervision of a teacher.

Ethics

Para-Educators should realize that information concerning students, as well as faculty members, should not be conveyed to persons outside the school. The Family Rights & Privacy Act addresses confidentiality of school records. Confidentiality is a very important factor that must be considered when collecting, organizing, interpreting, and applying data on individual students. Idle gossip, inside and outside of the school, can create a situation that is not conducive to a good educational setting. Like those in the medical and legal professions who observe a code of ethics. Para-Educators in the classroom must do the same. Being identified with a school and the teaching profession requires Para-

Educators to assume the responsibilities of the role as an educator and choose a standard of behavior appropriate for this role.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a very important factor that must be considered when collecting, organizing, interpreting, and applying data on individual students. Idle gossip, inside and outside of the school, can lead to situations that impair productive educational settings. Like medical and legal professions who observe a code of ethics.

Paraprofessionals in the classroom must do the same.

- IEPs and BIPs are legal documents and cannot be discussed with those not directly involved with the student's education.

- Speaking about students in a way that could identify them as students with disabilities to people who do not have an educational connection might violate their rights to confidentiality.

Consequences for violating confidentiality range in severity from school and district level warnings, reprimands, and loss of job to state level revocation of your certificate and legal proceedings.

Qualities of an Effective Para Educator

A person serving as a Para-Educator should possess a willingness to cooperate with Special Education teachers, students, Coordinators, and appropriate school personnel. Para-Educators should set an appropriate example for students to follow. There are various professional qualities Para-Educators should strive to demonstrate. They are presented below.

Professional Qualities of an Effective Para Educator

- **Exhibit a professional attitude regardless of student behavior.**
- **Be punctual.**
- **Maintain a record of regular attendance.**
- **Respect confidentiality of students and support services.**
- **Accept responsibility.**
- **Understand nature and needs of students**
- **Conduct professional attitude when confronted with inappropriate student behavior.**
- **Follow dress code policies.**
- **Accept constructive criticism from other educational professionals.**

In addition to professional qualities, the **personal qualities** of Para-Educators are also important. Patience, tolerance, enthusiasm, and interest in the job are examples of personal qualities. Other desirable personal qualities of Para-Educators include friendliness, cooperativeness, honesty, maturity,

confidence, sincerity, respect for individual differences, and sensitivity to the needs of others. Para-Educators should possess these qualities to maintain a good working relationship with administrators, counselors, teachers, parents, and students. If Para-Educators do not have the above qualities, they should work to acquire them.

Relationship with School Personnel

Relationship with Teachers

Para-Educators are resource personnel who support, improve, and enrich the services offered in a school. Para-Educators are invaluable in assisting the Teacher and students. When working with students; therefore, the Para-Educator must realize that the teacher is ultimately responsible in the classroom. In return, the teacher should demonstrate respect and show consideration toward the Para-Educator. Any disagreements or concerns should be discussed and handled privately or seek counsel from an administrator if needed.

Relationship with Members of the Faculty

In working with the faculty, the Para-Educator must get to know the climate of the school. the Para-Educator should be knowledgeable of these things:

1. Organizational Structure and Channels of Communication. Find out who holds what position in the administration of the school and who to contact for information, or to handle certain situations.
2. School Procedures. Secure and read a copy of the school handbook.

Multiple Roles and Responsibilities of the Para-Educator.

Learn what your responsibilities are in the classroom and on the school campus. Your responsibilities may be different from other Para-Educators due to the nature of Special Education and Support Services.

Resource Personnel, Equipment, and Materials.

Find those educational materials, which can be used. Para-Educators are a part of the school structure. However, teachers may not consider the Para Educator who does not share equal responsibilities to be an equal member of the faculty. Usually if the Para Educator shows an earnest and cooperative effort, he/she can alleviate problems that occur. To develop a positive relationship with other members of the faculty, consider these suggestions.

- Be patient and respectful of teachers with whom you work. Remember that they are learning to use your services as you are learning to serve and cooperate with them.
- Any task necessary to promote student learning is worthy of you performing it with pride and diligence.
- Teachers are teaching because they are dedicated to their profession, but being human, they too make mistakes.

- Question areas of concern. Try to understand thoroughly what is expected of you.
- Be supportive of administrators and teachers. Give the school administrators your loyal support, the teachers your best assistance, and the pupils your help and encouragement.
- Share new information with other faculty members.
- You should know which teachers might assign duties to you. Whenever questions or disputes arise, both you and the teachers involved should refer the problem to the Principal.
- All of the academic team members should be familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the Para-Educators. Discuss requests for your assistance with non-special education activities with the Special Education Teacher or Director.

Working with Parents

As a Para-Educator, remember that part of maintaining good public relations is having a good relationship with parents. You should treat parents with consideration and respect. Most parents will be appreciative of your interest in their child. When working with parents, always think and act in a professional manner. Report all contact with parents to the teacher with as much accuracy and lack of bias as possible.

The following list contains several steps to follow concerning the student/parents/Para-Educator relationships:

- Encourage parents to speak and think positively
- Welcome parent comments and recommendations for working with their child/children with disabilities.

Para-Educators can be the agents to make the IEP plan a reality, since they can work with each individual student. Para-Educators may be asked to perform any or all of the following tasks.

- Assist in the overall instructional program in classrooms
- Assist the instructor with making modifications and accommodations to assignments, tests and projects for the student.
- Make Teacher aware of learning deficiencies.
- Prepare, obtain, or order materials needed for classrooms.
- Select and utilize available instructional materials.
- Assist with assessment and transition activities.
- Provide instruction to students as prescribed by the Teacher and reinforce skills introduced by the teacher.
- Clarify course objectives for students.
- Provide tutorial service to small groups or individuals in the academic class.

- Manage student behavior and maintain classroom order when appropriate; reinforce rules of the school and classroom.
- Assist the Teacher in assessment and in screening records.
- Coordinate information from all available sources.
- Supervise the class when the Teacher must leave.
- Interpret difficult and important information for students who miss assignments.
- Provide extra help to students who do not understand assignments.
- Observe students and report positive and negative behavior to the Teacher. to arrange home visits or
- Instruct students in the proper use of technology.
- Proofread and help students correct homework.
- Conduct reading and spelling groups and lead groups in simple drills and exercises.

Para-Educators may be required to perform the following activities.

- Assist in the preparation of daily lesson plans.
- Perform support tasks such as copying materials, laminating items, keeping correspondence, and filing paperwork and documentation.
- Record student's daily progress for documentation of progress on IEP goals.
- Maintain a class plan book/journal for notes for each class period.
- Compile results for state and/or federal reports.

Preparation of Student Folders

The Para-Educator should prepare student folders at the beginning of each semester per the Teacher's instructions. The folders may contain the following forms and information on students.

- Student data sheet (address, phone numbers, legal guardians, birthday, etc.).
- Student academic form(s).
- Assessment data.
- Individual test results.
- Class schedules.

Overall, Para-Educators should plan ahead to save the Teacher as much time as possible. There are occasional disruptions in the school program, which may affect the Para-Educator's duties and how they are carried out. However, an energetic, positive attitude can help smooth out minor negative situations as they arise.

Para-Educator Schedules

Para-Educator schedules may vary from day to day. A schedule determines where the Para-Educator will be and under whose supervision he/she will be working. Special education teachers should be notified if the Para Educator schedule is changed.

Management of Student Behavior

According to the Quality Basic Education Act (section 20-2-215), "a classroom paraprofessional shall have, while performing assigned duties, the authority of in loco parents (in absence of parent), except for the administration of corporal punishment; provided however, that such paraprofessionals have at least the minimal training or experience and are under direct supervision of classroom teachers on a daily basis. Paraprofessionals shall have such authority both when classroom teachers are present and when they are absent for justifiable purposes." Para-Educators should consult the principal, or local school board about local policies concerning Para-Educators' roles in classroom management. Para-Educators play an important role in the management of student behavior. If a situation arises that a Para-Educator is uncertain about, he/she should refer the problem to the Teacher or Principal for advice. Discussing students' behavior with the Teacher is the best way to avoid problems. Often the Teacher has some special information about a student in his or her behavior management plan that is important to anyone dealing with his/her behavior. In cases where the behavior warrants an official referral to an administrator, the Para-Educator should send the referral through the Teacher. This step provides the Teacher the opportunity to deal with the discipline problem and head off a potentially serious situation. Para-Educators will encounter a wide variety of students from many different backgrounds and home situations. Problems at home may follow students into the classroom. This often results in inappropriate behavior because students are unable to cope with their personal problems. Therefore, Para-Educators should not take every display of undesirable behavior as a personal offense. The manner in which Para-Educators handle classroom problems will have a great deal to do with their success. Students need firm, respectful and consistent treatment from adults. They need to feel secure and know that an adult is in control. Students also need to know there are limits to their behavior. When they do misbehave, students must realize there are consequences, but that they will be treated fairly. Remember, students may not automatically like and respect Para-Educators. Respect must be earned.

Students

Para-Educators should make every effort to become familiar with each student. This includes getting to know their backgrounds, home life, strengths, and weaknesses, as well as their aspirations and goals. Para-Educators should review their assessment results. This information enables Para-Educators to better predict how a student is likely to react in a given situation. Para-Educators must be honest and

sincere and always let students know what is expected of them. In addition, Para-Educators should strive to form cooperative relationships.

Classrooms

A structured classroom routine should be in place. All scheduled activities should be consistently followed. Any changes in the routine should be clearly and adequately explained. Rules should be established and stated in a positive manner. Limits and consequences should be applied consistently. Para-Educators should monitor the entire classroom and be aware of what is going on at all times. Recognize potential “trouble spots” and try to anticipate problems before they intensify. Para-Educators should seek advice from the Teacher if they are unsure of how to handle a problem. Para-Educators should avoid using negative tactics, such as the ones below when managing student behavior.

- Punishing the whole class for the misbehavior of a few.
- Threatening a student and losing temper.
- Failing to follow through with identified consequences.
- Using sarcasm or ridicule as a means of punishment.
- Showing favoritism.
- Publicizing offenses.
- Being overly friendly or too distant.
- Making unreasonable demands.
- Using students as a focus for personal feelings of hostility or aggression.
- Holding grudges.
- Using students to find out information about others.

Escalated or Emergency Situations

If an escalated or emergency situation occurs, Para-Educators should remain calm and follow the school’s policy. Para-Educators should contact a school official or administrator and handle the situation in a professional manner. Be firm, stay objective, and make every attempt to calm the student and the group. Determine what the problem is and separate facts from opinions. If possible, take the offender aside for a private discussion and give him/her the benefit of the doubt. Separate personal attitude toward the student from attitude toward his/her behavior. Do not revisit the matter once it has been settled. And... remember to keep your sense of humor! Reinforcing Appropriate Behavior Each student is an individual with specific needs and learning issues. Because each student and each situation is special, there are no set rules for every circumstance. An encouraging word will go far in convincing a child to continue with appropriate behavior. Para-Educators must allow students to learn to solve their own problems. Positive reinforcement of specific behaviors you want to see repeated helps maintain

good discipline in the classroom. The Teacher may already have a “reinforcement/rewards” program in place.

Attitude Toward Students

A Para-Educator must conduct himself/herself in a professional manner. Para-Educators set and maintain a professional distance while at the same time develop a good rapport with students. Failure to maintain a professional relationship from students will cause loss of control and the students will not consider the Para-Educator’s leadership position. The Para-Educator should recognize students as individuals having specific needs, interests, and abilities. This recognition should be offered in a manner that will enable the students to view the Para-Educator’s interest in them as sincere and honest. A Para-Educators may be most effective by first gaining a positive rapport with the students. By communicating with students on their own level, the Para-Educator will enhance the students’ desire to cooperate. In establishing this rapport, Para-Educators must remember that effective teaching is greatly dependent upon the establishment and enforcement of ground rules. These rules should be established by the Teacher and always upheld by the Para-Educator. The Para-Educator must never assume a student knows what is expected of him/her. Instead, the Teacher and the Para-Educator must determine a student’s strengths and weaknesses through careful assessment, screening, testing, and conferring with the student. Para-Educators may then proceed to work with the student individually.

A Para-Educator should always maintain a professional relationship with students. Respect confidentiality. Do not discuss personal problems of students with anyone other than authorized personnel involved with Special Education Support Services. Remember that a student needs your acceptance as an individual, even though you may not approve of his/her actions. Remember never to write or say anything about a student that can be misused in any way. Do not put anything in a file that you would not want a parent to see. You will not be able to solve every problem for every student. Do not lead them to believe you can. Be positive and knowledgeable about school rules and their enforcement. Stress positive characteristics of students when conferring with professional personnel. Document only observed behavior and not an opinion.

FERPA

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal statute. The purposes of FERPA are twofold: to ensure that parents have access to their children’s educational records and to protect the privacy rights of parents and children by limiting access to these records without parental consent.

FERPA applies to all agencies and institutions that receive federal funds, including elementary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities. The statute is in the United States Code at 20 U. S. C. 1232g and 1232h. The regulations are in the Code of Federal Regulations at 34 C.F.R Part 99.

FERPA deals with:

- access to educational records
- parental right to inspect and review records
- amendment of records and destruction of records

Disability Categories

A child or youth from 3 through 21 years of age is considered to have a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004) if they meet the eligibility criteria in any of the following areas and need special education and related services:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD))

Deafblind (DB)

Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH)

Emotional and Behavioral Disorder (EBD)

Intellectual Disability (mild-MID, moderate-MOID, severe-SID, profound-PID)

Significant Developmental Delay (SDD)

Orthopedic Impairment (OI)

Other Health Impaired (OHI)

Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Visual Impairment (VI)

Speech-Language Impairment (SI)

Disability Terms and Definitions

The disability terms and definitions are taken from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

Autism- a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age three, which adversely affects a child's educational performance. Other characteristics often associated with autism are engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experience. Autism does not apply if a child's education performance is adversely affected primarily because the child has an emotional disturbance.

Deaf-blindness- a concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

Deafness- a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired in processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Hearing impairment- an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness in this section.

Emotional Disturbance- a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child's educational performance: An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. Emotional disturbance includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance.

Intellectual Disability-a significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Intellectual disabilities can be mild, moderate, severe, or profound.

Multiple Disabilities-a concomitant impairment (such as intellectual disability, blindness or intellectual disability-orthopedic impairment), the combination of which causes such severe educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for one of the impairments. Multiple disabilities do not include deaf-blindness.

Orthopedic impairment- a severe orthopedic impairment that adversely affects a child's education performance. The term includes impairments caused by a congenital anomaly, impairments caused by disease, and impairments from other causes (e.g., cerebral palsy, amputations, and fractures or burns that cause contractures).

Other health impairment- having limited strength, vitality, or alertness, including a heightened alertness to environmental stimuli, that results in limited alertness with respect to the education environment, that is due to chronic or acute health problems such as asthma, attention deficit disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, diabetes, epilepsy, a heart condition, hemophilia, lead poisoning, leukemia, nephritis, rheumatic fever, sickle cell anemia, and Tourette syndrome; and adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Specific learning disability- a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written that may manifest itself in the imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations, including conditions such as perceptual disabilities, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. Specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, of mental retardation, of emotional disturbance, or of environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.

Speech or language impairment- a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance.

Traumatic brain injury-an acquired injury to the brain caused by an external physical force, resulting in total or partial functional disability or psychosocial impairment, or both, that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Traumatic brain injury applies to open or closed head injuries resulting in impairment in one or more areas, such as cognition; language; memory; attention; reasoning; abstract thinking; judgment; problem-solving; sensory, perceptual, and motor abilities; psychosocial behavior;

physical functions; information processing; and speech. Traumatic brain injury does not apply to brain injuries that are congenital or degenerative, or to brain injuries induced by birth trauma.

Visual impairments including blindness- an impairment in vision that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partial sight and blindness.

Significant Developmental Delay-for a child aged 3-9 (or any subset of that range, including, ages 3 through 5), and may include a child experiencing developmental delays, as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedure, in 1 or more of the following areas: physical development; cognitive development; communication development; social or emotional development; or adaptive development; and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

Infant or toddler with a disability- an individual under 3 years of age who needs early intervention services because the individual is experiencing developmental delays, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and delays in 1 or more of the areas of cognitive development, physical development, communication development, social or emotional development, and adaptive development; or has a diagnosed physical or mental disability that has a high probability of developmental delays.