

2023-2024
PARAPROFESSIONAL HANDBOOK



GRAND MEADOW PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #495

GRAND MEADOW, MINNESOTA

School Board Approved July 18, 2023

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Grand Meadow Public School Mission Statement:

Design and deliver relevant learning opportunities for all students which enable student growth and achievement.

Grand Meadow Public School Vision Statement:

All students receive a quality education in a safe and welcoming environment that enables them to develop to their full potential to live meaningful and productive lives.

Grand Meadow Public Schools Core Values:

- Integrity – being respectful of ourselves and others in our school and community. We are inclusive of all and appreciate the diversity of our community.
- Wellbeing – providing an environment that encourages each individual to advocate for their wellbeing (physical, mental, and social).
- Communication – providing honest and timely communication, and encourage engagement from all (administration, teachers, students, parents, guardians, and community). We value collaboration and innovation in communication.
- Community Engagement – creating meaningful learning experiences for all. We will partner with the community to integrate career and life skills that enhance the lives of those we serve.
- Excellence – creating and promoting an environment of learning and development that allows everyone to do their best, every day.



What is a Paraprofessional?

A paraprofessional is a school employee who works under the supervision of a certified/licensed staff member to support and assist in providing instructional and other services to children and youth and their families. The certified/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. (Adapted from A.L. Pickett, Director for the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, City University of New York, 1993)

Job Titles

- Aide
- Classroom Assistant
- Educational Aide
- Educational Assistant
- Instructional Aide
- Instructional Assistant
- Para Educator
- Support Aide
- Teaching Assistant

Highly Qualified Paraprofessionals (School Board Policy - Approved 01/14/14)

The Southern Minnesota Special Education Consortium and member districts require all paraprofessionals that work within each of our school districts to be highly qualified. The cooperative and member districts are requiring all paraprofessionals to pass the ParaPro Assessment within 90 school days of their hire to become highly qualified or hold a teaching license. The district will pay for paraprofessionals to complete the test on their first two attempts, if the applicant does not pass on the first two attempts and chooses to retake it a third time, it will be at their own expense. If they choose not to take the test after their second attempt at passing or if they do not pass on their third attempt the paraprofessional employment will be terminated at that time. The cooperative and district have no obligation to purchase study materials or provide tutoring to paraprofessionals that do not pass the ParaPro test, having the knowledge to pass the test is a requirement upon their hire.

PARAPROFESSIONAL REQUIREMENTS

All paraprofessionals who work in the Title I program must have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Paraprofessionals who assist with instruction must meet additional requirements with one of the three options currently available in Minnesota:

Option A: Completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education (a minimum of 60 semester credits or the amount required to complete two years of full-time enrollment as defined by the institution attended); or

Option B: Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or

Option C: Demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and mathematics (or, as appropriate, readiness for each of these subject areas) by passing the ParaPro test with a minimum score of 460. The test is administered by appointment in participating school districts, regional offices of education, and other agencies.

Minnesota Department of Education -education.mn.gov

ParaPro Assessment

The ParaPro Assessment is a general aptitude test that is required in many states for paraprofessional certification. It also offers school districts an objective assessment of your foundation of knowledge and skills.

What is it?

The ParaPro Assessment measures the skills and knowledge in reading, writing and math by prospective and practicing paraprofessionals. It also measures their ability to apply those skills and knowledge when assisting in classroom instruction. It was designed to satisfy the requirements of the federally legislated No Child Left Behind Act.

Who takes it?

The test is for prospective and practicing paraprofessionals.

How long is it?

Test takers have 2.5 hours to complete the test.

What subjects are on the test?

Test subjects include reading, writing and math.

What are the questions like?

The test has 90 multiple-choice questions, approximately two-thirds of which focus on basic skills and knowledge. The remaining one-third focus on applying skills in the classroom. All test questions are in English.

How is the test given?

The test is delivered on computer and administered by appointment in participating school districts, regional offices of education and other agencies.

State and School District Requirements:

Minnesota has an established qualifying score of 460. Test takers must meet or exceed this score to pass the ParaPro Assessment.

Tips for Taking the ParaPro Assessment

- Familiarize yourself with the test before taking it.
- Read the directions carefully.
- Consider all answer choices before marking one.

- Work rapidly without being careless. Don't spend too much time on difficult questions.
- Guess rather than not respond at all.
- Mark your answers clearly, and give only one answer per question.
- Review your answers if you finish early.

The ParaPro Assessment for Test Takers – www.ets.org

See Human Resources or refer to the contract for areas such as:

- Hours of Service
- Basic Work Week
- Shifts and Starting Times
- Overtime
- Lunch Periods
- Breaks
- Snow/Event Days
- Rates of Pay
- Longevity
- Health Insurance
- Mutual of Omaha Life Insurance
- Dental/Eye Care/Wellness Coverage
- Sick Leave
- Personal Leave
- Holidays

Code of Ethics for Paraprofessionals

Accepting Responsibilities

- Recognize that the supervising teacher has the ultimate responsibility for student's instruction and management.
- Engage only in activities for which you are qualified or trained.
- Do not communicate progress or concerns about students to parents.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students or others to the supervising teacher.

Relationships with Students and Parents

- Discuss a child's progress, limitations, and/or educational program only with the supervising teacher in the appropriate setting.
- Discuss the school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel.
- Refrain from engaging in discriminatory practices based on a student's disability, race, sex, cultural background or religion.
- Respect the dignity, privacy and individuality of all students, parents and staff members.
- Present yourself as a positive adult role model.

Relationships with the Teacher

- Recognize the teacher as the supervisor and team leader.
- Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- When problems cannot be resolved, talk with an administrator
- Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher.

Relationships with the School

- Accept responsibility for improving skills.
- Know school policies and procedures.
- Represent the school district in a positive manner.

Professionalism

A paraprofessional plays a critical role in the lives of students, in the school and in the community. As a representative of a school, you are considered a professional and expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. Therefore, as a paraprofessional you are expected to demonstrate characteristics such as honesty, integrity, dependability, cooperation, accountability and a willingness to learn. Other expected behaviors are:

Attendance: Attendance and punctuality convey how seriously you take your job. The classroom supervising teacher and the students you work with count on you being at work and on time every day.

Dress Code: Professional attire is to be worn every day, unless there is a special event. Friday is School Spirit Day.

Serve as a Positive Role Model: Engage in positive behaviors at all times, treating students and colleagues with dignity and showing regard for individual differences and diversity.

Attitude: It is important to display a positive attitude. Often other's perception of your attitude is developed from verbal and non-verbal cues. A positive attitude can be conveyed in many ways. For example, just remembering to smile and being friendly towards others can make a difference as well as looking for ways to assist others.

Adapted from The Paraprofessional's Guide to the Inclusive Classroom

Work Responsibilities

- 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
- Monitor and assist students during whole class instruction
- Monitor and support students during independent work
- Assist the teacher with behavioral management
- Supervise students in the hallway, lunchroom, and playground
- Reinforce learning in small groups or with individuals
- FASTBridge Screening
- FASTBridge Progress Monitoring

- Interventions
- Maintain appropriate records for teachers
- Assist with preparation of instructional materials

Paraprofessionals

*making a difference
every day....*



The Distinction in Roles of Paraprofessionals and Teachers

Duties of Supervising Teacher

- Classroom Organization
 - Plans weekly schedule
 - Plans instructional program: goals, lessons, activities for entire class and individual students
- Assessment
 - Administers test to entire class
 - Evaluates and grades student performance
- Sets Objectives
 - Determines appropriate objectives for class and individual students
- Instruction
 - Designs and selects instructional materials
 - Teaches lessons for the entire class, small groups and individual students
- Behavioral Management
 - Plans and carries out behavior management strategies for the whole class and individual students
- Working with Family Members
 - Corresponds and meets with family members
 - Initiates, conducts and facilitates conferences for individual students
- Individualized Education Planning

- Develops and implements IEP with the IEP team
- In-Service/Staff Development
 - Attends appropriate in-services and professional development opportunities
- Other Duties
 - Facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education classrooms

The **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION** clearly states that:

It is the **teacher's responsibility to teach skills or knowledge for the first time**. The paraprofessional can be assigned by the teacher to review what was taught or to supervise activities in which students practice or apply what the teacher has taught, but the teacher is responsible for the teaching content.

The **teacher is responsible for instruction and management of student's behavior**. The paraprofessional assists the teacher in carrying out lesson plans and behavior plans, but the teacher is responsible for the design of these plans.

Duties of Paraprofessionals

- Classroom Organization
 - Assists with planning: copies, types, files, etc.
 - Implements plan as specified by the teacher
 - Plans review activities
 - Maintains records
- Assessment
 - Checks and scores student work
 - Monitors student progress; relates findings to teacher
- Sets Objectives
 - Implements lessons to meet student objectives
- Instruction
 - Assembles instructional materials as told by the teacher
 - Leads small group and 1-on-1 lessons as directed
- Behavior Management
 - Implements behavioral management strategies using the same emphasis and techniques as the teacher
 - Conducts observations, collects data and maintains records
- Individualized Education Planning
 - Assists in implementing IEP goals and objectives
 - Carries out teacher's plan
- In-service/Staff development
 - Attends appropriate in-services and professional development opportunities
- Other Duties
 - Monitors playground, cafeteria, hallway, bus, etc.
 - Facilitates the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education
 - Provides health services as assigned
 - Other duties as assigned
 - Before school supervision

Expectations

Expected Behaviors:

- ❖ Follow school policy and procedures
- ❖ Maintain confidentiality
- ❖ Be on time! Promptness is essential
- ❖ Regular attendance is very important. Students, teachers and other paraprofessionals depend on you each day
- ❖ Follow directions and guidance of teachers and other supervisors
- ❖ Follow your schedule
- ❖ Maintain focus on your duties at all times
- ❖ Present a professional appearance
- ❖ Conduct yourself in a professional manner
- ❖ Manage students both in and out of the classroom
- ❖ Help redirect and supervise in all areas of the school
- ❖ Be able to work effectively without being told what to do
- ❖ Show respect for others
- ❖ Be a positive role model
- ❖ Maintain professional behavior in the classroom

Field Trip Chaperone

The Grand Meadow School District expects all participants on a school sponsored trip to adhere to the rules and expectations of the school district while away from the school. Students who do not adhere to the expectations, policies and procedures of the school district or specified trip expectations will be given discipline action in compliance with school policies and procedures. It is important to remember that field trips take a great deal of planning and not all who volunteer will be able to attend based on venue and number restrictions. Older siblings of students who still attend Grand Meadow Public Schools are not considered chaperones, and will not be permitted to attend. Please communicate with the teacher well in advance about trip arrangements.

Chaperones and adults participants will need to adhere to school policies and procedures. All adults attending will have current background checks on file. Chaperones may oversee students other than your own, and must adhere to the guidelines set by the teacher regarding each trip. Chaperones must ride school provided transportation. Chaperones and adults are to be role models and conduct themselves in a manner consistent to the expectations outlined.

Ref: MSBA Policy 510, GM School Board Policy 510.1

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is important that paraprofessionals maintain confidentiality. It's the LAW! Confidentiality is a guaranteed right to students and parents under FERPA, Article 7 and IDEA.



CONFIDENTIALITY LAWS

FERPA – Family Educational Right and Privacy Act

- Passed in 1974
- Protects the privacy of student educational records
- **Educational records** include a range of information such as: place of birth, grades, test scores, special education records, disciplinary records, medical records and other personally identifiable information

IDEA- Individuals with Disabilities Act

- Federal Law passed that supports special education and related service programming for children with disabilities.
- One section of the law deals with confidentiality and incorporates the provisions of FERPA

GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY

1. **Never** discuss information about a student in a public place.
2. **Never** discuss information about a student with the parents of another student.
3. **Never** discuss information about a student with another student.
4. **Never** discuss information about a student with staff not directly working with that student.
5. **Never** post information about a student on social media.

Legally Protected

- | | |
|--|---|
| ✓ Information that identifies a student | ✓ Evaluation Information |
| ✓ Information about a student's disability | ✓ Behavioral Reports |
| ✓ IEP Information | ✓ Test Results |
| ✓ Information from team meetings both verbal and written | ✓ Health Information |
| | ✓ Student's personal family information |

Public Information

NO STUDENT INFORMATION IS PUBLIC

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY POLICY FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

Policy: The District #495 Public Schools, in compliance with State and Federal statutes and regulations, and in recognition of its obligation to provide equal educational opportunity for all students. The school district does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, parental status, status with regard to public assistance, disability, sexual orientation, including gender identity and expression, or age. The school district also makes reasonable accommodations for disabled students in the following:

1. Access to course offering
2. Curricular materials
3. Counseling practices
4. Extracurricular activities
5. Athletics
6. Use of school facilities

Mandated Reporting

What is a Mandated Reporter?

A **mandated reporter** is a person who, because of his or her profession, is legally required to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to the relevant authorities. These laws are in place to prevent children from being abused and to end any possible abuse or neglect at the earliest possible stage.

Who is considered a Mandated Reporter?

- Social workers
- Teachers
- Educators
- Health care providers
- Law Enforcement

Duties of Mandated Reporter

- Failure to report is a crime (misdemeanor or felony, depending on the injury of the crime)
- If you suspect abuse/neglect/maltreatment, YOU must report

What must be reported?

- **Types of Child Maltreatment**
 - Neglect (physical and emotional)
 - Physical Abuse
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Threatened Injury
 - Threatened Sexual Abuse
 - Domestic Violence (if a child was witness to abuse in the home)
 - If a child discloses they witnessed a parent using illegal drugs

Who should I report to?

See School Social Worker for reporting procedures

Your Protection as a Mandated Reporter

- Your name is protected and confidential (until after the case has been closed)
- You cannot be held accountable for slander (even if the report is screened out or child protection/law enforcement determines neglect/abuse did not occur)
- If your identity is disclosed or if you have to testify, you are protected from liability

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

❖ Tornado/Severe Weather Threats

- Remain in the classroom and shut the door. Keep away from windows and/or anything breakable to prevent injuries. Do not allow students to leave the room until an “all clear” has been given.
- For individuals in hallways or open areas go against a wall and sit cross-legged. Place hands over head to prevent items from falling on your head or causing injury. Remain in this situation until informed the area is safe.

❖ School-Wide Emergency Evacuation

- **Roles and Responsibilities**
 - Paraprofessionals – your class
 - If your students are at specials- you meet up with your class
- **Details and Routes**
 - **EXITING TO THE WEST:** 5th Street and Third Lane
 - **SOUTHERN EXIT:** Follow the path to Pheasant Run then Brittany Way SE to 1st Ave SE
- **Evacuation Site**
 - **EMS BUILDING**
 - **Locations**
 - Those arriving first may need to stop at the park
 - Pre-K -Grade 1 will be in the conference room and students that have sensory needs
 - Grades 2-12 will be in the open vehicle area and with classroom teachers
- **LUTHERAN CHURCH WILL BE PARENT PICKUP AND LAW ENFORCEMENT WILL BE RELEASING STUDENTS**

❖ Fire Drills

- **Normal Fire Drills** In the event of a fire, each room will follow the evacuation plan posted in the highly visible location on the wall near the door.

❖ Active Shooter Drills

- **ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILL**
 - "Active shooter drill" means an emergency preparedness drill designed to teach students, teachers, school personnel, and staff how to respond in the event of an armed intruder on campus or an armed assailant in the immediate vicinity of the school. An active shooter drill is not an active shooter simulation, nor may an active shooter drill include any sensorial components, activities, or elements which mimic a real life shooting.
 - "Active shooter simulation" means an emergency exercise including full-scale or functional exercises, designed to teach adult school personnel and staff how to respond in the event of an armed intruder on campus or an armed assailant in the

immediate vicinity of the school which also incorporates sensorial components, activities, or elements mimicking a real life shooting. Activities or elements mimicking a real life shooting include, but are not limited to, simulation of tactical response by law enforcement. An active shooter simulation is not an active shooter drill.

- "Full-scale exercise" means an operations-based exercise that is typically the most complex and resource-intensive of the exercise types and often involves multiple agencies, jurisdictions, organizations, and real-time movement of resources.
- An active shooter drill conducted according to Minnesota Statutes, section 121A.037 with students in early childhood through grade 12 must be:
- Active shooter drill protocols must include a reasonable amount of time immediately following the drill for teachers to debrief with their students. The opportunity to debrief must be provided to students before regular classroom activity may resume. During the debrief period, students must be allowed to access any mental health services available on campus, including counselors, school psychologists, social workers, or cultural liaisons. An active shooter drill must not be combined or conducted consecutively with any other type of emergency preparedness drill. An active shooter drill must be accompanied by an announcement prior to commencing. The announcement must use concise and age-appropriate language and, at a minimum, inform students there is no immediate danger to life and safety.

Notice

- The school district must provide notice of a pending active shooter drill to every student's parent or legal guardian before an active shooter drill is conducted. Whenever practicable, notice must be provided at least 24 hours in advance of a pending active shooter drill and inform the parent or legal guardian of the right to opt their student out of participating.
 - If a student is opted out of participating in an active shooter drill, no negative consequence must impact the student's general school attendance record nor may nonparticipation alone make a student ineligible to participate in or attend school activities.
 - The Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education must ensure the availability of alternative safety education for students who are opted out of participating or otherwise exempted from an active shooter drill. Alternative safety education must provide essential safety instruction through less sensorial safety training methods and must be appropriate for students with mobility restrictions, sensory needs, developmental or physical disabilities, mental health needs, and auditory or visual limitations.
 - Any student in early childhood through grade 12 must not be required to participate in an active shooter drill that does not meet the Criteria set forth above.
 - A student must not be required to participate in an active shooter simulation. An active shooter simulation must not take place during regular school hours if a majority of students are present, or expected to be present, at the school. A parent or legal guardian of a student in grades 9 through 12 must have the opportunity to opt their student into participating in an active shooter simulation.

Violence Prevention

- A school district or charter school conducting an active shooter drill must provide students in middle school and high school at least one hour, or one standard class period, of violence prevention training annually.
- The violence prevention training must be evidence-based and may be delivered in-person, virtually, or digitally. Training must, at a minimum, teach students the following:
 - how to identify observable warning signs and signals of an individual who may be at risk of harming oneself or others;
 - the importance of taking threats seriously and seeking help; and
 - the steps to report dangerous, violent, threatening, harmful, or potentially harmful activity.
- A school district or charter school must ensure that students have the opportunity to contribute to their school's safety and violence prevention planning, aligned with the recommendations for multihazard planning for schools, including but not limited to:
- At a regularly scheduled school board meeting, a school board of a district that has conducted an active shooter drill must consider the following:
 - the effect of active shooter drills on the safety of students and staff; and
 - the effect of active shooter drills on the mental health and wellness of students and staff.

LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES

- ❖ **Lockdown Procedure Internal Threat:** This procedure secures and contains classrooms within the building. An announcement will be made via notification system stating “This is a Code Red Internal Threat, please lock your door.” Everyone needs to stay where they are, let no one in! Notify the office if someone tries to enter your room. Remain at Lock Down until an “All Clear” is given over the notification system that the Lock Down is over.
- ❖ **Lockdown Procedures External Threat:** This procedure requires the locking of the High School and Elementary office entry doors as well as to confirm the remaining building doors are secure to prevent access to the building by a potential outside threat. An announcement will be made over the notification system stating “This is an External Threat, please gather your students, lock your door and continue class.” No outdoor classes or recesses will be allowed until the “All Clear” is given.
- ❖ **Normal Lockdown Drills:** In the event of a lockdown, each room will follow the normal lock down procedure. Make sure to lock all entrances into your room and place your students in an area out of range of the door. Turn off lights and remain in silence. The drill will end once notified.
- ❖ **Combo Lock Down/ Blockade Simulation:** This drill will simulate the movement of larger items to block entrances into the room. Once doors are locked, have students help move larger items (desk, file cabinets, etc.) in the front of doorways. Once doors are blocked, move students to an area out range of the door. Turn off lights and remain in silence. The drill will end once notified.
- ❖ **Locations to go in the event of a Lockdown**
 - Classrooms – remain in classrooms and lock doors
 - Playground – take students to the van garage
 - Baseball/Football fields – take students to the Crow’s Nest