

# *Griffith Public Schools*

## **Paraprofessionals Handbook**



Welcome to  
*Griffith*

Established  
1904

**2026 - 2027**

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# Griffith Public Schools

## Paraprofessional Staff

### Handbook

#### **Purpose & Objectives**

The Special Education Department of Griffith Public Schools administers programs required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the State of Indiana Article 7 statutes and regulations. Special education students receive their education in the setting that most adequately meets their diverse instructional and related service needs.

This office monitors referrals for evaluation services, case conference procedures and documentation, eligibility documentation, special education programs within each school, and the licensing of special education teachers and related service personnel. All child count information is collected and reported through this office. In addition, the office coordinates required related services, contracting, and Extended School Year (ESY) services.

#### **Paraprofessional**

A team approach is essential to assist all students in achieving success. This team includes teachers, parents, and paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals may help with planning, implementing, and administering services for students, depending on their level of need. While paras typically follow the plan set by the special education or general education teacher, their close work with students provides valuable insights. Paras are encouraged to contribute to the planning process.

#### **Department Positions**

Special Education Paraprofessionals are assigned to a specific special education program teacher and have various duties throughout the school day. This may involve being in several different general education classrooms or remaining within one special education classroom. Paraprofessionals reteach skills and implement the student's IEP to support academic and social growth. At the high school level, duties may include attending off-site employment opportunities with students.

1:1 Paraprofessionals are assigned to students with significant needs as determined by the Case Conference Committee (CCC). While they may assist with other students, they are primarily responsible for supporting their assigned student throughout the day.

## **Expectations**

### **Working Hours**

The building principal (direct supervisor) will assign work hours. All non-benefitted employees work no more than 32.30 hours per week. Hourly employees must clock in and out daily using the AOD time clock system located in the building workrooms/office. A 30-minute lunch is taken out daily as well. Hourly pay is calculated and rounded to the nearest fifteen-minute interval. Employees may only work assigned and approved hours. Overtime must be pre-approved by a direct supervisor and the CFO or Superintendent.

### **Dress Code**

Employees are expected to maintain a professional appearance that reflects Griffith Public Schools' high standards. Avoid extremes in dress or grooming that may interfere with safety or job performance. Facial piercings are allowed; however, hoops or dangling piercings are discouraged for safety reasons. Biker shorts that are worn should be at, or slightly above the knee.

## **PTO DAYS**

This benefit shall apply to all regularly employed paraprofessional employees of Griffith Public Schools.

### **Sick Leave**

Effective July 1, 2026, each eligible paraprofessional employee shall be granted three (3) paid sick leave days per school year.

Sick leave may be used for the employee's personal illness, injury, medical appointments, or other purposes permitted by applicable law and District policy.

Unused sick leave days shall accumulate from year to year without limitation, unless otherwise modified by Board action.

### **Personal Leave**

Effective July 1, 2026, each eligible paraprofessional employee shall be granted two (2) paid personal leave days per school year.

Personal leave requests must be submitted in accordance with District procedures and approved by the employee's supervisor.

Unused personal leave days shall not accumulate and shall expire at the conclusion of each school year.

### **Proration**

Employees hired after the beginning of the school year may receive prorated leave benefits as determined by District administration.

### **Expectations of changes in a School Day**

- School cancelation: Paras will not attend.
- Delayed Start Days- Paras will attend two hours after their normal start time.
  - For example: 8:15 start time, you will arrive at 10:15.
- Professional Development Days: Paras do not attend, UNLESS otherwise stated by administration.

**Employee Handbook (find online on the district website)**

<https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1750699525/griffithk12inus/l5zqurq2gp9k6cknpghe/EmployeeHandbooktoBoard6192025.pdf>

### **Human Resources**

Hiring/Onboarding Process: Sandra Tinoco (Employee Specialist)

Technology/Email (Outlook): Jody Tibbs

Payroll and Clocking in & Out system: Dawn Magallanes

- All Pay and Benefit questions should be directed to Dawn Magallanes.
- All timecard questions/issues should be directed to the school's Secretary. Paras can review their timecard information via mobile/ESS for accuracy; however, the school secretaries review/edit and approve them biweekly for processing.
- All requests for leave or changes in schedules should be directed to their supervisor (supervising teacher and building administration). These requests/changes often need a supervisor's approval before the secretary can confirm a timecard for payroll.
- Handouts were provided to staff regarding ESS and Mobile. All new hourly employees will receive these at the start of the year. If you misplace them or have questions, please ask.

## **Training & Professional Development**

### **Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (CPI)**

GPS staff receive training in de-escalating potentially dangerous situations, emphasizing the philosophy of 'Care, Welfare, Safety & Security' for all individuals involved in a crisis. CPI or Crisis Prevention Intervention recertification will occur every 2 years. Instructors have the right to certify or not certify you in both verbal and nonverbal deescalation as well as physical holds.

### **Attendance**

Regular, punctual attendance is critical to the effective operation of GPS. Excessive absenteeism disrupts workflow and impacts other employees. Absences must be approved by Human Resources and the direct supervisor in advance, when foreseeable (Check with your specific building principal on this, since it does differ for each building). Unforeseen absences may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Basic Expectations for Working in a School**

- Respect the dignity, privacy, and individuality of all students, their families, and staff.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Adapt instruction to meet students' unique learning styles.
- Recognize the teacher as the supervisor in the setting.
- Discuss concerns about teaching methods with the teacher privately.
- Share relevant information about students with the teacher.
- Refer concerns about students or staff to the supervising teacher.
- Be cooperative and honest with all staff and administrators.
- Do not communicate student progress or concerns to parents unless directed by the teacher.
- Follow teacher's guidance for instruction and classroom management.
- Ask for direction when questions arise.
- Refrain from personal cell phone use while working.

### **Basic Expectations for Working with Students**

- Understand the student's specific needs as written in the IEP (BIP/FBA).
- Encourage student independence.
- Use positive verbal and non-verbal reinforcement per teacher discretion.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in physical contact. Depending on how this looks, only trained CPI staff should be engaging in physical contact.
- Use hand-over-hand procedures only when trained and approved by direct teacher or supporting staff (Speech, OT).
- Treat each child as an individual.
- Be kind, consistent, and firm.

- Learn new tasks from the teacher before implementing them.
- Paras agree upon changing students IF needed (diapers, pull ups, clothes), this includes all students.

## **Basic Behavior Strategies**

- Explicitly teach behavioral expectations.
- Use positive supports and reinforce compliance.
- Give clear, concise commands (five words or fewer).
- Allow processing time after directions.
- Offer choices when possible.
- Use demonstrations alongside verbal commands.
- Avoid labeling students; focus on behavior.
- Follow through on consequences and rewards.
- Maintain a positive attitude and encourage independence.
- Provide visuals given by direct supervising teacher.

## **Ways of Working with All People**

- Use person-first language.
- Do not treat disabilities as illnesses.
- Focus on abilities rather than limitations.
- Offer assistance only if it is warranted or have been asked.
- Speak directly to the person, not through others.
- Be patient and let the person set the pace.
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect.

## **Information to Ask the Classroom Teacher**

- Know your lunch time (30 minutes daily).
- Understand what records you are responsible for keeping per supervising teacher (ex. Data tracking of behavior).
- Know playground rules and regulations.
- Know where supplies are stored.
- Understand the communication and chain of command.
- Parent Questions: You are to redirect to your supervising teacher; you are not answer any questions unless stated otherwise. Redirect parent to contact teacher via phone call or email.
- Know which student records are accessible to you.
- Understand expectations for student discipline.
- Know what to do if you lack assigned tasks.
- Understand confidentiality requirements.

## **Additional Tips**

- Promote student independence.
- Encourage ownership of personal work and space.
- Be aware of student body language and triggers.
- Understand how the disability manifests.
- Know the student's learning style and preferences.
- Build trust with teachers and students in your workplace.
- Understand that fair is not always equal.
- Familiarize yourself with Behavior Intervention Plans (dependent on room placement).
- Maintain confidentiality both personally and professionally.
- Follow accommodations and modifications as outlined in the IEP.

## **The best practices for being Successful**

- Is flexible and adaptable to changing schedules, assignments, and routines.
- Respects all team members and values collaboration.
- Is eager to learn and asks questions when unsure.
- Keeps accurate records as instructed by the supervisor.
- Maintains confidentiality as required by IDEA and FERPA.
- Thinks before acting when situations arise.
- Demonstrates maturity and professionalism.
- Reports observations and concerns promptly to the supervisor.
- Approaches challenges with persistence and creativity.
- Promotes a positive attitude and models a 'We can!' mindset.
- Believes that all students can learn and contribute to their community.

## **Classifications / Eligibilities**

The following categories are recognized under Article 7 for eligibility for special education services. Each student is an individual, and these descriptions are general guidelines, not exact definitions for every case.

- Autism (ASD)
- Speech/Language Impairment (SLI)
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH)
- Developmental Delay (DD)
- Emotional Disability (ED)
- Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
- Intellectual Disability (Mild, Moderate, Severe or Multiple)
- Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
- Other Health Impairment (OHI)
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

- Blind or Low Vision (BLV)
- Deaf-Blind (DB)

Each category has unique characteristics and teaching strategies. Paraprofessionals should work closely with the supervising teacher to understand individual student needs, accommodations, and goals.

## **Laws to Know**

Special education law in the United States is governed by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and interpreted in Indiana through Article 7. Key legal principles include:

- FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education): Ensures all students with disabilities have access to education.
- LRE (Least Restrictive Environment): Students with disabilities should be educated alongside peers without disabilities when appropriate.
- IEP (Individualized Education Program): A legally binding plan for each eligible student.
- FBA/BIP (Functional Behavior Assessment / Behavior Intervention Plan): Tools for understanding and addressing challenging behaviors.
- FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act): Protects the confidentiality of student records.

## **For Further Information**

Questions about specific students should be directed to:

- The Teacher of Record or Teacher of Service
- The assigned therapist (OT/PT/SLP)
- The student's general education teacher
- The Case Manager
- The Director of Special Education

# Griffith Public Schools

## Paraprofessional Staff Acknowledgment and Confidentiality Agreement

Paraprofessional Staff of the Griffith Public Schools are in constant contact with students and their families. There are frequent matters of a confidential nature relative to our students and their families.

Paraprofessional Staff must understand and uphold the importance of confidentiality in their positions. All employees are expected to maintain strict confidentiality and to refrain from discussing or disclosing sensitive information. **A breach of confidentiality will result in disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment.**

*By signing below, I acknowledge the following:*

- I have received and read the Griffith Public Schools Paraprofessional Staff Handbook and GPS Employee Handbook.
- I understand the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the handbooks and agree to comply with them.
- I understand that questions about the handbook should be directed to my Teacher of Record or Building Principal.
- I understand the importance of confidentiality in my role as a Paraprofessional employee and agree not to discuss or disclose confidential matters. Failure to do so may result in termination of employment.

Employee Name (Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervising Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# PARAPROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS AGREEMENT

Quarter: \_\_\_\_\_

Paraprofessional: \_\_\_\_\_

Supervising Teacher/Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_

School Year: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to establish clear expectations and responsibilities for the paraprofessional role during the current quarters (1-4). These expectations are intended to support student success, maintain a positive learning environment, and promote effective collaboration among staff members.

## Responsibilities

The paraprofessional agrees to:

1. Arrive on time and prepared for all assigned duties.
2. Follow directions, schedules, and instructional plans provided by the supervising teacher and administration.
3. Support students academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally as directed.
4. Maintain confidentiality regarding student information, educational records, and staff matters.
5. Use professional and respectful communication with students, families, colleagues, and administrators.
6. Assist with classroom organization, instructional materials, supervision, and other assigned tasks.
7. Implement accommodations, modifications, and behavior support plans as directed by the supervising teacher.
8. Monitor student progress and communicate concerns or observations to the supervising teacher in a timely manner.
9. Follow all school and district policies, procedures, and safety protocols.
10. Maintain a positive, collaborative, and professional attitude at all times.
11. Actively supervise students and remain engaged during assigned instructional and supervisory periods.

## Not Permitted

The following behaviors are not permitted:

- Discussing confidential student information with unauthorized individuals.
- Using personal electronic devices during instructional or supervisory time unless specifically authorized for work-related purposes.
- Wearing headphones, earbuds, or similar listening devices during instructional or supervisory time unless specifically authorized by administration or required for job-related duties.
- Leaving assigned duties, classrooms, or supervision areas without approval or for longer than the allotted time.
- Using inappropriate language or engaging in unprofessional conduct towards students or staff in any manner.
- Failing to follow teacher directions, school procedures, or administrative expectations.
- Engaging in negative discussions, gossip, or unprofessional conversations regarding students, families, staff members, or school operations.
- Physical intervention with students except as trained and authorized by the school or district.
- Excessive absenteeism or tardiness without proper notification and documentation when required.
- Failure to actively supervise students during assigned responsibilities.

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## Accountability

If expectations outlined in this agreement are not met, or if any prohibited behaviors occur, a conversation will be held to discuss the concern, review expectations, and identify steps for improvement.

Continued concerns may result in additional meetings, documentation of concerns, performance improvement measures, or other administrative actions consistent with school and district policies.

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## Acknowledgment

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have reviewed, understand, and agree to the expectations outlined in this agreement for the current quarter.

**Paraprofessional Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervising Teacher/Administrator Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Administrator Signature (if applicable):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_