# Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals
## Documentation of Special Education Paraprofessionals' Competence in Entry Level Standards-Based Knowledge and Skills

As practicing members of the educational team, special education paraprofessionals should be able to document their competence and mastery of required skills and knowledge. The *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania* is recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education for paraprofessionals to obtain "qualified" status, per 22 PA Code Chapter 14.105(a)(1)(iii).

This requirement states that by July 1, 2010, all instructional paraprofessionals shall meet one of the following qualifications:
  (i)     Have completed at least 2 years of postsecondary study.
  (ii)    Possess an associate degree or higher.
  (iii)   Meet a rigorous standard of quality as demonstrated through a State or local assessment.

The *Special Education Paraprofessional Competencies for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist* may be used by instructional paraprofessionals in school entities, charter schools or cyber charter schools and their supervisors to document the achievement of skills and knowledge necessary to work with students with disabilities.

Within the Competency Checklist, administrators and supervisors of paraprofessionals will find various methods, (i.e., Interview, Demonstration, or Professional Development) to document a paraprofessional's attainment of the competencies. These can be recorded on the checklist (checklist format adapted from Twin Falls School District #411, Idaho, Paraprofessional Portfolio Plan & Competency Checklist, 2002).

When a special education paraprofessional has completed the *Special Education Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist,* and a school entity, charter school or cyber charter school administrator has attested, on the assurance page, to the demonstration of the paraprofessional's competence in each of the seven competency areas, the paraprofessional may electronically submit the document and any questions to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education to [RA-EDPARAPROFESSIONAL@pa.gov](mailto:RA-EDPARAPROFESSIONAL@pa.gov) . Upon review and approval of the submitted documents, the paraprofessional will be issued a *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania.* Please note that it takes about 6-8 weeks for the approval process to be completed.

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

## *Performance–Based Competencies for Special Education Paraprofessionals*

Performance-based competencies include statements of the knowledge and skills needed by paraprofessionals to work successfully in educational environments. Competencies for knowledge and skill are the foundation for pre-service preparation, ongoing professional development, and performance assessment of paraprofessionals. *Knowledge and Skills for Beginning Special Educators* were identified by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) in *What Every Special Educator Must Know*, 4th ed, 2000. These knowledge and skill competencies correspond with the performance-based competencies for special education paraprofessionals promulgated by the CEC.

The Bureau of Special Education, Pennsylvania Department of Education endorses the use of these seven CEC performance-based competencies and their corresponding required knowledge and skills, as they define the basic content for the initial preparation and practice of special education paraprofessionals.

**Core Competency Area 1**: Professional Learning and Ethical Practices

**Core Competency Area 2:** Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences

**Core Competency Area 3:** Special Education Services and Supports in the Learning
  Environments

**Core Competency Area 4:** Assessment

**Core Competency Area 5**: Instructional Supports and Strategies

**Core Competency Area 6**: Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports

**Core Competency Area 7**: Collaboration with Team Members

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

## *Directions for the Special Education Paraprofessional Competency Assessment Checklist*

The Competency Assessment Checklist is a vehicle through which a paraprofessional can document achievement of the entry level knowledge and skill competencies required to receive the Paraprofessional Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education. The paraprofessional's supervisor or designee must verify achievement of all items on the checklist, as evidenced by an electronic signature on the assurance page before application for the credential may be submitted to the Bureau of Special Education.

The Competency Assessment Checklist contains seven competencies. Included for each competency is a list of essential knowledge and/or skills that are required to meet the competencies. Paraprofessionals can achieve these competencies by one of three methods: Interview, Demonstration, or Professional Development. In addition, each knowledge and/or skill competency can be achieved at the entry level. Supervisors must verify paraprofessionals have the entry level knowledge and/or skills for each competency to qualify for the Paraprofessional Credential. Methods are described below:

**Interview**
When interviewed by the supervisor, paraprofessional provides responses to questions relating to knowledge and skill competencies.

**Demonstration**
When observed by the supervisor in the classroom or a simulated situation, paraprofessional employs knowledge and skills competencies.

**Professional Development**
Paraprofessional has documented attendance and met syllabus requirements of professional development/in-service training approved by a school entity.

*Please note, not all knowledge and skill items can be achieved by attending a professional development or in-service training. Some items require demonstration under actual work conditions.

# Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills

## Completing the Paraprofessional Competency Assessment Checklist

Please complete all demographic information on the cover page. Each of the seven Paraprofessional Competencies has a separate row that includes: the checklist of essential knowledge and skills that apply to that competency; the date achieved; and the method used to achieve each competency.

**Directions:**
1. Complete employee information on cover page and identifying information on each page.
2. Indicate the date each competency was documented by supervisor or designee.
3. Indicate method used to achieve each competency in the *I-D-PD* column.
4. Paraprofessionals may provide evidence to document the completion of each core competency in the evidence and resource boxes.
5. When all knowledge and skills in a competency have been completed, the supervisor or designee assures and electronically signs on the last page to document that the requirements have been met.
6. Retain a copy of the completed application for your records.

### Competency Area 1 – Professional Learning and Ethical Practices

Employee Name: Ms. Mary Smith          Work Location: Smart Elementary

### Core Competency 1 – Professional Learning and Ethical Practices

| Core Competency 1 – Professional Learning and Ethical Practices | | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Knowledge* | | | | |
| K1.1 | *Principles, standards, and policies that guide ethical practice* | 2/1/2023 | PD | *Jane Doe* |
| K1.2 | *Personal and cultural biases and differences and how they may influence one's practice* | 2/1/2023 | PD | *Jane Doe* |
| K1.3 | *Professional growth opportunities for continued learning* | 2/1/2023 | PD | *Jane Doe* |

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

Paraprofessional Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City:_____State:_____Zip Code: _____

Home Phone:_____Email:_____

College Credits (if any)

Years of Experience _____

Job Title: _____

☐ Original application date_____

☐ Revised Application date_____

Please check all that apply to your current assignment:

| | |
|---|---|
| Early Intervention | Middle School |
| Elementary School | High School |
| Learning Support | Speech and Language Support |
| Life Skills Support | Emotional Support |
| Multiple Disabilities Support | Deaf and Hard of Hearing Impairment Support |
| Autistic Support | Blind and Visual Impairment Support |
| Physical Support | Other _____ |

Supervisor Name: _____

Supervisor Title: _____

School District: _____

Supervisor Email: _____

Supervisor Phone Number: _____

Pennsylvania Department of Education

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

**Core Competency Area 1 – Professional Learning and Ethical Practices**

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/Rationale of Core Competency Area 1

| Core Competency 1 – Professional Learning and Ethical Practices | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Knowledge* | | | |
| K1.1 *Principles, standards, and policies that guide ethical practice* | | | |
| K1.2 *Personal and cultural biases and differences and how they may influence one's practice* | | | |
| K1.3 *Professional growth opportunities for continued learning* | | | |
| *Skills* | | | |
| S1.1 *Conduct activities with integrity and in compliance with applicable local, state, and federal standards, policies, and guidelines* | | | |
| S1.2 *Maintain the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of all students with disabilities, families, and school personnel* | | | |
| S1.3 *Follow the chain of command established by the district to address policy questions, system level issues, and personnel practices* | | | |
| S1.4 *Report suspected child abuse, suicidal ideation, and dangerous behaviors as required by law, policies, and local procedures* | | | |
| S1.5 *Recognize and respect role differences of teachers, paraeducators, and other licensed professionals* | | | |
| S1.6 *Recognize the role of the licensed professional as the leader of the instructional team* | | | |
| S1.7 *Practice within the limits of the defined paraprofessional role* | | | |
| S1.8 *Practice within one's skill limits and request direction, instruction, guidance, or additional training for new or unfamiliar tasks* | | | |
| S1.9 *Maintain boundaries for relationships and communication with students and their families within the professional and ethical scope of responsibility* | | | |
| S1.10 *Refer questions about student progress to appropriate licensed professionals* | | | |
| S1.11 *Reflect on one's performance, seek guidance and use feedback from licensed professional to continually improve practice* | | | |
| S1.12 *Advocate for participation in ongoing professional growth and development opportunities* | | | |
| S1.13 *Demonstrate respect and appreciation for cultural differences in verbal and written interactions with students, families, and school personnel* | | | |

# Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills

*Examples of Evidence:*

*Resources:*

# Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills

## Core Competency Area 2 – Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/Rationale of Core Competency Area 2

| Core Competency 2 – Learner Development and Individual Learning Differences | | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | | |
| K2.1 | Cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development which impact milestones of students with disabilities compared to typically developing peers | | | |
| K2.2 | Educational challenges manifested as a result of varying disabilities | | | |
| K2.3 | Effect of disabilities on students, families, and society through the lifespan | | | |
| K2.4 | Family systems and their influence on the educational process | | | |
| K2.5 | Common concerns of families of students with disabilities | | | |
| K2.6 | Effects of cultural and linguistic diversity on the educational process and relationships between school, home, and community | | | |
| K2.7 | Characteristics and implications of one's own culture and use of language, including verbal and nonverbal communication, and how this may differ across cultures | | | |
| K2.8 | Effect of speech and language development on academic and nonacademic learning of students with disabilities | | | |
| K2.9 | Non-verbal modes of communication used by students with disabilities including augmentative and alternative communication | | | |
| **Skills** | | | | |
| S2.1 | Support student's independence, self-advocacy, positive sense of identity, self-control, and self-reliance under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |
| S2.2 | Support students with disabilities in their use of self-assessment, problem-solving, and other cognitive strategies under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |
| S2.3 | Recognize and respect individual differences between culture, religion, gender, and sexual orientation of students with disabilities and their families | | | |
| S2.4 | Align communication methods to individual's language proficiency under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |

| S2.5 | *Provide opportunities and support for children to understand, acquire, and use verbal and nonverbal means to communicate thoughts and feelings under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |
|------|---|---|---|---|
| S2.6 | *Reinforce the use of oral and written communication efforts of students with disabilities under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |

*Examples of Evidence:*

*Resources:*

# Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills

**Core Competency Area 3 – Special Education Services and Supports in the Learning Environments**

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/Rationale of Core Competency Area 3

| Core Competency 3 – Special Education Services and Supports in the Learning Environments | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | |
| K3.1 | Purposes of supports, services and specially designed instruction which provide access to general education curriculum | | | |
| K3.2 | General knowledge of categories from federal law for students with disabilities | | | |
| K3.3 | General knowledge of principles of inclusive practices for students with disabilities | | | |
| K3.4 | Individual learner characteristics as the primary basis for instructional programming and decision making, rather than disability categories or educational placement | | | |
| K3.5 | District/agency policies and procedures for protecting the safety, health, and well-being of learners and school personnel | | | |
| K3.6 | Rights and responsibilities of students with disabilities and the personnel who serve them | | | |
| K3.7 | Effects of paraeducator's proximity and fading of paraeducator support on student engagement, learning and independence | | | |
| **Skills** | | | |
| S3.1 | Access credible and reliable websites and resources to expand understanding of special education services and students with disabilities under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |
| S3.2 | Support a safe and equitable learning environment that honors diversity and inclusion under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |
| S3.3 | Establish and maintain rapport with learners under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |
| S3.4 | Use knowledge of student's strengths and interests to encourage engagement in varied school and community activities under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |
| S3.5 | Prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning as directed by the instructional team | | | |
| S3.6 | Adapt the physical environment and modify learning materials and activities as directed by the instructional team | | | |
| S3.7 | Support students with disabilities in following established school and classroom expectations and routines under the guidance of the instructional team | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *S3.8* | *Use routines and procedures to support effective transitions as determined by the instructional team* | | | |
| *S3.9* | *Use and maintain adaptive equipment/materials and assistive technology for students with disabilities as determined by the instructional team* | | | |
| *S3.10* | *Support students with disabilities in their use of augmentative and alternative communication devices and other assistive technology under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |
| *S3.11* | *Perform monitoring duties in learning environments as assigned by the instructional team* | | | |
| *S3.12* | *Use universal precautions to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy environment in all settings* | | | |
| *S3.13* | *Understand and articulate common educational and medical terminology used in the school setting* | | | |
| *S3.14* | *Use techniques to address personal care, medical care, and physical assistance to students with disabilities as directed or authorized by a licensed professional* | | | |

**Examples of Evidence:**

**Resources:**

Pennsylvania Department of Education

# Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills

**Core Competency Area 4 – Assessment**

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/Rationale for Core Competency Area 4

| Core Competency 4 – Assessment | | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | | |
| K4.1 | Rationale and methods for formative and summative assessment | | | |
| K4.2 | Link between assessment and instruction | | | |
| K4.3 | Accommodations on student IEP and procedures for proctoring accommodated tests | | | |
| **Skills** | | | | |
| S4.1 | Record objective and accurate data using collection procedures determined by the instructional team | | | |
| S4.2 | Proctor routine classroom and standardized tests following student accommodations as directed by the instructional team | | | |

*Examples of Evidence:*

*Resources:*

# Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills

**Core Competency Area 5 – Instructional Supports and Strategies**

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/Rationale for Core Competency Area 5

| Core Competency 5 – Instructional Supports and Strategies | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | |
| K5.1 *Concepts of differentiated instruction, accommodations, modifications, High Leverage Practices, specially designed instruction* | | | |
| K5.2 *Instructional strategies and instructional technology to support the individual student's learning* | | | |
| **Skills** | | | |
| S5.1 *Demonstrate proficiency in academics including oral and written communication, literacy, and mathematical skills appropriate to the job assignment* | | | |
| S5.2 *Follow written instructional plans provided by the instructional team, seeking clarification and training as needed* | | | |
| S5.3 *Communicate relevant information about the student with disabilities to the instructional team* | | | |
| S5.4 *Support the use of effective and culturally responsive instructional strategies in literacy and mathematics as directed by the instructional team* | | | |
| S5.5 *Review and reinforce learning activities, essential concepts, and modified content as directed by the instructional team* | | | |
| S5.6 *Use instructional time effectively* | | | |
| S5.7 *Modify pace of instruction and provide organizational cues under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |
| S5.8 *Make responsive adjustments to instruction under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |
| S5.9 *Provide least intrusive levels of support, fade support, and fade physical proximity from students with disabilities under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |
| S5.10 *Provide feedback to students with disabilities regarding their performance under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |

Pennsylvania Department of Education

*Examples of Evidence:*


*Resources:*


Pennsylvania Department of Education

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

**Core Competency Area 6 – Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports**

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/Rationale for Core Competency Area 6

| Core Competency 6 – Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Supports | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | |
| K6.1 *Basic principles of positive behavior supports to promote social, emotional, and educational well-being of students with disabilities* | | | |
| K6.2 *Communicative purpose of behaviors* | | | |
| K6.3 *Legal and ethical practices for the use of behavioral interventions* | | | |
| K6.4 *State and district policies and procedural safeguards regarding appropriate use of behavioral supports with students with disabilities* | | | |
| K6.5 *Importance of the paraeducator serving as a positive model for students with disabilities* | | | |
| **Skills** | | | |
| S6.1 *Implement positive behavior supports outlined in a behavior support plan as determined by the instructional team* | | | |
| S6.2 *Implement individualized reinforcement systems as determined by the instructional team* | | | |
| S6.3 *Support the implementation of social-emotional and behavioral interventions as determined by the instructional teams* | | | |
| S6.4 *Assist in teaching specific behaviors and procedures to facilitate safety and learning in each school setting as determined by the instructional team* | | | |
| S6.5 *Respond to student actions using strategies under the guidance and direction of the instructional team* | | | |
| S6.6 *Support development of social skills and facilitate proactive peer interactions for students with disabilities under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |
| S6.7 *Support students with disabilities by modeling and facilitating the use of conflict resolution and collaborative problem solving under the guidance of the instructional team* | | | |

*Examples of Evidence:*

*Resources:*

Pennsylvania Department of Education

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

**Core Competency Area 7 – Collaboration with Team Members**

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

Description/rationale for Core Competency Area 7

| Core Competency 7 – Collaboration with Team Members | Date Competency Achieved: | Verification: I = Interview D = Demonstration PD = Professional Development | "Optional" Verified By: Certified Teacher (Designee of Supervisor) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Knowledge** | | | |
| K7.1 | *Purpose of effective teamwork to improve student outcomes* | | | |
| K7.2 | *Communication styles and strategies for problem-solving and decision making* | | | |
| **Skills** | | | |
| S7.1 | *Establish and maintain professional, collegial, and appropriate relationships with school personnel, students, and their families* | | | |
| S7.2 | *Communicate effectively with school personnel, students and their families as determined by the instructional team* | | | |
| S7.3 | *Attend meetings and participate with other team members* | | | |

### *Examples of Evidence:*

### *Resources:*

Pennsylvania Department of Education

# *Paraprofessional Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist for Entry Level Standards Based Knowledge and Skills*

## Assurance Page

By my electronic signature below, I verify I have demonstrated competence in each of the seven competency areas required for the *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania.*

_____

Signature of Paraprofessional

_____

Date

By my electronic signature below, I verify demonstration of the paraprofessional's competence in each of the seven competency areas required for the *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania.*

_____

Printed Name of Paraprofessional Supervisor

_____

Signature of Paraprofessional Supervisor

_____

Title of Supervisor

_____

Date