

# Paraprofessional Skills Preparation Program (PSPP)

## Handbook

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### The Pressing Need for Qualified Paraprofessionals in Schools

The National Association of Special Education Teachers (**NASET**) and the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (**AASEP**) recognize the increasing need for qualified special paraprofessionals in schools. In order to enhance this area of concern, they have created a ***Paraprofessional Skills Preparation Program (PSPP)*** whereby upon completion, you are awarded a certificate of completion that demonstrates school districts and future employers of your enhanced knowledge, skills, and abilities in the field.

A paraprofessional is an employee who works under the supervision of teachers and other licensed personnel who have the ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of education and related service programs. Paraprofessionals provide assistance to a variety of students including those with and without disabilities, with health needs, with limited English proficiency, and others.

Typically employed by school districts and area education agencies, they work in a range of educational settings. The responsibilities of a paraprofessional can vary between districts, schools, and even between classrooms. In today's schools, assistants to teachers are best described as paraprofessionals. Although nationwide information on numbers of paraprofessionals is not consistently collected and reported, rough estimates put the number nationwide at over one million (about 1.2 million).

Paraprofessionals participate as active team members in a variety of ways. Each program and level contain specific challenges and routines that are unique to the program. Your duties as a paraprofessional will vary from building to building, program to program, and student to student. In general, you are considered a "building professional".

If utilized appropriately and effectively, paraprofessionals increase the likelihood of all students achieving individual student growth targets. They are beneficial in any classes that have students with identified disabilities. With proper training, established expectations and on-going communication, they are able to support students with identified disabilities not just in the area of academics but also in the area of social behaviors. Paraprofessionals are in a perfect position to model and demonstrate appropriate social skills. They help establish environments where students feel safe and nurtured.

The **NASET** and **AASEP *Paraprofessional Skills Preparation Program (PSPP)*** is comprised of 5 specific MODULES:

- **MODULE #1:** Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals
- **MODULE #2:** Special Education Today: Basic Principles of Special Education
- **MODULE #3:** Educating Children with Special Needs and Classroom & Behavior Management for Paraprofessionals
- **MODULE #4:** Effective Communication and Collaboration with Teachers as a Paraprofessional
- **MODULE #5:** Confidentiality, Professional Behavior and Ethical Responsibilities as a Paraprofessional

Each of the 5 MODULES contains video lectures, PowerPoint presentations, supplemental videos and supplemental readings. At the end of each MODULE, there is a 25-50 question multiple choice exam which must be successfully completed to move on to the next MODULE. Upon successful completion of each exam, you will immediately be able view/save or print a certificate of completion of the MODULE.

Paraprofessionals play an active and essential role in their work with children and youth by providing encouragement, support, and assistance. They are critical to the social, emotional, academic, and vocational success of children and youth. Paraprofessionals are respected and valued members of the educational team. They understand the needs of children and youth and have the specialized training to meet student needs. Paraprofessionals have a professional identity and advocate for their profession by maintaining positive, supportive, cooperative, and professional relationships. Their value and the complexity of their roles are recognized as important to the success of the school.

The **NASET** and **AASEP *Paraprofessional Skills Preparation Program (PSPP)*** offers you all the materials to be a competent, qualified and caring paraprofessional. In the end, completion of the PSPP will provide you with the knowledge, skills and abilities to be more confident working with children with special needs, teachers, administrators and parents as a paraprofessional.

# Module Summaries

The **NASET** and **AASEP Paraprofessional Skills Preparation Program (PSPP)** is comprised of a comprehensive compilation of 5 Modules. Each Module contains video lectures, PowerPoint presentations, supplemental videos and supplemental readings. At the end of each Module, there is a multiple-choice examination which must be successfully completed with a grade of at least 80% to move on to the next Module. Upon successful completion of each Module, you will immediately be able view/save or print a professional certificate of recognition. Modules are enabled for review one at a time in a sequential order, per the listing below.

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## MODULE #1

### *Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals*

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**Video Lecture and PowerPoint Presentation:** A paraprofessional is an employee who works under the supervision of teachers and other licensed personnel who have the ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of education and related service programs. “Paraeducator” or “paraprofessional” is currently the most generally accepted and recognized job title. Paraprofessionals provide assistance to a variety of students including those with and without disabilities, with health needs, with limited English proficiency, and others. A paraprofessional’s position in a school is either instructional in nature or as someone who delivers other direct or indirect services to children, youth and /or their parents. Typically employed by school districts and area education agencies, they work in a range of educational settings. The responsibilities of a paraprofessional can vary between districts, schools, and even between classrooms. The special education teacher, principal, or other staff members will identify the daily responsibilities of paraprofessionals they supervise. The focus of this lecture will be on the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals. After completing this lecture, you should understand the following:

#### **What is a Paraprofessional?**

- Definition of Paraprofessional
- Job Titles
- Overview of the Profession

#### **What Can a Paraprofessional Do?-Responsibilities of a Paraprofessional**

- Introduction to Responsibilities of a Paraprofessional
- Supervision of Groups of Students
- Behavioral Supports
- Delivery of Instruction/Therapy/Service
- Activity Preparation/Follow-up
- Health/Personal Related Services
- Data Collection/Reporting Observation and Recording:

- Observing and Keeping Good Data
- Data
- Observation Biases
- Observation
- Objective Observation
- Anecdotal Records
- Checklists
- Interviews
- Frequency or Duration Notes

### **Role of the Teacher v. Role of the Paraprofessional**

- Classroom Organization
- Assessment
- Setting Objectives
- Teaching
- Behavior Management
- Working with Parents
- Building a Classroom Partnership

### **Paraprofessionals May....**

### **NEVER: What Can Paraprofessionals NOT Do?**

### **Successful Paraprofessionals**

### **Conclusion-Roles and Responsibilities of Paraprofessionals**

**Supplemental Readings** - In this section, you will have the opportunity to reinforce concepts presented in this Module through additional publications and articles.

**Supplemental Videos** - In addition to the video lecture presentation in this Module, there are multiple supplemental videos available to enhance the concepts presented in this Module.

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## MODULE #2

### *Special Education Today: Basic Principles of Special Education*

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**Video Lecture and PowerPoint Presentation:** Special education is instruction that is specially designed to meet the unique needs of children who have disabilities. It is provided in public schools at no cost to the parents and can include special instruction in various types of educational setting. Special education is mandated for students with disabilities by a federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (or IDEIA). This law gives eligible children with disabilities the right to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE). More than 6 million children ages 3 through 21 receive special education and related services each year in the United States. This lecture focuses on an overview of terms and concepts of importance in special education. Areas covered include:

- Definition of special education
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Exceptionality
- Disability classifications
  - Autism
  - Deaf-Blindness
  - Developmental Delay
  - Emotional Disturbance
  - Hearing Impairments (including deafness)
  - Intellectual Disabilities
  - Multiple Disabilities
  - Orthopedic Impairments
  - Other Health Impairments
  - Specific Learning Disabilities
  - Speech and Language Impairments
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Visual Impairments
- Prevalence
- Gender issues in special education
- Early intervention
- Causes of disabilities

- Accommodations v. modifications
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- What makes special education truly special?
- Inclusion
- Disability v. handicap
- 10 basic steps in the special education process
- Using correct language (appropriate first person language)

**Supplemental Readings** - In this section, you will have the opportunity to reinforce concepts presented in this Module through additional publications and articles.

**Supplemental Videos** - In addition to the video lecture presentation in this Module, there are multiple supplemental videos available to enhance the concepts presented in this Module.

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## MODULE #3

### *Educating Children with Special Needs and Classroom & Behavior Management for Paraprofessionals*

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**Video Lecture and PowerPoint Presentation:** This lecture is going to cover many different areas that you need to understand when educating children with special needs as a paraprofessional. The first part of the lecture will address where students can be educated (Least Restrictive Environment) and the written plan that explains the special education and related services they will be provided (Individualized Education Program; IEP). The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this lecture will then focus on both classroom and behavior management techniques and strategies when working with children with special needs. After completing this lecture, you should understand the following:

- Different Types of Classrooms in Special Education (The Least Restrictive Environment)
  - Regular (General Education) Classroom
  - Inclusion Classroom
  - Resource Room
  - Separate Class
  - Separate School
  - Residential Facility
  - Hospitalization
  - Homebound Instruction
- Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

- Assistive Technology
- Related Services
- Classroom Management
- How to Manage Behavior Issues in the Classroom
- Interacting with Students as a Paraprofessional
- Instruction
- Motivating Students
- 9 Classroom Management Tips for Paraprofessionals
- Behavior Management
- Fostering Friendships, Creating Social Opportunities
- General Behavior Management Techniques
- Group Management Strategies
- Strategies for Increasing Positive Student Behaviors
- Support and Approval of Children's Behaviors

**Supplemental Readings** - In this section, you will have the opportunity to reinforce concepts presented in this Module through additional publications and articles.

**Supplemental Videos** - In addition to the video lecture presentation in this Module, there are multiple supplemental videos available to enhance the concepts presented in this Module.

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## **MODULE #4**

### ***Effective Communication and Collaboration with Teachers as a Paraprofessional***

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**Video Lecture and PowerPoint Presentation:** As a paraprofessional, you are an important part of the classroom team. You may be asked to collaborate with general education teachers, special education teachers, administrators, speech-language pathologists, occupational or physical therapists, the school nurse or other staff members in your building. It is important to build a good relationship with the other members of the team to benefit students and create a positive working environment. In order to maximize student learning, collaborative teams must be able to communicate effectively to identify solutions. Good communication involves back-and-forth conversation that is focused on students' needs, being respectful of others' ideas and perspectives, and being a good listener. No matter how well a program is designed, success depends on good communication between the teacher and the paraprofessional. Poor communication skills and negative statements are at the heart of most problems. The learning process is totally dependent upon the staff establishing and maintaining good lines of daily communication. The focus of this lecture will be on effective communication and collaboration with teachers as a paraprofessional. After watching this lecture, you should understand the following:

- Understanding Teaching Styles
  - Supervision Styles
  - Discipline Styles
  - Materials Style
  - Classroom Style (Organization and Rules)
- Effective Communication Skills for Paraprofessionals
- Key Points to Effective Collaboration
  - Teaming/Collaborations
- Conflict Management
- How Paraprofessionals Can Establish Healthy Communication with Teachers
- Paraprofessionals Teaming with the Teacher to Assist with Instruction
  - Part I: Planning
  - Part II: Working with Students
  - Part III: Communicating the Performance of Students to the Teacher
  - Part IV: Reflection on the Instructional Session
- Being a Team Player as a Paraprofessional

**Supplemental Readings** - In this section, you will have the opportunity to reinforce concepts presented in this Module through additional publications and articles.

**Supplemental Videos** - In addition to the video lecture presentation in this Module, there are multiple supplemental videos available to enhance the concepts presented in this Module.

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## MODULE #5

### ***Confidentiality, Professional Behavior and Ethical Responsibilities as a Paraprofessional***

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**Video Lecture and PowerPoint Presentation:** Paraprofessionals play an active and essential role in their work with children and youth by providing encouragement, support, assistance, and advocacy. They are critical to the social, emotional, academic, and vocational success of children and youth. Paraprofessionals are respected and valued members of the educational team. They understand the needs of children and youth and have the specialized training to meet student needs. Communication among paraprofessionals, licensed personnel, and parents is carefully planned and carried out. Paraprofessionals have a professional identity and advocate for their profession by maintaining positive, supportive, cooperative, and professional relationships. The value of paraprofessionals and the complexity of their roles are recognized as important to the



success of the school. The focus of this lecture will be on professionalism and ethics as a paraprofessional. After watching this lecture, you should understand the following:

- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Confidentiality
- Confidentiality Pointers
- Tips to Keeping Confidentiality from Becoming a Problem
- Professional Behavior as a Paraeducator
  - Professional Attitude
  - Appropriate Clothing
  - Cell Phone and Other Electronic Devices
  - Attendance and Punctuality
  - Photography
  - Release of Students
  - Respect and Dignity
- Ethics for Paraeducators
  - Accepting Responsibilities
  - Relationships with Students and Parents
  - Relationship with the Teacher (Supervisor)
  - Relationship with the School
- Avoiding Unprofessional Conduct
- Final Thoughts on Professionalism and Ethics

**Supplemental Readings** - In this section, you will have the opportunity to reinforce concepts presented in this Module through additional publications and articles.

**Supplemental Videos** - In addition to the video lecture presentation in this Module, there are multiple supplemental videos available to enhance the concepts presented in this Module.

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# Frequently Asked Questions about PSPP

## What is a Paraprofessional?

Paraprofessionals provide assistance to a variety of students including those with and without disabilities, with health needs, with limited English proficiency, and others. Typically employed by school districts and area education agencies, they work in a range of educational settings. The responsibilities of a paraprofessional can vary between districts, schools, and even between classrooms. A *paraprofessional* is an employee who works under the supervision of teachers and other licensed personnel who have the ultimate responsibility for the design and implementation of education and related service programs. A paraprofessional is an employee whose position is either instructional in nature or who delivers other direct or indirect services to children, youth and /or their parents. “Paraeducator” or “paraprofessional” is currently the most generally accepted and recognized job title.

## What is the Job Outlook for Paraprofessionals?

According to the National Education Association, teacher shortages, increasing numbers of English language learners, increased employment of one-to-one paraprofessionals for students with severe disabilities, the growing need for compensatory/remedial education, and federal and state mandates are just some of the factors that have resulted in the increased employment of paraprofessionals.

Employment of paraprofessionals has grown steadily and their functions have changed dramatically since they were introduced into classrooms as teacher aides in the 1950’s. Their duties are no longer limited to recordkeeping, preparing materials, or monitoring students in lunchrooms and other settings. Today, paraprofessionals are active team members that provide assistance with instruction, classroom management, and other direct services to students and their families. Finally, while education changes constantly, some parts of it never do—there will always be a need for qualified teaching professionals to assist in classrooms and work with students. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that the field will continue to grow (by about 6% by 2024).

## What Education Do Paraprofessionals Need?

Paraprofessionals can usually get started in the field without a four-year college degree, but it helps to have completed some college courses or an Associate’s degree, particularly in Education. Each state and school district has its own rules for paraprofessional certification, so you should see what your state requires.

Some paraprofessional jobs may only require a high school diploma while others will only hire paraprofessionals with an associate’s degree. Depending on the State, paraprofessionals may need to pass a skills assessment test before being able to work.

## What Does a Paraprofessional Do?

Paraprofessionals do a lot! Ultimately, a paraprofessional works to assist a teacher throughout his or her daily classroom activities. Some of the duties include helping schedule and implement programs in accordance with the curriculum as well as general classroom and clerical duties such as maintaining a

clean and safe environment or printing and preparing educational material. Other responsibilities include:

- Assist in the educational and social development of students under the direction and guidance of the facilitator and classroom teachers
- Assist in the implementation of Individual Education Plans for the students and monitor their progress
- Provide support for individual students inside and outside the classroom to enable them to fully participate in activities
- Work with other professionals, such as speech therapist, social worker, occupational and physical therapists
- Assist classroom teachers with maintaining student records
- Assist classroom teachers with copying items to support teaching
- Support students with emotional or behavior concerns and assist them in developing appropriate social skills
- Assist in the preparation and display of student work

## **Can I Receive Professional or Educational Credit for Completion of the Modules?**

That would depend upon many factors. Primary amongst them is the credit requirements for acceptance by your school, district or governmental agency. All Modules have been rated by NASET/AASEP in study hours. The number of study hours is indicated on each Module certificate which also contains your name, the Module title, and the date of completion.

## **How Much Does the Program Cost?**

The cost for NASET members fee is \$69/module for each of the 5 Modules or save \$50 by paying for all Modules in a single payment of \$295.00. (Non-members pay \$85.00 each or save \$65 with a single payment of \$360).

## **Do I Need to be a Member of NASET or AASEP to Apply for PSPP?**

No. Although NASET or AASEP membership does provide a discount, we do not require you to be a member of NASET or AASEP to apply.

## **Is There an Application Fee?**

No. There is no application fee to apply for the PSPP.

## **How Long Does it Take to Complete the PSPP?**

Since the modules and quizzes are available online 24/7, the time it takes is totally up to you. The only limitations are that you complete the 5 Modules within 2 years of your application acceptance. If you

start with the NASET member's discounted fees, your membership must remain active throughout the period, during which you are completing the requirements.

### **Will I Need to Renew My Certification?**

No, renewal is not a requirement of the PSPP, however we may offer additional updated courses to provide the latest useful information for you in advancing your career.

### **Do I Need to Travel to a Location to Access Materials, View a Lecture or Take the Multiple Choice Quizzes?**

No. All Modules are all online. There is no need to travel to access anything. The entire program, from start to finish, can be done in the comfort of your home, office or wherever you choose.

### **Are There Specific Start Dates to Begin the PSPPP?**

No, you can begin to start a Module whenever you choose. You work and study at your own pace. As soon as you are notified of your access via email, your access has been "turned on" so that you may begin at your convenience.

### **When Can I Take the Multiple Choice Exams for a Given Module?**

That is also completely up to you. You work and study for an exam at your own pace. There is no specific exam date. You set the pace of the program based on your availability.

### **If I Do Not Pass a Specific Multiple Choice Exam, Will I Be Given Another Chance?**

Yes. You are allowed 3 attempts to complete each of the 5 Module Exams.

### **How Do I Advance to the Next Module After I Complete the Latest Multiple Choice Exam?**

Once you receive a score of 80% or higher on a Module Exam, you can then print a certificate of successful completion. You will need to provide this certificate to the Career Center at NASET by email, fax or mailing. The following is information for each method to send the certificate: **Email** – [careercenter@naset.org](mailto:careercenter@naset.org) **Fax:** 800-424-0371 or **by mail:** NASET Career Center, 3642 E. Sunnydale Drive, Chandler Heights, AZ 85142. Lastly payment must be completed before any module is activated.

### **What If I Have Technical Issues With Online Module Access or Examinations?**

Contact the NASET Career Center at [careercenter@naset.org](mailto:careercenter@naset.org) or call us at 800-754-4421 ext 102

### **How Will I Know When Or if I Have Access to a Given Module?**

You will receive an email notification that access to the next Module has been activated. You can also see active links for modules with access turned on for you in the **Module Access Portal** page\* (*Please note – You must be logged in to see the Module Access Link(s)*)

## Who Do I Contact If I Have Any Questions About the PSPP Program?

Contact the NASET Career Center at [careercenter@naset.org](mailto:careercenter@naset.org) or call us at 800-754-4421 ext 102

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## Cost & Who Can Apply

### PSPP Cost

**NASET** Members are entitled to discounted tuition fees, but **NASET** membership is not required. There is also savings that can be realized by paying for all Modules in one single payment. The following is the cost for the *Paraprofessionals Skills Preparation Program* (PSPP)

**NASET MEMBERS TUITION** - Single Module Payments (5) - \$69.00/each or All Modules Payment - \$295 (save \$50)

**NON-MEMBERS TUITION** - Single Module Payments (5) - \$85.00/each or All Modules Payment - \$360 (save \$65)

### Can or Should I Join NASET?

We welcome Paraprofessionals as **NASET** *Affiliate Members* with the same access to everything that **NASET** has to offer. Not only does **NASET** Membership provide additional proof of dedication to your chosen aspiration to work as a Paraprofessional, but with the wealth of information, publications, special education news, free courses and much more, you will be far ahead of your colleagues in your knowledge and understanding of your role as a Paraprofessional! And don't forget, if you decide to apply for PSPP, the cost of membership will pay for itself in the tuition discount you will receive as a **NASET** member!

### Who Can Apply

Anyone can apply to the Paraprofessional Skills Preparation Program (PSPP). There is no application fee or educational prerequisite to apply or complete the program. Successfully completing the program will provide you with documentation of your efforts through the National Association of Special Education's (NASET) to learn the skills and knowledge that **NASET** has defined as necessary in becoming a Paraprofessional. Please note that the requirements for paraprofessionals vary and may be determined by state, district and school officials and or agencies. For more information on this topic see the [PSPP FAQ](#).

## **Who Do I Contact If I Have Any Questions About the PSPP Program?**

Contact the **NASET** Career Center at [careercenter@naset.org](mailto:careercenter@naset.org) or call us at 800-754-4421 ext 102

[Click Here for the PSPP Application Form](#)

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