

Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist

Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraeducators Documentation of Special Education Paraeducators' Competence in Standards-Based Knowledge and Skills

Pennsylvania Department of Education

As practicing members of the educational team, special education paraeducators should be able to document their competence and mastery of required skills and knowledge. The *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraeducators in Pennsylvania* is recommended by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education for paraeducators 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 Paraeducator Standards 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 paraeducators will find various methods, (i.e., Class/In-service Training, Interview, Observation/Demonstration, or Portfolio) to document a paraeducator's attainment of the competencies. In addition, the level of competence achieved (i.e., Entry, Intermediate, or Advanced) can be recorded on the checklist (checklist format adapted from Twin Falls School District #411, Idaho, Paraeducator Portfolio Plan & Competency Checklist, 2002).

When a special education paraeducator has completed the *Special Education Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*, and an administrator of an educational organization has attested, on the assurance page, to the demonstration of the paraeducator's competence in each of the ten standard areas, the paraeducator may electronically submit the document and any questions to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education to RA-EDPARAPROFESSIONAL@pa.gov or by telephone at 717-783-6134. Upon review and approval of the submitted documents, the paraeducator will be issued a *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraeducators in Pennsylvania*. Please note that it takes about 6-8 weeks for the approval process to be completed.

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Performance–Based Standards for Special Education Paraeducators

Performance-based standards include statements of the knowledge and skills needed by paraeducators to work successfully in educational environments. Standards for knowledge and skill competencies are the foundation for pre-service preparation, ongoing professional development, and performance assessment of paraeducators. *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 statements correspond with the performance-based standards for special education paraeducators promulgated by the CEC.

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

Paraeducator Standard # 1: Foundations of Special Education

Paraeducator Standard # 2: Development and Characteristics of Learners

Paraeducator Standard # 3: Individual Learning Differences

Paraeducator Standard # 4: Instructional Strategies

Paraeducator Standard # 5: Learning Environments & Social Interactions

Paraeducator Standard # 6: Language

Paraeducator Standard # 7: Instructional

Paraeducator Standard # 8: Assessment

Paraeducator Standard # 9: Professional and Ethical Practice

Paraeducator Standard # 10: Collaboration

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Directions for the Special Education Paraeducator Competency Assessment Checklist

The Competency Assessment Checklist is a vehicle through which a paraeducator can document achievement of the knowledge and skill competencies required to receive the Paraeducator Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraeducators from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education. The paraeducator'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 ten standards. Included for each standard is a list of essential knowledge and/or skill competencies that are required to meet the standard. Paraeducators can achieve these competencies by one of four methods: Class/In-service Training, Interview, Observation/Demonstration, or Portfolio. In addition, each knowledge and/or skill competency can be achieved at the Entry, Intermediate, or Advanced level. Paraeducators must reach entry level for each knowledge and/or skill competency for each standard as verified by their supervisor to qualify for the Paraeducator Credential. Methods and levels are described below:

Class/In-service Training

Paraeducator has documented attendance and met syllabus requirements of class/in-service training approved by a school entity.

Entry – Successfully completed the course and/or training

Intermediate – Action plan developed for application in job situations

Advanced – Action plan implemented and submitted to supervisor for review

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

Interview

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

Entry – Provides responses to questions describing basic knowledge and skills with limited evidence of application

Intermediate – In response to questions, describes application of knowledge and skill competencies in job situations

Advanced – In response to questions, describes application of knowledge and skill competencies to job situation and provides description of how adaptations could be created to meet student needs

Observation/Demonstration

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

Entry - Performs job duties using basic knowledge and skills; Requires some coaching to apply in job situations

Intermediate – Sometimes applies knowledge and skills while performing duties in job situations

Advanced - Consistently applies knowledge and skills and adapts to meet student needs across all educational settings

Portfolio

Paraeducator submits to supervisor a predetermined collection of products relating to the knowledge and skill competencies.

Entry – Products meet minimum of predetermined requirements reflecting basic understanding of knowledge and skill competencies with limited application

Intermediate – Products meet predetermined requirements and include examples of application of knowledge and skill competencies to job situations

Advanced – Products exceed predetermined requirements and include examples of application and adaptation of knowledge and skill competencies to job situations

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Completing the Competency Assessment Checklist

Please complete all demographic information on the cover page. Each of the ten Paraeducator Standards has a separate page that includes: the checklist of essential knowledge and skill competencies that apply to that standard; the method used to achieve each competency; and the level achieved for each competency.

Directions:

1. Complete employee information on cover page and identifying information on each page.
2. Indicate method used to achieve each competency in the *C-I-D-P* column.
3. Indicate the achievement level in the *E-I-A* column.
4. Indicate the date each competency was documented by supervisor or designee.
5. When all competencies in a standard 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.

Standard # 1 – Foundations of Special Education

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

Standard # 1 – Foundations of Special Education

Foundations of Special Education		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
K1	<i>Purposes of programs for individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>	I	7/1/2020	C
K2	<i>Basic educational terminology regarding students, programs, roles and instructional activities</i>	I	7/1/2020	C

***Paraeducator Standards for Practice:
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**Pennsylvania Department of Education Bureau of Special Education
*Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist***

Paraeducator Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip Code:** _____

Home Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

College Credits (if any): _____ **Years of Experience:** _____

Last four digits of SS#: _____ **Job Title:** _____

Please check one:

☐ 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: _____

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Standard # 1 – Foundations of Special Education

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
1. Foundations of Special Education				
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
<i>K1</i>	<i>Purposes of programs for individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>			
<i>K2</i>	<i>Basic educational terminology regarding students, programs, roles, and instructional activities</i>			

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Standard # 2 – Development and Characteristics of Learners

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

2. Development & Characteristics of Learners		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
<i>K1</i>	<i>Effects an exceptional condition(s) can have on an individual's life</i>			

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Standard # 3 – Individual Learning Differences

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
3. Individual Learning Differences				
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
<i>K1</i>	<i>Rights and responsibilities of families and children as they relate to individual learning needs</i>			
<i>K2</i>	<i>Indicators of abuse and neglect</i>			
<i>Essential skills:</i>				
<i>S1</i>	<i>Demonstrate sensitivity to the diversity of individuals and families</i>			

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Standard # 4 – Instructional Strategies

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
4. Instructional Strategies				
Essential knowledge:				
K1	<i>Basic instructional and remedial strategies and materials</i>			
K2	<i>Basic technologies appropriate to individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>			
K3	<i>How students learn reading</i>			
K4	<i>How students learn mathematics</i>			
Essential skills:				
S1	<i>Use strategies, equipment, materials, and technologies, as directed, to accomplish instructional objectives</i>			
S2	<i>Assist in adapting instructional strategies and materials as directed</i>			
S3	<i>Use strategies as directed to facilitate effective integration into various settings</i>			
S4	<i>Use strategies that promote the learner's independence as directed</i>			
S5	<i>Use strategies as directed to increase the individual's independence and confidence</i>			

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Standard # 5 – Learning Environments & Social Interactions

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

5. Learning Environments & Social Interactions		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
K1	<i>Demands of various learning environments</i>			
K2	<i>Rules and procedural safeguards regarding the management of behaviors of individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>			
<i>Essential skills:</i>				
S1	<i>Establish and maintain rapport with learners</i>			
S2	<i>Use universal precautions and assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment</i>			
S3	<i>Use strategies for behavior management as directed</i>			
S4	<i>Use strategies as directed, in a variety of settings, to assist in the development of social skills</i>			

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Standard # 6 – Language

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

6. Language		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
<i>K1</i>	<i>Characteristics of appropriate communication with stakeholders</i>			

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Standard # 7 – Instructional Planning

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
7. Instructional Planning				
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
S1	<i>Follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed</i>			
S2	<i>Prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning as directed</i>			

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Standard # 8 – Assessment

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
8. Assessment				
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
<i>K1</i>	<i>Rationale for assessment</i>			
<i>K2</i>	<i>Assessments in reading</i>			
<i>K3</i>	<i>Assessments in mathematics</i>			
<i>Essential skills:</i>				
<i>S1</i>	<i>Demonstrate basic collection techniques as directed</i>			
<i>S2</i>	<i>Make and document objective observations as directed</i>			

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Standard # 9 – Professional and Ethical Practice

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
9. Professional and Ethical Practice				
Essential knowledge:				
K1	<i>Ethical practices for confidential communication about individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>			
K2	<i>Personal, cultural biases and differences that affect one's ability to work with others</i>			
Essential skills:				
S1	<i>Perform responsibilities as directed in a manner consistent with laws and policies</i>			
S2	<i>Follow instructions of the professional</i>			
S3	<i>Demonstrate problem-solving, flexible thinking, conflict management techniques, and analysis of personal strengths and preferences</i>			
S4	<i>Act as a role model for individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>			
S5	<i>Demonstrate commitment to assisting learners in achieving their highest potential</i>			
S6	<i>Demonstrate the ability to separate personal issues from one's responsibilities as a paraeducator</i>			
S7	<i>Maintain a high level of competence and integrity</i>			
S8	<i>Exercise objective and prudent judgment</i>			
S9	<i>Demonstrate proficiency in academic skills, including oral and written communication</i>			
S10	<i>Engage in activities to increase one's own knowledge and skills</i>			
S11	<i>Engage in self-assessment</i>			
S12	<i>Accept and use constructive feedback</i>			
S13	<i>Demonstrate ethical practices as guided by the CEC Code of Ethics and other standards and policies</i>			

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Standard # 10 – Collaboration

Employee Name: _____ Employment Location: _____

		Achievement Level: E = Entry I = Intermediate A = Advanced	Date Competency Achieved:	Verification: C = Class I = Interview D = Demonstration P = Portfolio
10. Collaboration				
Essential knowledge:				
K1	<i>Common concerns of families of individuals with exceptional learning needs</i>			
K2	<i>Roles of stakeholders in planning an individualized program</i>			
Essential skills:				
S1	<i>Assist in collecting and providing objective, accurate information to professionals</i>			
S2	<i>Collaborate with stakeholders as directed</i>			
S3	<i>Foster respectful and beneficial relationships</i>			
S4	<i>Participate as directed in conferences as members of the educational team</i>			
S5	<i>Function in a manner that demonstrates a positive regard for the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of paraeducators and those of professionals</i>			

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Assurance Page

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

Signature of Paraeducator

Date

By my electronic signature below, I verify demonstration of the paraeducator's competence in each of the ten standard areas required for the *Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraeducators in Pennsylvania*.

Printed Name of Paraeducator Supervisor

Signature of Paraeducator Supervisor

Title of Supervisor

Date