

Professionalism and Ethical Practices for Educational Support Personnel (ESP)

Professional Ethics

Many times, ESP's may find themselves in a unique position within the school or classroom. They are involved in the educational process with students and many of their expectations are similar to that of a teacher. However, they are also involved in any number of other activities within the school that may involve different interactions with students, staff and parents. Consequently, an ESP is in a professional position that requires consideration of the following ethical guidelines:

Accepting Responsibilities:

- Always ask for additional support or guidance if you do not feel qualified for a particular activity or instructional practice.
- Engage only in instructional and other activities for which you are qualified or trained.
- Do **not** communicate progress or concerns about students to parents, community members or other teachers; this is reserved only for communication with the assigned teacher(s).
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students or others to the assigned teacher(s).
- Recognize that the assigned teacher(s) has/have the ultimate responsibility for instruction and management and follow the prescribed directions.
- Help to see the best interests of individual students are met.

Relationships with Students and Parents:

- Discuss a child's progress, limitations and/or educational program **ONLY** with the assigned teacher(s) in an appropriate setting. (e.g., do not discuss students in the teacher workroom with other teachers during lunchtime.)
- Express differences of opinion with an assigned teacher **ONLY** when students are absent from the room.
- Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel.
- Do not engage in discrimination practices based on a student's race, sex, national origin, cultural background, religion, sexual orientation or disability.
- Respect the dignity, privacy and individuality of all students, parents and staff members.
- Be a positive role model.

(Adapted from: Long, C (1996). Piecing Together the Para-professional Puzzle: A handbook for orientation and training of first year paraprofessionals. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Children, Families, & Learning, p.42)

The information contained in this pamphlet originally appeared in the "Special Education Paraprofessional Handbook" created by the Area Special Education Cooperative (ASEC) in the state of Minnesota. Where appropriate, references to paraprofessionals have been altered to reflect Middleborough's use of the title "Educational Support Personnel (ESP)" to reflect these staff members.

Relationship with the Teacher:

- Recognize the teacher as the individual responsible for designing instruction and designating activities for the day; follow the assigned teacher's prescribed directions.
- Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher in an appropriate and private setting.
- When problems cannot be resolved, bring the issues to your building principal.

Relationship with the School:

- Engage in behavior management strategies that are consistent with the standards of the district.
- Accept responsibility for improving your repertoire of skills.
- Participate in professional development opportunities offered by the district .
- Know and follow school policies and procedures.
- Represent the school in a positive manner.

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