

East Mills Community School District Paraprofessional Handbook 2023-2024



East Mills Community School District

Paraprofessional Handbook

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Thank you for being a vital part of the East Mills Community School District education family. In an ongoing effort to provide you with as much information as possible this handbook has been exclusively prepared for you. The intent of this handbook is to provide our paraprofessionals with the most current and most commonly requested information to help them succeed in their respective paraprofessional positions. This handbook is a tool for knowledge and understanding. However, this handbook is not intended to be all encompassing of every aspect of the paraprofessional position within East Mills Community Schools. It is being presented as a guideline for a successful work experience.

PARAPROFESSIONALS

There are several ways paraprofessionals help to improve the quality of educational programs and instructional activities. Probably the most important contribution they make is to enable teachers to concentrate on meeting instructional objectives for the students as well as small groups of children. Paraprofessionals enhance the quality of various program activities in the following ways:

- The educational program becomes more child oriented and flexible within the classroom or other educational setting.
- Children benefit from extra "eyes and ears" that are alert to individual needs and problems.
- Teachers and other professional practitioners have more time to study and assess the needs of each child, confer with parents, diagnose problems, prepare and plan for individual instruction, try a broader range of teaching techniques, and evaluate the progress of each child.

The paraprofessional's primary role is to assist the teacher and promote more effective use of the teacher's abilities and professional knowledge. It is the teacher's responsibility to assure that students are meeting challenging content and performance standards. Paraprofessionals assist the teacher in helping to meet these goals for each student. In order for paraprofessionals to provide direct instruction to students, teachers plan the instruction for the student. Teachers assist the paraprofessional in the specifics of the instruction, evaluate student progress, and monitor the effectiveness of the paraprofessional's implementation of the instructional strategies.

PARAPROFESSIONAL ETHICS

To protect the rights of students and parents, the paraprofessional must be aware of and practice appropriate ethical behavior. As members of the East Mills Community School District team, paraprofessionals have special relationships with teachers and other colleagues, with children and their parents, and with other members of the community. The effectiveness of these relationships depends not only on the quality of the work performance, but also on professional and ethical behavior demonstrated on the job. The professional behaviors and attitudes expected at East Mills do not end at the close of the school day. Please remember paraprofessionals, like all school personnel, are representatives of the East Mills Community School District. As an East Mills paraprofessional you are expected to:

- maintain confidentiality about all personal information and educational records concerning children and their families.
- respect the legal and human rights of children and their families.
- follow district or agency policies for protecting the health, safety and well-being of children.
- follow directions of teachers and other supervisors.
- maintain a record of regular attendance, arrive and depart at specified contract times and notify appropriate personnel when you must be absent.
- demonstrate honesty, loyalty, dependability, integrity, and a willingness to learn.
- demonstrate respect for cultural diversity and individuality of all students.
- follow the chain of command for various administrative procedures.
- demonstrate a willingness to participate in opportunities for continuing education provided by the East Mills Community School District.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

No matter how smoothly a program runs, problems will arise. If a problem does arise, the paraprofessional must follow the chain of responsibility in order to resolve the problem.

1. If a problem arises, the paraprofessional should contact the supervising teacher about the problem.
2. If the problem isn't resolved, the next step is to contact the building principal.
3. If the problem isn't resolved, the next step is to contact the superintendent.

If a problem arises with another paraprofessional, the first rule of thumb is to contact the person that you have the concern with. Try to work out the problem. If the person is unwilling to resolve the problem, then work through the chain of command until the problem is resolved.

CELL PHONE USE

Because we expect cell phone use to be limited for our students and not to disrupt their learning we hold the same expectation for all staff. Do not use your cell phone during teaching /

supervising times.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Every time you communicate, whether it's in-person or on social media, you shape public opinion about you, your profession, your school, your board and public education. Statements like, "Tweets are my own and don't reflect my employer's views," don't hold true for educators. As such, staff should use sound judgment and care when using social media while on and off duty.

ATTENDANCE:

At the beginning of the school year, each classified employee shall be granted two (2) days of leave without loss of pay to be used for the employee's personal business. A day is defined to be the employee's normal working day. For example, if you normally work 4 hours per day, one personal day of 4 hours is intended. An employee planning to use a leave day shall notify the principal three (3) days in advance except in cases of emergency. Leave is subject to the principal and/or superintendent's approval. No personal leave day will be allowed the work day immediately preceding or immediately following any holiday, paid vacation, school recess, during the first or last weeks of the school year, except in cases of emergency. Should an emergency arise during the above days, permission is to be obtained from the principal. Personal leave days shall not accumulate and must be used before days without pay are requested.

Sick/Emergency/Funeral leave applies as follows:

- 1st year- 12 days
- 2nd year- 13 days
- 3rd year- 14 days
- 4th year- 15 days

Subsequent years- 15 days

HOLIDAYS

All classified employees receive holiday pay. The following holidays shall be recognized by the Board for all paraprofessionals. These holidays shall generally be considered vacation days and will be paid; Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day.

DAILY WORK SCHEDULE

7:30AM-3:30PM with a 30 minute duty free lunch. If you have down time, ask your teacher or administrator what you can do to help. Move around the room, and avoid just sitting for extended periods of time.

DRESS CODE

It is expected that faculty of the East Mills Community Schools dress appropriately in a professional manner. Students and visitors will tend to react to your apparel in a positive or negative way. We want that response to be a positive one. Please be sure your dress is always

professional. NOTICE: Fridays will be Spirit Days. Acceptable jeans and East Mills attire are permitted. No exceptions to the dress or the day. All other days of the week will be professional dress.

WORK RESPONSIBILITIES

A paraprofessional performs tasks under the general supervision of a certified teacher or teaching team; releases the teacher from routine tasks and participates in selecting, planning, and organizing; helps the teacher prepare and use instructional materials; conducts drills and exercises as directed by the teacher; helps the teacher work with individual students and groups; duplicates materials; records attendance; prepares instructional aides, including displays and mockups; assists with play area activities; helps operate and use educational media; assists with testing routines; assists students with programmed or precise units of instruction; or performs equivalent activities determined by the local school district.

1. Recognize that the classroom teacher has the ultimate responsibility for the instruction and the behavior of the students and follow the directions given by your supervisor.
2. Realize that you may be assigned to a particular classroom or grade, but you may be asked to work with other classes and/or age groups at any given time.
3. Assist students in performing activities initiated by the teacher.
4. Supervise children in the hallway, lunchroom, playground, etc.
5. Reinforce learning in small groups or with individuals, while the teacher works with other students.
6. Refer concerns expressed by parents, students or others to the classroom teacher. The teacher is responsible for communicating progress and concerns with parents—not the paraprofessional.
7. Perform clerical tasks such as attendance, typing, copying, etc.
8. Assist the teacher in observing and charting behavior.
9. Assist the teacher with crisis problems and behavior management.
10. Carry out instructional programs designed by the teacher.
11. Work with the teacher to develop classroom schedules.
12. Assist in planning field trips or activities.
13. Read aloud or listen to children read.
14. Hand out papers.
15. Assist in creating flashcards, posters, bulletin boards, etc.
16. Take care of student emergencies and illnesses such as vomiting, toileting accidents, etc.
17. Supervise when students arrive at school, eat breakfast, eat lunch, recess, etc...
18. Supervise in the restrooms.
19. Straighten room at the end of the day.
20. Complete time sheets in a timely manner.
21. Carry out any other responsibilities deemed appropriate for this position.
22. Avoid situations where you are alone in an enclosed area with a student.
23. **STAY BUSY.** If you have down time, ask your teacher what you can do to help. Move around the room, and avoid just sitting for extended periods of time.

PARAPROFESSIONALS MAY NOT

- Communicate concerns or progress about students to parents.
- Discuss any aspect of a student's behavior, progress, and concerns with anyone outside of the school setting.
- Be solely responsible for assigning grades.
- Assume full responsibility for teaching a class or supervising for extended periods of time. (15 minutes or less)

PARAPROFESSIONAL POSITIONS DEFINED

- *General Classroom*- An aide that helps the teacher work with students who are in general education.
- *Pre-School*- An aide that works closely with the Pre-School teacher by helping students with lessons and activities.
- *Special Education*- An aide assigned to a specific student(s) and tends to the student(s) based on the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP).
- *Title I*- An aide that works with students in the Title I Reading program.

TEACHER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide clear directions, appropriate training and appropriate support for paraprofessional duties.
- Provide appropriate supervision of the paraprofessional.
- Communicate regularly with the paraprofessional regarding teacher and paraprofessional roles.
- Communicate clear information to parents regarding roles and duties of paraprofessional.

PARAPROFESSIONAL EVALUATION

The supervising teacher and principal conduct an annual evaluation for each East Mills paraprofessional. Use of the information from the evaluation serves as a tool for paraprofessionals to improve skills, define job descriptions, apply clearly defined processes and procedures, and increase the educational partnership for optimal student and classroom success. Reports, correspondence and memoranda can also be used to document performance. A performance conference may be scheduled at which time the employee will have an opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

Paraprofessionals:

- Informal Observations (walk-through) throughout the school year.
- Feedback Form to be completed by classroom teacher by the end of March
- A summative evaluation conference will be held before the end of the school year with the principal.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT RECORDS

Federal law protects the confidentiality of records for all students. All policies regarding the release of information must be strictly followed. Access to the records of any students with disabilities is strictly limited, and all special education eligibility information is to be kept in a locked, secured location. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) limits the release of any personally identifiable information about any student only to the student's parents, educators with a direct educational interest in the child, and appropriate persons in the event of an emergency. Release of confidential information to any other agency or person requires the written consent of the parent. Teachers and paraprofessionals should give careful consideration to any written descriptions of student behavior. Any written description of student behavior, once shared, becomes accessible information. Any verbal communication about a student containing personally identifiable information may be a violation of the student's right to confidentiality. A paraprofessional should not discuss student progress, student needs and other educational program components with family members or others outside the school setting.

PARAPROFESSIONAL CHECKLIST

This checklist is a tool to help our paraprofessionals develop a job description, understand expectations and establish good communication between supervisors and co-workers. By answering the questions on the checklist, paraprofessional will gain added knowledge and expertise in their job assignment as well as become a contributor to student success.

- ____ 1. Have I exchanged telephone numbers with my secretary, teacher, immediate co workers?
- ____ 2. Have I learned emergency procedures in case of such events as fire or weather conditions?
- ____ 3. Have I become familiar with the daily classroom schedule?
- ____ 4. Do I understand my job description?
- ____ 5. Do I understand how I am to divide my time among tasks?
- ____ 6. Do I understand the teacher's discipline methods?
- ____ 7. Do I know in what ways the teacher wants me to assist in disciplining students?
- ____ 8. Do I know what student records I am to keep and where to file them?
- ____ 9. Do I know which outside-the-classroom activities (i.e., lunchtime or playground duties) I am responsible for?
- ____ 10. Do I know where supplies are kept?
- ____ 11. Do I know where to obtain equipment?
- ____ 12. Do I know how to operate classroom equipment?
- ____ 13. Am I familiar with the school policy concerning releasing a child to a parent (or other adult) who comes to pick up that child early?
- ____ 14. Do I understand the school policy regarding reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect?
- ____ 15. Have I reviewed/discussed educational and medical student information with the

teacher?

- _____ 16. Am I familiar with district policy and procedures?
- _____ 17. Do I have a substitute folder of instructions and job duties for my sub?
- _____ 18. Do I know how to report my absences?
- _____ 19. Have I read the district's policy on Leaves and Absences?
- _____ 20. Have I notified my supervisor that I will be absent?
- _____ 21. Do I know how to access the East Mills website to find district information, questions and answers, forms, policy and employee information? (www.emschools.org)
- _____ 22. Have I read and do I understand district policy and procedures regarding confidentiality of records and information for both students and employees?

PARAPROFESSIONAL HANDBOOK VERIFICATION FORM

I, _____ have received a copy of the Paraprofessional Handbook.

I understand I **MUST** communicate and coordinate with all teachers and administrators on a regular basis to ensure success for the students.

I understand that I am **REQUIRED** to comply with district policies and can be subject to disciplinary action for non-compliance.

Paraprofessional Signature: _____ Date: _____