

# TEACHER ASSISTANT HANDBOOK 2017-18



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Park Hill School District

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Building Successful Futures • Each Student • Every Day

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## **Welcome!**

This handbook is meant to be used as a tool to help establish a positive climate for learning to take place. It is not all inclusive, but is an excellent resource for the special education Teacher Assistants as they seek to provide the best support to the students and educational staff in Park Hill Schools.

The success of the Teacher Assistant can only be gauged on the success of the student with a disability and therefore, should be the guiding principle for all Park Hill Teacher Assistants.

## **Introduction**

A special education Teacher Assistant is one who is assigned to assist and support a teacher but who does not assume the primary responsibility for the classroom. This person possesses a commitment to the betterment of education and a desire to work with and understand children with special needs.

The special education Teacher Assistant makes it possible for the teacher to be more effective and to utilize his/her ability and professional knowledge. It is the teacher's responsibility to assure that the students are moving toward achievement of their individual goals and objectives. Teacher Assistants serve under the direction and supervision of the teacher to assist in carrying out those goals and objectives.

This handbook is based on the belief that there is a basic body of knowledge that needs to be shared and acquired if the Teacher Assistant is to be effective in providing services to students with special needs. It is also based on the belief that the Teacher Assistant should be viewed as a team member and who along with the teacher provide the best possible learning environment for their students.

## **Myths About Teacher Assistants**

- The Teacher Assistant will see that all needs of the special students are met.
- The Teacher Assistant is initially fully trained for his or her class and/or student assignments.
- The Teacher Assistant receives all his or her instructions from the special education teacher.
- The Teacher Assistant cannot be a part of student planning.
- Teacher Assistants can work only with special needs students.
- There are no restrictions on the use of Teacher Assistants as long as what they're asked to do is in the best interest of the student or students.

- Teacher Assistants always understand and support inclusive programming for special needs students.
- Teacher Assistants always know what to do.

### **Ethical Considerations for Teacher Assistants**

As an integral part of the educational team, Teacher Assistants have a commitment to maintain ethical standards of behavior in their relationships with students, parents, supervising teachers and other school personnel.

In order to protect the right of students and parents, Teacher Assistants must be aware of and practice appropriate ethical behaviors. You must always maintain confidentiality and protect and promote the rights of students to due process, dignity, privacy and respect. Teacher Assistants must also demonstrate honesty, loyalty, dependability, cooperation, accountability and a willingness to learn. The following is a suggested code of ethics for Teacher Assistants.

#### **A Code of Ethics**

##### Accepting Responsibilities:

- Engage only in instructional and non-instructional activities for which you are qualified or trained.
- Communicate progress or concerns about students to the supervising teacher, not to parents.
- Refer concerns expressed by parents, students or others to the supervising teacher.
- Recognize the teacher has the ultimate responsibility for instruction and management and follow the prescribed directions.
- Help to see the best interests of individual students are met.
- Represent the educational agency in the community and refrain from expressing negative opinions of the program or agency.
- Be on time to work and record accurate attendance.

##### Relationships with Students and Parents:

- Discuss a child's progress, limitations and/or educational program only with the teacher in the appropriate setting.
- Express differences of opinion with the 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 disability, race, sex, national origin, religion, or any other characteristic protected by law.
- Respect the dignity, privacy and individuality of all students, parents and staff members.
- Serve as a positive role model for students in personal interactions and communications.

Relationship with the Teacher:

- Recognize the teacher as your supervisor.
- Establish communication and a positive relationship with the teacher.
- Recognize that the supervising teacher has the ultimate responsibility for the instruction and behavior management of children and follow the directions prescribed by him/her.
- Discuss concerns about the teacher or teaching methods directly with the teacher.
- When problems cannot be resolved, speak with the building administrator.

**DO'S AND DON'TS FOR TEACHER ASSISTANTS**

<b>Teacher Assistants May:</b>	<b>Teacher Assistants May Not:</b>
Be left alone in the classroom when the teacher needs to step out.	Be used as a substitute when the teacher is ill.
Work with individuals or groups of students on concepts that have been introduced by the teacher.	Teach new concepts or skills.
Have specific instructional and management responsibility for students.	Use a cell phone, text, surf the internet for non-work related purposes, or allow other personal distractions during instructional time or while supervising students.
Be involved in meetings related to student educational needs.	Attend staffing or IEP meetings in place of the teacher.
Be used to support the integration of students into regular classes.	Be responsible for all mainstreaming or be used to teach curriculum content to students without disabilities.
Be assigned record-keeping or data collection tasks relevant to the goals and objectives on a student's IEP.	Carry out clerical duties normally assigned to office staff.
Aid the teacher in supervising activities outside of the classroom.	Work "off the clock."
Communicate with the teacher about student progress or discipline issues.	Communicate with parents about student progress or discipline issues.

## **Special Education Teacher Assistant**

The job of the Special Education Teacher Assistant is to enhance the instructional programs for students with disabilities. The Teacher Assistant is under the direct supervision of the building administrator and the special education teacher. The Teacher Assistant supports the teacher (special ed. or regular ed.) in providing instruction and also performs duties which free the teacher to work with those students needing more help. Many of the duties performed by the Teacher Assistant are similar to those performed by the teacher. Because the Teacher Assistant works only under the direction of the teacher, the teacher diagnoses and prescribes the learning needs of the students. The teacher functions in a leadership role and carries the primary responsibility of implementing the student's individual education plan (IEP). In turn, the Teacher Assistant may be assigned duties or activities which foster the implementation of various portions of the student's IEP. All lessons originate through the classroom teacher, but may be implemented by the Teacher Assistant.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

While the role of the Teacher Assistant is multifaceted, the Teacher Assistant's primary focus always should be to provide better learning opportunities for students with disabilities. Depending upon the level of the student's disability, the student's age and the type of classroom the student is assigned; the role of the Teacher Assistant will vary. Below are many of the roles and responsibilities that the Teacher Assistant can expect to do.

### **Instructional Support**

- Reinforce and review concepts and skills. Assist students in activities initiated by the supervising teacher.
- Carry out the instructional program as planned by the supervising teacher.
- Modify written materials as needed to meet students' needs.
- Monitor and check student work.
- Assist students with self-help skills (grooming, toileting etc.)
- Assist with testing modifications.
- Assist a small group of students or an individual student in a particular task planned and assigned by the teacher.
- Assist students in writing dictated stories.
- Assist with computer-assisted instruction.
- Assist students in the general education settings (specials, library, cafeteria, classroom, recess, etc.)
- Assist with social skills instruction and generalization of these skills.
- Work with students in their mainstream regular education classes.
- Reinforce student's goals and objectives as written on the IEP.
- Assist with lifting and positioning students.
- Accommodate for individual students learning needs.
- Follow daily work schedule.

### **Organizational Support**

- Meet students upon arrival.
- Help students load and unload bus.
- Assist with lunch and/or recess.

- Assist students in their environmental setting with the restroom, library etc.
- Accompany students to physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech etc.
- Help prepare students for dismissal.
- Get materials ready for activities.
- Help prepare and clean up after classroom activities.
- Collect completed work.
- Prepare and arrange room for the teacher.
- Make visual aids.
- Organize supplies in the classroom.



### **Behavior Management Support**

- Observe and chart behavior.
- Give positive reinforcement and support.
- Provide close supervision for students with behavior problems.
- Circulate in classroom to provide support where needed.
- Enforce class and school rules.
- Assist students with organizational skills.
- Motivate students.
- Help students develop to become independent learners.
- Assist in implementing the behavior plan as set up by the supervising teacher according to the IEP.
- Assist with data keeping and recording.
- Supervise safe spot.

### **General Support**

- Sort and file student papers.
- Help with the preparation of educational materials.
- Assist with assemblies.
- Assist on field trips/Community Based Instruction trips.
- Provide safe school environment for students.
- Assist student with mobility needs. (May involve lifting, toileting, etc.)

### **Interpersonal Relations**

Communicate with your supervising teacher. Discuss expectations and work habits from the beginning. The goal is for the Teacher Assistant and the supervising teacher to work as partners, sharing responsibilities to ensure all students have a successful experience.

Accept supervision. Be flexible and cooperate with change. Understand that the schedule will and can be changed to meet the needs of the students. Treat all persons with respect and maintain positive interpersonal relationships.

If for any reason you cannot resolve difficulties with your supervising teacher or other staff members, it is important to follow the chain of command and to follow the grievance procedures outlined by the school district.

## **Inclusion and Integration**

The use of Teacher Assistants is increasing. Duties are becoming more complex and challenging as schools seek to meet the state mandates for individualized services and for the integration of students with disabilities into general education environments.

The terms inclusion, integration, and mainstreaming are often confused, but they are not synonymous. Mainstreaming refers to the selective placement of students receiving special education services into one or more “regular” education classes. Mainstreaming proponents generally assume that a student must “earn” his/her opportunity to be mainstreamed through the ability to “keep up” with the work assigned by the teacher to the typical students in the class. This concept is closely linked to traditional forms of special education service delivery.

Inclusion and integration refer to the commitment that every child belongs to the entire school community regardless of labels. Inclusion and integration indicate a whole-hearted commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate in the school and classroom he/she would attend if not receiving special education support. Being a part of their neighborhood school and classroom community is a basic educational right for all students and is an essential element for students with disabilities. Support services are brought to the child rather than the child moving to the services. This requires only that the child benefit socially, emotionally, and/or academically from being a part of the class. It does not require that the student “keep up” with the other students in the classroom. For students with disabilities to be successfully included or integrated, appropriate levels of support must be supplied. Determining what supports are needed becomes the responsibility of the individual student’s educational support team. The team consists of the parent, the classroom teacher, the special educator, therapist(s), and the paraprofessional.

Whether the student is being included or integrated, it is important that the Teacher Assistant remember that when supporting the student instructionally, the student is to participate and interact with their regular education peers to the fullest extent possible. Regular classroom assignments may need to be modified to allow the student to be successful and understand the basic principle or concept being taught. All modifications should be approved by the classroom teacher to ensure that the principles and concepts being taught remain intact.

In special classes, the Teacher Assistant needs to help instruct and teach activities. An example might be in P.E. class, the Teacher Assistant should make sure that the student understands the rules and concepts of the activity so that the student can participate as fully as possible. The Teacher Assistant can walk the student through the P.E activity until it is understood. In art class, the Teacher Assistant may need to suggest modifications to make it fit the student’s needs and abilities for example in the area of fine motor skills.

The Teacher Assistant is to make sure that the student is participating and involved in whatever activity that is occurring in the classroom. The Teacher Assistant is not to sit and watch, but be engaged and assisting the students at whatever level is necessary. Students should be treated age appropriately and like their typical peers.

The following are some guidelines for the roles of the classroom teacher, special educator, and Teacher Assistant in an inclusive, integrated setting:



## **Classroom Teacher**

- Support the premise that all children belong and are an essential component of the school community.
- Develop the structure of the classroom, including general curriculum, discipline policy, physical layout, materials, etc.
- Plan the daily lessons, activities, tests, assignments, etc. with appropriate levels of differentiation to meet the needs of all students within the classroom environment.
- Collaborate with special educators and therapists on curriculum modifications, grading, report cards, transition, etc.
- Supervise Teacher Assistants in the classroom routines.
- Be familiar with and review the IEP for all students with special needs assigned to the classroom. Follow all modification requirements.
- Attend the IEP and staffing meetings that pertain to any students in the classroom.
- Collaborate with parents, support staff, and students on the writing of the IEP.

## **Special Educator/Therapist**

- Establish open communication with the regular classroom teachers. Be an advocate for your students and a resource for the regular educators in your building.
- Provide modification recommendations for students with disabilities in regard to materials and equipment, positive behavior plans, individualized curricula, etc.
- Provide modification recommendations for students in regard to lesson, activities, tests, assignments, grading, report cards, etc.
- Recommend instructional strategies for students. Share your knowledge of what works and what doesn't.
- Coordinate IEP's, evaluations, team meetings, revision of behavior intervention plans, etc.
- Collaborate with parents, regular educators, support staff, and students on the writing of the IEP.

## **Teacher Assistants**

- Follow classroom policies developed by the classroom teachers.
- Implement the modifications developed by the team.
- Facilitate learning opportunities for individuals and groups of students. Provide assistance to all students.
- Collect data on the goals and objectives for each student as requested by special education staff using teacher designed data collection sheets.
- Collaborate with teachers, support staff, and parents to enhance the learning of the students.
- Communicate with classroom and special education teachers about the student. Ask questions if you are unsure. Provide appropriate input to support the learning environment of the student.
- Encourage the independence of the student throughout the school environment and during the school day.
- Remember you are a contributing member of the school community. Maintain a professional attitude with students, staff, and parents at all times.

## **Work Hours and Travel**

Teacher Assistants are typically hired for seven (7) hours per day with a 30-minute unpaid lunch. This establishes a 7 ½ hour day. Teacher Assistants should report to work 15 minutes before the start of the school day and stay for 15 minutes after the end of the school day. Work schedules can be adjusted by building principals to best suit the needs of the building and students.

Upon reporting to work, Teacher Assistants will need to time in/out using the nearest Kronos station.

The school year calendar consists of 177 student days. Teacher Assistants report for work two additional days either prior to the beginning of the year or on an additional day for professional development. The teacher's calendar consists of 189 workdays. There are ten (10) assigned days for teachers that Teacher Assistants do not work.

Teacher Assistants who are assigned to travel among schools should submit a request for reimbursement for travel on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. All Teacher Assistants are paid twice per month on the 15<sup>th</sup> and end of the month. Work time should be accurately recorded through the Kronos terminals. Teacher Assistants will time in upon arrival, time out/in for lunch, and time out at the end of the day.

Throughout the year, Teacher Assistants may be asked to attend IEP meetings, faculty meetings or training sessions. In these cases, report extra time by timing in/out through the Kronos terminals.

## Reporting Your Absence

Personal time off should be requested at least 24 hours in advance through a Kronos terminal and submitted to your supervisor for approval. Personal business days are granted if student and building needs are covered. For other absences, such as sick leave, a time off request should be submitted through a Kronos terminal or directly to your supervisor. In some instances, such as bereavement/funeral leave, documentation may be required. Please review the Support Staff Agreement for specific information related to leave.

## Scheduling Substitutes

If you are unable to attend school and need to make arrangements for a substitute you must access our automated system (SmartFind) to report your absence. The automated system can be accessed either by phone or on-line.

Your building administrator may also request that you contact them notifying them of your absence. Check with your administrator to determine if you must also contact them.

- Report the absence to the automated system **as soon as possible**. Professional leave can be entered weeks in advance. Our system can only work 3 jobs at a time so only urgent matters should be left until the last minute. **Jury duty is the exception in most instances**; please wait until you have definitely been told to report.
- Remember, a sub's I.D. is their **7 digit PHONE NUMBER** (no area code) when you are entering a specified substitute OR a pre-arranged job.
- If you have **definitely confirmed** with a substitute a pre-arranged job but when you try to enter it in SmartFind it states the sub is not available, invalid, or something similar, **HANG UP or quit** before it assigns a job number. If you continue and get a job number the system will find a substitute and you will have 2 for your pre-arranged job. Frequently a substitute may have blocked themselves out for part or all of a particular day and then agreed to work. Please call Sue Gilland at 359-4041 and she will enter the job for you. Again, please don't wait until the last minute to enter the job.
- Absences are for a WHOLE or HALF day. Half day jobs start at 12:00 – 12:30 at the elementary level and around 11:00 at the middle and high school level. Substitute jobs are for 3 ½ to 4 hours. **Substitutes are told to remain for the entire assignment, including planning time.** If there is no work that you have for them, please instruct them to report to your school office for further instructions.

## Policies and Procedures

### District Policies

The Park Hill School District has its own policies and procedures, many of which are explained at length in the Support Staff Handbook. These include evaluation practices, emergency procedures, employment policies, and faculty/staff conduct guidelines. All employees are expected to know and adhere to district policy. It is important to be familiar with the policies and procedures of the district in order to perform in an orderly, appropriate, and efficient manner. To become aware of district policies locate the Support Staff Handbook on the Park Hill School District website at [www.parkhill.k12.mo.us](http://www.parkhill.k12.mo.us) .

### Building Policies

As a Teacher Assistant you will need to know the basic information about how the building operates. Space has been provided for you to add the information that pertains to your assigned building.

- Dress code:
- Arriving late or leaving early:
- Starting and Ending times:
- Access to phone or voice mail:
- Emergency Plan:
- Faculty meetings:
- In-service:
- Daily Schedule:
- Workroom:
- Dismissal procedures:
- Map of the building:
- Mailboxes:
- Interoffice Mail:
- Staff Lounge/Restroom:
- Discipline Policy:

☐ Nurse's Office:

### People to Meet

As part of the support team in your building it is important to know the team members you will be working with. Below is a list of those individuals that you will want to meet.

Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Assistant Principal(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Administrative Assistant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

Counselor \_\_\_\_\_

SpEd Teacher(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Speech Therapist \_\_\_\_\_

Occupational Therapist \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Therapist \_\_\_\_\_

Family Resource Specialist \_\_\_\_\_

Reading Improvement \_\_\_\_\_

Nurse \_\_\_\_\_

Lunchroom/Recess Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Custodian \_\_\_\_\_