

Paraprofessional job description and interview questions

Running an organized classroom is a big task, and sometimes teachers need a little help. That's where hiring a Paraprofessional can help. Paraprofessionals act as classroom assistants to help teachers with classroom management and provide more individualized support to students that need it.

If you're ready to hire a Paraprofessional for your school, take a look at this sample job description to learn more about common Paraprofessional responsibilities and required qualifications. We've also included some useful questions to ask Paraprofessional candidates during job interviews to find the right person to fit your school's and student's needs.

What is a Paraprofessional?

A paraprofessional is a classroom aide that assists teachers in managing and organizing classroom activities. They tend to the students' different emotional, physical, and academic needs. Many education paraprofessionals also provide support to students with disabilities who need additional help in the classroom.

Paraprofessional responsibilities can vary widely based on the students' and teachers' needs. They may help provide instruction, organize and prepare teaching materials, provide support to individual students, lead small groups of students in projects or breakout sessions, or grade student assignments.

Paraprofessional Job Description Template

Overview

We are looking for a Paraprofessional to assist the teacher in managing the day-to-day activities of their classroom. Their daily tasks may include preparing instructional materials, organizing class supplies, recording submitted assignments, and overseeing classroom behavior. The ideal candidate will have lots of patience and prior experience working with children. They should be comfortable co-leading lessons as needed and monitoring student activities during small group work and individual learning time.

Job Responsibilities

- Provide support to the assigned teacher by assisting in a variety of classroom management activities.
- Maintain a productive learning environment by minimizing distractions and disruptions in the classroom.
- Lead small group sessions or one-on-one sessions with students that need extra help or support.

- Assist in the preparation of lesson plans and instructional materials as requested by the classroom teacher.
- Collect, grade, and record homework assignments.
- Assist students in completing work and learning concepts covered in the daily lessons.
- Provide accommodations to students with disabilities as required in their IEPs.
- Attend classroom field trips and special activities as requested.

Qualifications

- High school diploma required. Associate's degree in early childhood education preferred.
- One to two years of experience in a classroom environment.
- Experience working with special needs students preferred.
- First aid and CPR certification.
- Strong interpersonal and communication skills.

Paraprofessional interview questions

Here are some helpful questions to ask when interviewing candidates for a paraprofessional.

Tell me about your experience working with children. What age groups have you worked with? Have you ever worked with children with disabilities?

It's important to thoroughly dive into the candidate's background in working with children. Like teachers, paraprofessionals may prefer or have more experience with specific age groups. While the overall skills are transferable to most classrooms, there is quite a difference between assisting first graders and middle schoolers.

Inquire about the age groups that they've worked with, what subjects they've helped teach, and any experience with special needs students. This is a great place to ask clarifying questions such as what they enjoy about working with a certain age group or subject matter. If they have experience helping students with disabilities, you can also dive into that experience to learn more about what types of disabilities they have experience with, if they've ever helped with IEP plans, and their comfort with different support levels such as those that need help with toileting or who are non-verbal.

How do you build a positive working relationship with the classroom teacher?

The Paraprofessional is there to support the teacher(s) in the classroom. As such, it's important that they are able to create a solid professional relationship with the teacher that they're assigned to support.

It's important that the candidate understands the importance of building a positive relationship with the teacher, and that they understand their role in that relationship. The main classroom teacher is quite busy and may not have as much time or energy available to put toward building the relationship, so sometimes paraprofessionals need to be a bit more proactive.

The candidate should be willing to make an effort to build rapport while proactively offering support wherever needed in the classroom. They should also have great communication skills and understand the importance of keeping the teacher in the loop regarding student concerns.

How do you keep students motivated?

One of the biggest challenges in education is keeping students motivated. Great teachers and paraprofessionals will know how to motivate students, reward hard work, and make lessons engaging enough to keep them interested. Invite the candidate to share some of their techniques or examples of what has worked for them in past roles.

Some techniques may include developing meaningful relationships with students to better understand what will motivate them, providing clear learning objectives and expectations, getting creative in how you deliver lessons, and giving students choices in their learning.

How would you handle a student that is being repeatedly disruptive?

Paraprofessionals often play an important role in behavior management. They can intervene in disruptions and provide one-on-one behavior support to students while allowing the teacher to continue their lesson uninterrupted.

The candidate should show an understanding of basic behavior management and classroom management techniques including rewarding good behavior, redirecting distracted students, and appropriate disciplinary measures for repeated disruptions. The candidate should also ideally demonstrate an understanding of how to help redirect neurodivergent students who may have a more difficult time staying focused during lessons.

What are your career goals?

Many candidates use paraprofessional roles as a stepping stone while they pursue additional education and work towards becoming a certified teacher. Others enjoy the paraprofessional role and don't wish to earn a teaching license or use paraprofessional jobs as an interim career while working towards an unrelated bachelor's degree or career path. It can be helpful for employers to understand what the candidate is looking to get out of the role and what their career goals are.