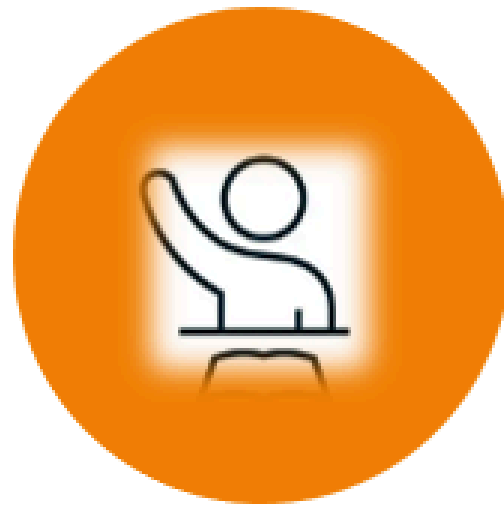


PARAEDUCATOR ETHICS

Kansas Educator Code of Conduct

Upon hire, each employee is given the Code of Conduct must sign in acknowledgement and agreement with its provisions.



RESPONSIBILITIES TO
STUDENTS



RESPONSIBILITIES TO
DISTRICT



RESPONSIBILITIES TO
THE PROFESSION



RESPONSIBILITIES TO STUDENTS



DO'S

- **DO** make reasonable effort to protect the student from harm;
- **DO** keep your relationships with students professional - both inside and outside the classroom;



DONT'S

- **DO NOT** disclose confidential or damaging information that affects the student;
- **DO NOT** solicit, encourage, participate or initiate inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, physical, sexual or romantic relationship with students.



RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE DISTRICT



DO'S

- **DO** fulfill reporting requirements honestly and accurately;
- **DO** Appropriately use funds, personnel, property and equipment;
- **DO** Conduct school district business through established procedures.



DONT'S

- **DO NOT** falsify any documents related to the employment process or as part of your job responsibilities;



RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PROFESSION



- **DO** act professionally at all times;
- **DO** represent accurate information to state and federal regulating authorities;
- **DO** abide by all federal, state and local laws as well as school board policies.



- **DO NOT** accept or promise gifts or favors that impair your professional judgment or to obtain special advantage.

COMMON PITFALLS

Confidentiality & Privacy	Boundaries & Relationships	Personal Conflicts
FERPA SDPA	Family Connections Community Activities Social Media	Personal Bias Discrimination

Confidentiality & Privacy

FERPA

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act is a federal law that dictates when information about a student may be disclosed without his/her consent.

Without consent you may only disclose information to the student, his/her parents if under age 18, and to other coworkers if they have a **“legitimate educational interest”** in the information.

Information deemed as directory information can be disclosed without consent but it is limited to the following:

- The student's name and age
- Parent's name, address and telephone number
- The student's class designation (i.e. first grade, tenth grade)
- The student's participation in officially recognized activities or sports

A legitimate educational interest means the coworker must have the information in order to perform his/her job duties.

Confidentiality & Privacy

Kansas SDPA

The Student Data Privacy Act limits when data contained in a student's educational record can be disclosed.

Some data may be disclosed at any time to the following:

- The student and his/her parent/guardian;
- The authorized personnel of an educational agency;
- The authorized personnel of any state agency with a valid data sharing agreement.

Exceptions to limits on disclosure:

- Directory Information
- information required by postsecondary institutions for admission
- information pursuant to a court order or subpoena
- information required to be disclosed to public health officials for urgent health or safety reasons

Confidentiality & Privacy

- C** Control information about the students
- O** Only share information with those who have proper authorization and a need to know
- N** Never discuss school information regarding students while attending social events
- F** Forward inquiries regarding students to teacher and supervisory personnel
- I** Interact with those who inquire in a manner keeping with your professional responsibilities
- D** Don't discuss student situations in lounge areas with staff who have no need to know
- E** Explanations for not discussing a student are easier than explaining why you disclosed without consent
- N** Not sharing is caring - protect student privacy
- T** Think about privacy in every interaction
- I** It's important that things that happen at school stay at school
- A** Appropriate information exchange carries significant responsibility
- L** Learn how to handle uncommon situations with discretion



Confidentiality & Privacy

What is wrong here?

Instagram

Log In

mr. [REDACTED]_sped

Follow Message ...


541 posts 498K followers 361 following

[REDACTED] ay
Middle School Special Ed. Math Teacher
Teacher Humor
Management: @jexyagency
✉: cyrena@jexyagency.com
🔗 linktr.ee/[REDACTED]

POSTS REELS TAGGED

My 4th hour kids hard at work!

SECONDARY LIFE SKILLS classroom



Scenario #1

- Earlier today you were working with Jane in Mrs. Doe's 2nd grade classroom. While there, Jane became frustrated, threw her papers on the floor and ran out of the classroom. You ran out after her.
- Mrs. Doe made a call on the walkie for support & your coworker, Mr. Smith, met you in the hallway where you and Jane were talking.
- After about 5 min. Jane had calmed down and both of you returned to class.
- Later, at the end of the day, you are outside supervising the bus pickup. Another para comes to you and says:

"Hey I heard the call this morning. I talked to Mr. Smith and he said that Jane had some pretty choice words for you. It's pretty hilarious when 2nd graders are cursing! What was she so mad about? She was probably grumpy. I'm pretty sure her mom NEVER makes her go to bed at a decent hour. That kid gets away with everything!"

What can you say?



- What are the ethical issues associated with responding to the para?

Scenario #1

Responsibilities to Students

- Code of conduct says that appropriate behavior is:
 - keeping confidential any information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional service
 - acting as an advocate for students in a professional relationship
- Code of conduct says that inappropriate behavior is:
 - sharing confidential information concerning student academics, discipline, health/medical information, family status/income and testing results unless the disclosure is required or permitted by law

1. Confidentiality Violations (possible):

- Telling the other para what the student was angry about;
- Having any discussion about the incident could be considered the inappropriate sharing of disciplinary information;
- The para mentioning to you that the student's mother never puts him to bed on time.

Remember:

Unless the other para has a "legitimate educational interest" in the information she is asking about, sharing any student specific information would be a violation of the student's right to confidentiality.

Boundaries & Relationships

Board Policies

- **GAG: Conflict of Interest**

- Misuse of Status or Influence
 - an employee shall not exploit professional relationships with students . . . for personal gain or private advantage;
 - an employee shall not accept gifts (some exceptions for nominal gifts)
- Improper Relationships
 - an employee shall not be supervised or evaluated by a member of that employee's family
- Misuse of District Information
 - an employee shall not disclose or use any confidential information acquired in the course of employment to further his/her personal, financial or other interests

- **GAF: Staff-Student Relations**

- Staff members shall maintain professional relationships with students which are conducive to an effective educational environment

Boundaries & Relationships

Healthy Para-Student/Family Relationships

- Research has identified that most paraeducators and families believe that close relationships are beneficial to their students.
- However, close relationships and extensive communications are not always helpful or beneficial;
- Close relationships between paraeducators and parents can be particularly precarious when
 - they exist without the involvement and or authorization of the person in charge of the program and
 - communications between the para and the students/families are most frequently occurring outside of the school setting.

Healthy Boundaries & Preexisting Relationships

Typical Problem Areas

Texting/Social Media

- Texting tends to blur the lines of student - para relationships and the professional boundaries established with students.
- Generally, texting students can create confusion for students who are still developing emotionally.
- Communications with students should occur only through district approved communication methods.
- You should NEVER maintain a social relationship with a student you are working with.

Family or Community Relationships

- Working with students who you are connected to outside of school can bring challenges in establishing a clear role as a paraeducator.
- Important to clarify your role with the student and his/her family from the beginning.
- Set clear expectations regarding communications related to the student that are supported by your supervising teacher and the family.
- Always communicate directly and openly with the teacher. If the teacher is not in the loop, problems can arise.
- Do not initiate conversations about student concerns with the family. Rather, raise the issue with your supervisor or administrator and obtain guidance for next steps.

Healthy Boundaries & Preexisting Relationships

Role confusion:

Example

I was at the Farmer's Market and ran in to a dad from school. Our children are in the same class. He asked me if my son was going to the birthday party for a classmate. When I said, "yes", the dad started asking me about the classmate's behavior and possible reasons for it. He knows that I work at the school. I had to stop and recognize that I was no longer talking as a fellow parent, but as a school employee. It can be hard to tell when one role or relationship shifts to another.

Scenario #2

- You have established a strong relationship with one of the students you work with, Ashley. In fact, it has become a regular occurrence for the teacher to defer to you when Ashley is struggling because she always calms down for you when she won't for anyone else.
- Ashley's mom and your mom are friends from church. One day, your mom tells you she gave your cell number to Ashley's mom because Ashley is getting harder to deal with at home. She mentioned that you are so good with Ashley and your mom thought you could help her out. Over the next few months, you respond to Ashley's mom's requests by helping out from time to time. You help with day-to-day tasks, occupy Ashley when her mother is busy, eventually becoming friends of the family. As thanks she buys you dinner periodically and has even been a reference for you on your apartment.
- After a few months, Ashley's teacher starts to notice that Ashley's behaviors at school seem to be worsening. In particular, Ashley gets more upset during the times that you are working with other students. You, yourself, have also noticed that Ashley is more hesitant to work on academic activities at school. Recently, Ashley has started telling you "we'll just do it later when you come over" or asks "why can't you just be my teacher."
- The IEP team decides they need to meet to discuss whether Ashley's plan needs adjustment because her scores are slipping. At the meeting Ashley's mom demands that Ashley be given increased access to you 1-on-1 during school because it wasn't until you started having to work with other students that Ashley's behaviors increased.



- Can you maintain your ethical responsibilities to both the student and the district at this point?
- Why or why not?

Responsibilities to Students	Responsibilities to the District
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions detrimental to learning, health or safety;• Maintain professional relationships with students both inside and outside the classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refrain from tutoring students assigned to you for money unless approved by the board;• Insuring that school procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization
Problems	Problems
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ashley’s relationship with you has become confusing to her;• When with you she wants to be a friend, not a student.	Your relationship with Ashley’s mom has potentially put you in the middle of what is best for Ashley’s education and what feels easier for mom outside of school.

Consider:

What happens to Ashley if the IEP team says no to mom’s request for a 1-on-1 para? What happens to you personally if Ashley’s mom becomes angry about the decision and files due process?

Personal Bias/Moral Conflicts



Personal Bias

- Implicit Bias: beliefs that you are unconscious of having
- Explicit Bias: beliefs that you are aware you possess

Educational Impact

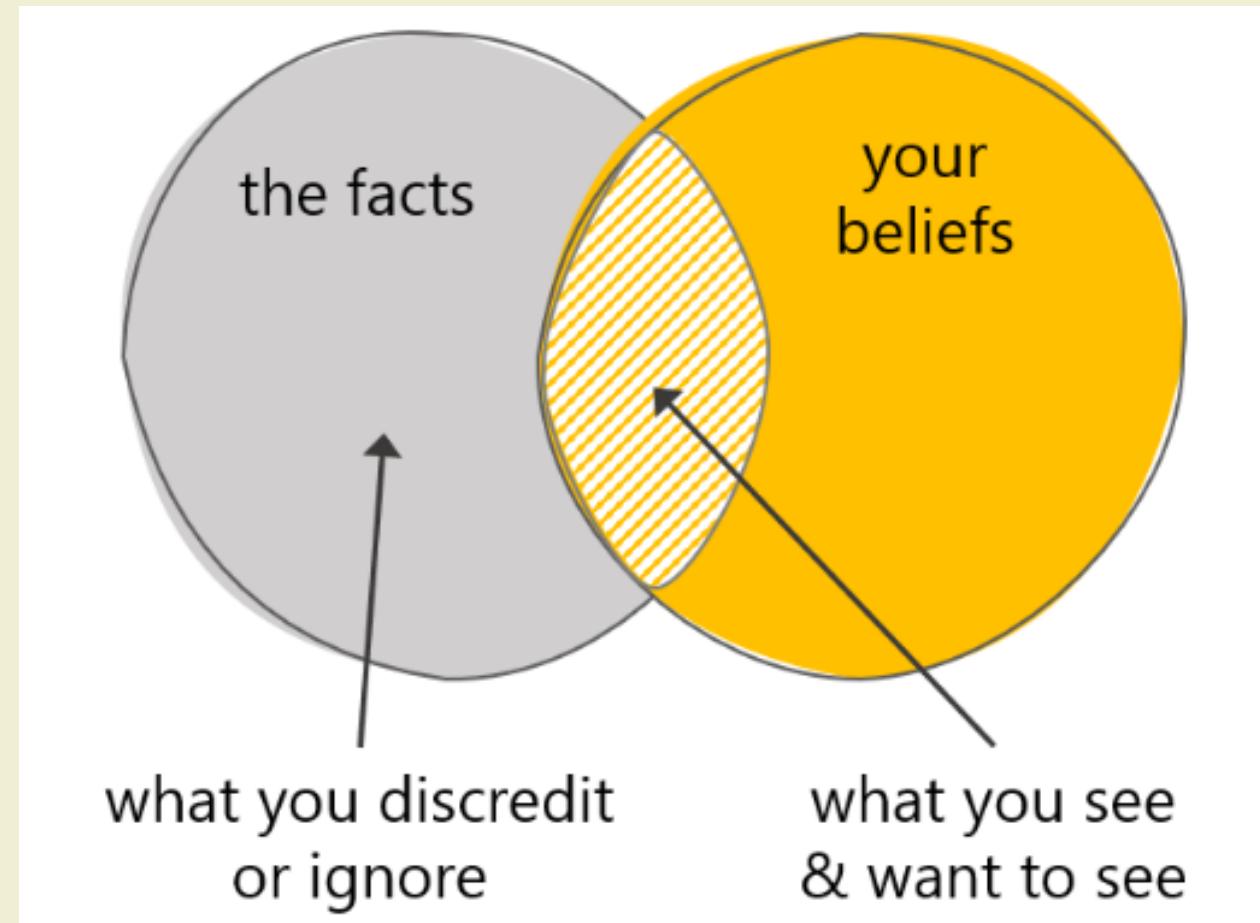
- Unchecked personal bias can
 - lead to discriminatory practices, student exclusion/marginalization
 - limit student engagement and success

Board Policies

- GAAB: Complaints of Discrimination
- GBU: Ethics
- DEA: Whistleblowers

IMPORTANT

CONFIRMATION BIAS



- This biased approach to decision making is largely unintentional, and it results in a person ignoring information that is inconsistent with their beliefs.
- These beliefs can include a person's expectations in a given situation and their predictions about a particular outcome.
- People are especially likely to process information to support their own beliefs when an issue is highly important or self-relevant.

PERSONAL BIAS

Biases can lead
to irrational
decisions

Biases can
lead to unfair
treatment

Biases can limit
creativity &
longterm
success



Scenario #3

- You have been assigned to work with a new student. After working with the student for a few days, a coworker tells you that the student has just come back from serving time as a juvenile for assaulting a police officer. You've also recently overheard him talking with his friends about how we should "defund the police."
 - Your significant other is a police officer.
-
- What, if anything, should you do at this point?



Evaluate Your Bias

STEP 1

SELF REFLECTION

Take some time to reflect on your own beliefs and values. Ask yourself why you hold these beliefs and where they came from. Consider how your experiences and background may have shaped your worldview.

STEP 2

SEEK DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Read books and articles written by people from different backgrounds; Watch documentaries or movies that explore different cultures; Engage in conversations with people who have different viewpoints.

STEP 3

CHALLENGE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

Ask yourself why you believe something to be true and consider whether there is evidence to support your belief. Be open to changing your mind if new information challenges your assumptions.

STEP 4

BE AWARE OF CONFIRMATION BIAS

Seek out information that challenges your beliefs and consider it carefully.

STEP 5

PRACTICE EMPATHY

Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. By practicing empathy, we can better understand the experiences and perspectives of those who are different from us.

STEP 6

CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF YOUR BIAS

For example, if you believe that people who think police officers are corrupt are criminals by nature, how will that influence you when a student is tired and unmotivated during the school day?

Scenario #3



Responsibility to Students:

- Nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, social and civic potential of all students;
- Provide services in a nondiscriminatory manner

What should you do?

Once you have taken a close look and evaluated your bias, if there is potential there for you to have difficulty meeting your responsibility to students, talk with your supervising teacher or building administrator.

Remember:

If you fail to evaluate how your own personal bias could affect a student, it may go unnoticed resulting in unintended long-term negative impacts on the student's learning.



QUESTIONS?