

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

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 a school entity, charter school or cyber charter school administrator has attested to the demonstration of the paraeducator’s competence in each of the ten standard areas, the paraeducator may submit the document to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education at the address below. 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.

**Please submit completed checklist to:**

**Application for Special Education Paraeducator Credential  
Division of Improvement and Technical Assistance – Central**

**Bureau of Special Education  
333 Market Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333**

## ***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*, 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Planning

**Paraeducator Standard # 8:** Assessment

**Paraeducator Standard # 9:** Professional & Ethical Practice

**Paraeducator Standard # 10:** Collaboration

## ***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 **original signature** on each standard, 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.

***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; the level achieved for each competency; the date completed; and the supervisor/designee signature.

**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 signs in space provided at bottom of the page to document that the requirements have been met.
6. Each page must have original signature of supervisor or designee in blue ink.
7. 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

Job Title: Paraeducator

<b>Verification:</b> C=Class I=Interview D=Demonstration P=Portfolio				
Date Competency Achieved: _____				
Achievement Level: E=Entry I=Intermediate A=Advanced				
<b>1. Foundations of Special Education</b>		<b>E-I-A</b>	<b>Date Achieved</b>	<b>C-I-D-P</b>
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>				
<u>K1</u>	<u>Purposes of programs for individuals with exceptional learning needs</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>8/24/2003</u>	<u>C</u>
<u>K2</u>	<u>Basic educational terminology regarding students, programs, roles, and instructional activities</u>	<u>I</u>	<u>8/24/2003</u>	<u>P</u>

Documented by:

Joseph Reynolds

Signature of Supervisor

Joseph Reynolds, Principal

(Type or print supervisor's name and title)

9/2/2003

Date

**Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Bureau of Special Education**

***Paraeducator Standards for Practice:  
Competency Assessment Checklist***  
**(PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)**

**Paraeducator Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Last six digits of SS #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Job Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check all that apply to your current assignment :**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention            | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle School                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School             | <input type="checkbox"/> High School                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Support              | <input type="checkbox"/> Speech and Language Support         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Skills Support           | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional Support                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Disabilities Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Deaf and Hearing Impairment Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Autistic Support              | <input type="checkbox"/> Blind and Visual Impairment Support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Support              | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____                         |

**College Credits (if any):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Years of Experience:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Supervisor Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School District:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Employment Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 1 – Foundations of Special Education

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 2 – Development and Characteristics of Learners

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 3 – Individual Learning Differences

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Verification:</b> C=Class I=Interview D=Demonstration P=Portfolio	
<b>Competency Achieved:</b>	
<b>Achievement Level:</b> E=Entry I=Intermediate A=Advanced	

3. Individual Learning Differences		E-I-A	Date	C-I-D-P
<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>			

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)



# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 4 – Instructional Strategies

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Verification:</b> C=Class I=Interview D=Demonstration P=Portfolio			
<b>Competency Achieved:</b>			
<b>Achievement Level:</b> E=Entry I=Intermediate A=Advanced			
<b>4. Instructional Strategies</b>	<b>E-I-A</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>C-I-D-P</b>
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>			
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>		
<i>Essential skills:</i>			
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>		

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 5 – Learning Environments & Social Interactions

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 6 – Language

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## **Standard # 7 – Instructional Planning**

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 8 – Assessment

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Verification:</b> C=Class I=Interview D=Demonstration P=Portfolio			
<b>Competency Achieved:</b>			
<b>Achievement Level:</b> E=Entry I=Intermediate A=Advanced			
<b>8. Assessment</b>	<b>E-I-A</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>C-I-D-P</b>
<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>		

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# ***Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist***

## **Standard # 9 – Professional and Ethical Practice**

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Verification:</b> C=Class I=Interview D=Demonstration P=Portfolio			
<b>Competency Achieved:</b>			
<b>Achievement Level:</b> E=Entry I=Intermediate A=Advanced			
<b>9. Professional and Ethical Practice</b>	<b>E-I-A</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>C-I-D-P</b>
<i>Essential knowledge:</i>			
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>		
<i>Essential skills:</i>			
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>		

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)

# *Paraeducator Standards for Practice: Competency Assessment Checklist*

## Standard # 10 – Collaboration

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Employment Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Documented by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Supervisor (in blue ink)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Type or print supervisor's name, title and school district)