

# Lamoille North Supervisory Union

## *Equity, Opportunity, Access*

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### **Paraeducator Guidebook**

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Lamoille North Supervisory Union (LNSU) values their paraprofessionals for their expertise and knowledge of their students. We feel that paraprofessionals are an important part of the IEP/504/EST team and strive to support them in their role. This handbook has been created to provide you with information essential to your job responsibilities as a Paraprofessional within Lamoille North Supervisory Union.

#### **Description of paraprofessional role:**

The role of the paraprofessional in special education is to directly or indirectly assist and support in the provision of services to students with disabilities in order to help them access the general education curriculum in as independent a manner as possible. The role and assignments of a paraprofessional are not defined by a particular student, setting or program but rather by students' needs as determined by the IEP.

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Find a brief video here on paraeducators: [Paraeducators: Key Members of the Educational Team](#)

## **POSITION OBJECTIVES:**

To assist and supervise assigned students instructionally, behaviorally and physically in school and classroom settings, working with individuals and/or small groups; to play a supportive role in assessing the progress and needs of assigned students, and participate in developing and modifying individualized instructional programs. Assigned students may include students on the autism spectrum, students with low-incidence disabilities, students with social/emotional challenges and other students with various needs and services, which may involve IEP, 504 or EST plans.

## **ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Under the direction of a professional, paraeducators will:

- Know and follow the written plan for assigned students
- Establish and maintain a positive and supportive relationship with student and school personnel
- Carry out instructional activities with students under the direction of special education case manager in collaboration with classroom teacher(s)
- Modify instructional lessons with guidance by special education case manager and/or classroom teacher, if needed, in order to satisfy the individual education plan of students
- Facilitate instructional activities and provide accommodations for students under the direction of a special education case manager in collaboration with classroom teacher(s)
- Carry out meaningful, realistic and consistent rules, routines and expectations with students in collaboration with professionals
- Implement behavior plans for students under the direction of a special education case manager in collaboration with classroom teacher(s)
- Collect data and provide objective feedback to teachers and case manager on student progress
- Assist in the administration of assessments to determine student progress and/or level of achievement
- Assist in the preparations and maintenance of instructional materials and equipment
- Communicate with appropriate educational personnel and related service providers on a regular basis in regard to planning and scheduling activities, instructional goals and objectives, student progress and pertinent health and behavior concerns
- Provide support to additional student(s) when not engaged with assigned student(s)
- Participate in team meetings as assigned by case manager

- Participate in assigned training activities and apply skills acquired when carrying out duties
- Supervise students when teacher is absent from room
- Assist in transporting students, and transferring them to and from specialized equipment, such as wheelchair, stander and the like. Maintain a good working knowledge of such equipment, and ensure equipment is in proper working order.
- Provide other types of physical assistance as needed including lifting and carrying a student
- Assist and/or instruct students in activities of daily living, such as general behavior, dressing/undressing for outdoors, care of belongings, insertion and adjustment of hearing aids and use of other special equipment, and other areas as assigned
- Assist students to fully participate in school activities while encouraging independence for the student
- Participate in various community activities and field trips with student(s)
- Provide supervision for students as directed in school related activities such as lunchroom, recess, bus arrival and departure, etc.
- Follow all building and district directives, procedures and policies
- Maintain confidentiality
- Assist or administer appropriate medical protocols under the direct and/or indirect supervision of nursing staff, consistent with district policies
- Maintain knowledge of safety and evacuation procedures; fire drill, lockdown, active incident, etc.
- Perform clerical duties as assigned
- Perform other duties as assigned by administration, case manager/special educator

**\* Paraeducators who are assigned the following duties shall receive an additional \$2 per hour of “premium pay” for the specific duration they are assigned those duties:**

- Assist students as required with toileting, diapering, personal care, feeding, hygiene and possibly health related needs
- Assist students as required with restraint
- Assist students with behaviors that may involve hitting, kicking, biting
- Assist students with assistive and medical therapy as directed by a Specialist. Such may include, but not limited to, respiratory therapy or other medical therapies as needed.
- Other duties as assigned

**SUPERVISION RECEIVED:**

Supervision is received from a special education case manager or as assigned by an administrator.

**SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITIES:**

No formal supervisory duties.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily, in addition to the following:

- Education and Experience. A minimum of two years of higher education plus one year of related experience, or a combination of education and experience from which comparable knowledge and skills are acquired is preferred. One year of directly relevant experience in a school setting is desired. Knowledge of special education teaching methods preferred. Basic health care or nurse's aide training/experience and/or CPR certification may be desirable. Must pass assigned online training courses.
  - Language Skills. Ability to read and interpret documents such as safety rules, operating and maintenance instructions, and procedure manuals. Ability to write routine reports and correspondence. Ability to speak effectively. Ability to provide effective instruction and receive constructive feedback.
  - Mathematical Skills. Ability to calculate figures and amounts such as discounts, interest, commissions, proportions, percentages, area, circumference, and volume. Ability to apply concepts of basic algebra and geometry may be necessary.
  - Computer Skills and Experience. Good basic computer skills and experience with word processing programs required. Experience with Microsoft Office preferred. Ability to use iPad and access necessary apps. Ability to use adaptive equipment desired.
- Reasoning Ability/Mental Requirements. Ability to apply common sense understanding to carry out instructions furnished in written, oral, or diagram form. Ability to deal with problems involving several concrete variables in standardized situations. Ability to anticipate and diffuse emotionally explosive situations.
- Communication & Interpersonal Skills. Ability to communicate courteously, efficiently and effectively with a variety of individuals, including students, faculty, administrators, parents, and representatives of outside organizations. Ability to work cooperatively and effectively with peers, subordinates, supervisors, parents, and outside agencies. Ability to show

patience, respect and compassion in working with students. Ability to effectively resolve conflicts and handle stress.

- Other Qualifications. Training/experience working with children/adolescents desirable, including those who have intensive special needs. Ability to assist students physically as required. Available to attend required or requested training, meetings, and professional growth activities outside of school hours (e.g., summers, teacher in-service days and after-school). Ability to remain calm and efficient in responding to medical emergencies. Licensed driver with a reliable personal vehicle, an appropriate level of insurance and a clean driving record, if required by assignment.
- Additional Competencies. The individual in this position must possess the

following:

- Dependability – being reliable, punctual, responsible and fulfilling obligations.
- Self-Control – maintaining composure, keeping emotions in check, controlling anger, and avoiding aggressive behavior, even in very difficult situations.
- Stress Tolerance – accepting feedback and dealing calmly and effectively with high stress situations.
- Cooperation – being pleasant with others on the job and displaying a good-natured, cooperative attitude.
- Concern for Others – being sensitive to others' needs and feelings and being understanding and helpful on the job.
- Attention to Detail – being careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks.
- Integrity – being honest and ethical.
- Adaptability/Flexibility – being open to change and to considerable variety in the workplace.
- Independence – guiding oneself with little or no supervision, and depending on oneself to get things done.

Social Orientation - preferring to work with others rather than alone, and being personally connected with others on the job.

Negotiated Agreement: [Found HERE](#)

For questions regarding the negotiated agreement, FMLA, Tuition benefits, etc., contact [hr@Insd.org](mailto:hr@Insd.org).

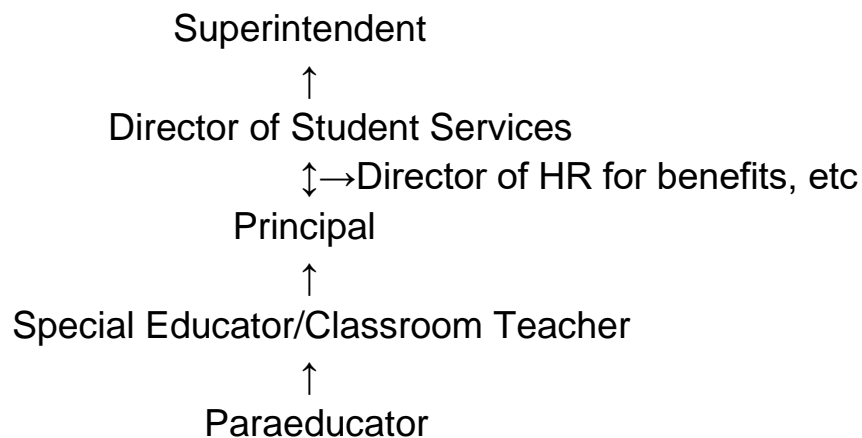
Evaluation Forms: Each school Building Administrator completes an evaluation of paraeducators: examples of evaluations used in the LNSU

[Paraprofessional Self Evaluation Form.docx](#)

[Paraprofessional Evaluation Form.docx](#)

↑Chain of Command/Problem-solving:

As a paraeducator, always start with your supervising special educator or classroom teacher with any concerns or questions that arise on the job.



**Cell Phones:**

The use of personal cell phones while working with students is not allowed. The only caveat to this is if a child's written behavioral intervention program requires a support staff's use of a cell phone during instructional hours. The focus should be on supporting students with academic and behavioral needs. Use of cell phones during the instructional day distracts employees from the focus of their work with students.

Confidentiality and Mandated Reporting: Confidentiality is imperative in the work you do in school with students. It is also imperative to understand your responsibilities as a mandated reporter. It is a requirement to familiarize yourself with the below file on confidentiality/ mandated reporting

[2. Confidentiality \(1\).pdf](#)

### **Always ask yourself ...**

- What information would you want discussed with others regarding your child?
- What would you like to said about yourself as a parent?
- What would you like said about your family, your values, your lifestyle?

### **Confidentiality Pointers**

- Avoid using names if you are asked about your job.
- Suggest that questions about a student are best directed to the building principal
- Do **NOT** share other student's names or information regarding their programs with parents during IEP meetings, conferences or informal conversations.
- Information regarding specific students and programs should not be shared in the lunchroom, staff room, office areas, out in the community or any other setting.
- When conferencing or writing information regarding a student or family that contains confidential information, be aware of those around you who may be within hearing distance. Look for a more private place within the school building.
- No matter who asks you a question about a student, if you are unsure whether you should answer, **DON'T**. You can do this gently and politely. Remember only staff that has a need to know should be given information about a student.
- For consistency of program as well as confidentiality, paraprofessionals must support teacher techniques, materials and methods, especially in the presence of students, parents and other staff. Questions should be directed to the specific teacher privately.



View short video on FERPA:

[SubTalk: FERPA What You Should Know](#)

[Paraeducators - What We Do Matters](#)

**Categories of Disabilities:** In your work in classrooms with students you may be assigned to work with a student who has a disability and is eligible for an Individualized Education Program - View the short video below for a brief overview of the disability categories - *Note: every child is different and may exhibit different characteristics then referenced in this generalized video:*

## **Team Member Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Description of paraprofessional role:**

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### **Description of paraprofessional responsibilities:**

The responsibilities of the paraprofessional may vary based upon specific assignment. Duties may also change at any time based upon administration or teacher examination or reexamination of student or program need. What follows is a non-inclusive list of responsibilities which may be part of a paraprofessional's assignment.

### **Supporting functional skills:**

- Assist the student with daily living skills and needs, such as eating, toileting, grooming, dressing, etc.
- Assist in transferring, positioning and mobility needs as directed by physical therapist, occupational therapist, or other special education or related service providers
- Act as job coach

### **Supporting social/emotional needs:**

- Redirect behavior and implement behavior management plans

- Facilitate interaction between students with disabilities and classmate
- Teach and model strategies to peers about how to interact with the student with a disability
  - Support the development of communication skills
  - Assist in student crisis management and de-escalation

### **Supporting academic development:**

- Carry out the instructional programs and lessons as developed by the supervising teacher in all learning environments
- Assist individual students or groups of students in performing activities initiated by the teacher
- Individually or in small groups, reinforce concepts and skills introduced by the teacher in all learning environments
- Keep students on task
- Implement assistive technology
- Implement accommodations indicated by the IEP (read tests aloud, take notes, enlarge materials, etc.) as directed by the special education teacher.

### **Serving as a communication link:**

- Provide the special education teacher/staff with information about general education assignments, activities and student participation and behavior
- Inform general education staff about student programs and adaptations
- Observe, record and collect data as directed
- As directed, share information with other paraprofessionals or family
- Attend IEP meetings at the request of administrator, teacher or parent

### **General support:**

- Assist special education teacher with clerical tasks, and material or room preparations, and equipment maintenance
- Intervene with other students about inappropriate behavior, language or actions
- Provide supervision and assistance on playgrounds, in the lunchroom, at assemblies, on field trips or other locations as directed for special education students.

### **Supporting medical needs:**

- Paras would be able to provide the following cares with training and supervision from appropriate professional personnel:
  - Administer tube feedings
  - Administer oral emergency seizure medication
  - Recognize and respond to critical symptoms of seizures, asthma, diabetes, food/bee allergies

- Use PT, OT equipment needed for students to meet their goals under the supervision of the Therapist. (i.e., bike, stander, walker, smo's)
- Provide assistance with student's Activities of Daily Living (assistance may range from verbal cues to total assistance) (i.e. toileting, feeding, dressing, grooming, Passive range of motion, i.e.)
  - Accompany and assist medically fragile students in all settings where the district is responsible

**Minimal expectations of a paraprofessional:**

- Demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum content for classes in which s/he assists
- Participate in skill and competency trainings and in-services
- Be discreet and respectful of confidential information
- Examples:
  - Capable of transferring and positioning students
  - Work with physically aggressive students
  - Structure teaching for low incidence disabilities
- Work cooperatively with all school personnel
- Demonstrate a warm and receptive attitude toward all students
- Complies with school district employment policies

[Video on Categories of Disabilities](#)

Paraeducators typically work with students with disabilities who are eligible for special education (IEP) or a 504 plan - see below for an outline of these laws:

Special Education brief History and Overview

[\(https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/\)](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/)

Special Education: On November 29, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed into law the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In adopting

this landmark civil rights measure, Congress opened public school doors for millions of children with disabilities and laid the foundation of the country's commitment to ensuring that children with disabilities have opportunities to develop their talents, share their gifts, and contribute to their communities.

The law guaranteed access to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE) to every child with a disability.

Subsequent amendments, as reflected in the IDEA, have led to an increased emphasis on access to the general education curriculum, the provision of services for young children from birth through five, transition planning, and accountability for the achievement of students with disabilities. The IDEA upholds and protects the rights of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families.

In the last 40+ years, we have advanced our expectations for all children, including children with disabilities. Classrooms have become more inclusive and the future of children with disabilities is brighter. Significant progress has been made toward protecting the rights of, meeting the individual needs of, and improving educational results and outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youths with disabilities.

Since 1975, we have progressed from excluding nearly 1.8 million children with disabilities from public schools to providing special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs to more than 7.5 million children with disabilities in 2018-19.

In 2018-19, more than 64% of children with disabilities are in general education classrooms 80% or more of their school day and early intervention services are being provided to more than 400,000 infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families

## Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act:

The [Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), Section 504 addresses protections for students with disabilities. Section 504 is a federal law designed to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance from the department.

OCR enforces section 504 in public elementary and secondary schools.

Section 504 states: “No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States... shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance....”

For more information find the link to the IDEA below:

[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act \(IDEA\)](#)

## What is an IEP?

[What Is an IEP? | Individualized Education Program Explained](#)

## What is the difference between an IEP and a 504 plan?

[IEP vs. 504 Plan: What Is the Difference Between IEP and 504 Plan?](#)

## **General Principles and Strategies for Interacting with Students**

In addition to implementing IEP goals, adaptations, behavior plans, etc, the following list of strategies may be helpful in your interactions with students.

## **Relationship Building**

- Develop a positive rapport with students.
- Maintain a professional, but supportive role with students as opposed to a "friend" relationship.
  - Provide positive, specific and frequent feedback.
  - Maintain your voice at a non-threatening moderate level.
  - Use respectful language with all students.

## **Behavioral Support**

- Provide clear expectations of behavior and check for understanding of those expectations.
- Provide fair and consistent consequences for inappropriate behavior.
- Cue student to return to a task without drawing negative attention to him/her.
- Catch the student displaying appropriate behavior or for finishing a task well and praise him/her.
- Consistently follow individual behavior intervention plans that were developed by the student's team of professionals.
- Continually evaluate the stress and frustration level of students.
- Communicate your observations and perspectives with the general and/or special educator.

## **Moving Towards Independence**

- Avoid becoming overprotective.
- Students may initially require intensive support, but you should fade to a coaching and indirect support role as soon as possible.
- Encourage independence and interdependence with classmates.
- Students will interact more naturally when you are not sitting or standing next to them.
  - Recognize the importance of peer modeling of appropriate behavior and point out examples of effective behavior and its consequences.
  - Natural support enhances student's independence and social acceptance.
  - Assist students by providing resources rather than giving them the answers.
  - Allow students to make as many decisions for themselves as possible.
  - Give opportunities for making choices.

## **Positive Behavior Interventions**

Special education paraprofessionals implementing IEP's containing behavior intervention plans and regulated procedures must be trained in the following:

- Positive behavior interventions
- Standards for using restrictive procedures
- Alternatives for using restrictive procedures
- De-escalation methods
- Physiological and psychological impact of the implementation of regulated procedures

The following characteristics are important to embody when interacting with students with behavioral challenges:

- Honesty
- Confidence
- Openness, care, and empathy
- Humor

These 12 tips will help you build a toolkit of go-to strategies to use when students become agitated. You will move from reacting to emergency situations to responding to them.

Strategy	Examples
<b>Actively Listen</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Giving the student total and complete focus</li> <li>● Giving eye contact and having a friendly and open expression on your face</li> <li>● Listening closely</li> <li>● Withholding judgment</li> <li>● Give student wait time to process and respond</li> </ul>
<b>Set Clear Limits</b>	Guide to Setting Limits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Clearly state</b> the specific boundary with a corresponding consequence.</li> <li>● The corresponding consequence should be a <b>logical or natural consequence</b> that results from not following the limit.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It should be <b>enforceable</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Offer Choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide two positive options.</li> <li>● Be clear and specific. (First/Then)</li> <li>● Make sure that both choices are acceptable and feasible.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Build Relationships</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The more you can genuinely engage with your students in an <u>authentic</u> way, the more they feel respected and valued.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Side-Step Power Struggles</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Establish an agenda for the day.</li> <li>● Find a win-win. Compromise.</li> <li>● Brainstorm solutions.</li> <li>● Ignore the challenge, not the person.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meet Physical and Emotional Needs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>H - Hungry.</b> Hunger can be a physical or an emotional need. If the hunger is physical, offer nutritious snacks</li> <li>● <b>A- Angry:</b> It's important to name the emotion and to explore what's causing it.</li> <li>● <b>L-Lonely:</b> If you notice your student is withdrawn, engage them in conversation. Reach out and engage in active listening. Help the student connect with a peer.</li> <li>● <b>T- Tired:</b> If your student feels tired, encourage them to rest or to take a short nap. If that's not possible, go for a walk around the block or encourage them to take a couple of deep breaths.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Catch Them Being Good</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 5 positives for every redirection</li> <li>● The goal here is to praise the positive behaviors and neutralize or ignore the negative behaviors.</li> <li>● By acknowledging when a student uses expected behavior, we can increase the likelihood of them using that behavior again.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Model Prosocial Skills</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prosocial skills are those behaviors that we engage in that benefit others. These behaviors include cooperation, sharing work, sharing toys, and emotionally supporting others who are in distress.</li> <li>● Students who have behavior disorders often have not developed strong prosocial skills.</li> <li>● Students need to see prosocial skills modeled and need several opportunities to practice the skills after they are taught.</li> </ul>



<b>Alter Volume/Cadence of Your Voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lower the volume of your voice and speak more quietly. As you speak more quietly, your student will have to become quieter to hear you.</li> <li>● Alter the cadence of your voice and speak more slowly.</li> <li>● Modulate your tone of voice and be calm and supportive.</li> <li>● Simplify your vocabulary.</li> </ul> <p><b>* Remember that as your student starts to escalate, they're starting to lose rationality. Speaking loudly and quickly will increase their agitation.</b></p>
<b>Monitor Nonverbals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use Non-Threatening Nonverbals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The more a person loses control, the less they hear your words -</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>and the more they react to your nonverbal communication. Be mindful of your gestures, facial expressions, movements, and tone of voice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Respect Personal Space <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allowing personal space tends to decrease a person's anxiety and can help you prevent acting-out behaviors.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Choose Wisely What You Insist Upon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It's important to be thoughtful in deciding which rules are negotiable and which are not.</li> <li>● If you can offer a person options and flexibility, you may be able to avoid unnecessary altercations.</li> </ul>
<b>Avoid Overreacting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Remain calm, rational, and professional.</li> <li>● While you can't control the person's behavior, how you respond to their behavior will have a direct effect on whether the situation escalates or defuses.</li> <li>● Your response to the situation or behavior should match that of the student.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor Triggers and Adjust</b>	<p>Often times, we spend precious minutes and hours of the school day de-escalating students. To address repeated escalating behaviors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Track what events are causing escalated behaviors (triggers)</li> <li>2. Remove the triggers if possible</li> <li>3. Teach the desired behavior</li> </ol>

# Professionalism and Ethical Practices

## Professional Ethics

Many times, the paraprofessional is in an awkward position. They are involved in the educational process with students and many of their expectations are similar to that of a classroom teacher. However, a paraprofessional is in a professional position that requires the following ethical guidelines.

### Accepting Responsibilities:

- 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 your supervising teacher.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students, or others to your supervising teacher.
- Recognize the supervisor has 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 supervising teacher in an appropriate setting (i.e. do not discuss students in the teacher workroom with other teachers during lunch time).
- Express differences of opinion with your supervising teacher **ONLY** when students are absent from the room.
- Discuss school problems and confidential matters only with appropriate personnel.
  - Do not engage in discriminatory practices based on a student's race, sex, cultural background, religion, or disability.
  - Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, parents, and staff members.
  - Be a positive role model

### Relationship with the Teacher:

- Recognize the teacher/case manager as your supervisor.
- Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher/case

manager.

- Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher in an appropriate setting.

**Relationship with the School:**

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