[Music playing]
Welcome to the Paraprofessional Performance Framework Training. This training is based on the Special Education Paraprofessional Performance Framework, which was developed by the Classified Growth and Development Unit of the Personnel Commission in consultation with the Division of Special Education.

A few things that we’ve included in this training are

- why we developed a framework specifically for Special Education Paraprofessionals,

- the Competencies required to be an effective Paraprofessional and examples of effective behavior in these areas, and

- the tools you may utilize in assessing your competencies, developing your competencies, as well as other ways you may grow and develop in your career as a Special Education Paraprofessional in the District.
The Classified Growth and Development Unit is responsible for the classified employee performance management/evaluation systems in LAUSD.

These systems include the longstanding employee evaluations, which are now available online, as well as the tools and process for the Classified Growth and Development Cycle or CGDC. The CGDC is a continuous growth and development cycle that employees can use to assess their competencies, and consider what they might do to improve in areas where they may need development. It can also guide them in working on competencies needed for positions they aspire to hold. We have developed a Classified Performance Framework – which has 28 competencies that are relevant to all classified positions across the district.

The Paraprofessional Performance Framework is a subset of the Classified Performance Framework – it was specifically designed for LAUSD Special Education Paraprofessionals. This framework consists of only 8 competencies, all of which are important for paraprofessional in their roles in the District.
As already mentioned, the Special Ed Paraprofessional Framework focuses on 8 competencies, the effective performance of which are considered necessary for success as a Special Education Paraprofessional at LAUSD.

The 8 competencies are: Commitment, Sound Judgment, Flexibility/Adaptability, Professional Knowledge/Technical Expertise, Communication Skills, Safety Focus, Interpersonal Relationships, Dependability/Reliability.

We will go over each of the competencies in the succeeding slides and define what effective looks like for each competency. We will also give examples of evidence for each competency in order to illustrate “effective” behavior.

For the most part, the first four competencies in the framework – Commitment, Sound Judgment, Flexibility/Adaptability, and Professional Knowledge/Technical Expertise - are focused INWARD - on the regular planning and preparation for your role. Your performance in these areas may not be as visible to others. However, effective performance in these areas will contribute to your success in other areas.

The remaining four competencies – Communication Skills, Safety Focus, Interpersonal Relationships, and Dependability/Reliability – are more OUTWARD facing. These are more
readily observed by others as you perform your day-to-day work.

Now we are going to take a look at each competency individually. We will provide a description of effective behavior, followed by an example of such behavior.
The framework has 3 rating factors

- “Developing” is not unexpected for someone fairly new in a position with little experience in the role. If rating a Competency developing, that competency may be a good one to consider for growth planning.

- “Effective” means that you consistently perform as described in the benchmark. If you perform this Competency well in your role, you are effective.

- “Effective +” is reserved for those who not only perform consistently in this Competency, but ALSO help their co-workers and peers to perform effectively in the Competency. An employee should not rate himself/herself Effective + just because s/he is consistently performing his/her job.

Before getting too far along, we should probably discuss what “effective’ behavior means. If you review the framework, you will see that effective means that someone is consistently performing at the level described under effective. This is what we are striving for as a District, to have an effective employee at every level of the organization. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the rating descriptors.
Now on to the competencies. Let’s start with Commitment.

Effective behavior in Commitment includes:

Accepting responsibility for the outcomes of your work. Assuming responsibility and accountability for your work as a Paraprofessional. It’s an indication of your sense of responsibility with regards to your role in the achievement of the students you work with. Paraprofessionals are expected to understand what an IEP is. At the beginning of every school year or for every new assignment, paraprofessionals are expected to review, understand and implement the IEPs of their students, under the direction of certificated staff. It is your responsibility to clarify with certificated staff anything that is not understood.

Remember that paraprofessionals are advocates for students with special needs. You appropriately advocate on behalf of the students regarding their progress, needs and inclusion in activities. A big measure of a student’s success is the student’s independence – paraprofessionals encourage the students to work independently, while providing support and guidance as needed.
I sat through 4 periods of the same lesson being taught. The teacher had to explain a problem to a student in the middle of 5th period, so I carried out the instruction on behalf of the teacher as I was already familiar with it by that time. It went very well.

Here’s an example of a Paraprofessional who observed the same class over 4 periods. The teacher had to explain a problem to one of the students in the middle of 5th period. The paraprofessional, having paid attention through all the classes, and under the direction of the teacher - carried on with instruction while the teacher was in the classroom talking to one of the students.
Next we have sound judgment. Effective behavior in Sound Judgment includes

Exercising discretion and safeguarding private and confidential student information. Understanding the ethical and legal aspects of maintaining student confidentiality. Adhering to District policies regarding confidential matters. Considering the consequences of your actions and activities in order to avoid causing misunderstanding or misinterpretation. Behaving calmly while taking quick action when needed. Making sound decisions while demonstrating integrity. And, basing your decisions on fact NOT emotion.
Paraprofessionals are obligated to be as fully prepared as possible to function ethically, as well as legally, in the school environment. Ethical standards provide a framework for reflecting on appropriate behavior.

Let’s look at this example. This is a scenario that paraprofessionals often find themselves in:

- Parents approaching them directly and asking them about the progress of their children.

As a paraprofessional, you may discuss your student’s progress only with the supervising teacher. However, sometimes you are faced with a very persistent parent. It is stated in the Code of Ethics, which can be found in the Paraprofessional Handbook, that Paraprofessionals should not communicate progress or concerns about students directly to parents.

In this particular example, the paraprofessional first directed the parent to the teacher. When the parent persisted and continued to inquire, he listened and told her that she would relay the matter to the teacher. He then relayed the information to the teacher. It is important to know your boundaries and to exercise sound judgment at all times.
### Classified Growth and Development

#### Special Education Paraprofessional Framework

**Review:**

Identify whether a competency is classified as “INWARD” or “OUTWARD by dragging the competency to the corresponding classification:

- **INWARD**
  - a. Dependability/Reliability
  - b. Commitment
  - c. Interpersonal Relationships
  - d. Sound Judgment
  - e. Safety Focus
- **OUTWARD**
  - f. Flexibility/Adaptability
  - g. Communication Skills
  - h. Professional Knowledge/Technical Expertise

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Let’s review your understanding. Identify whether the competencies are identified as either inward or outward by dragging the competency to the corresponding classification.
Next, flexibility/adaptability. Paraprofessionals can be moved around from time to time, depending on where they are needed most. These transfers result in constant changes in schedules, required techniques and routines. Flexibility/adaptability is needed to effectively respond to these changes in situations, circumstances, objectives or people.

Flexibility/Adaptability also means readily accepting, and adjusting quickly to changes in assignments and priorities. You may be required to handle multiple tasks simultaneously, on a regular basis, and you should be able to do so without sacrificing quality by prioritizing and effectively managing your time.
Here is an example of a paraprofessional who was moved to a different assignment – in the middle of the school year. To be effective in his role, the first thing the paraprofessional did upon transferring to the new assignment was to meet with the Administrator to go over his duties and responsibilities in the new assignment. Next, he met with the teacher to ask about her expectations and to find out more about the students that would be assigned to him. He also went over the students’ IEPs and asked the teacher clarifying questions about the IEPs.
Now on to professional knowledge/technical expertise. Paraprofessionals are required to have comprehensive knowledge of the spectrum of disabilities and how to provide for students regardless of needs. Paraprofessionals need to take the initiative to know the IEPs of students assigned to them to effectively implement and support instruction.

It is further required that they remain compliant with required certifications and training. It is good practice to renew required licenses before they expire – perhaps having calendar reminders regarding license/certification expiration dates to ensure that renewals are completed in a timely manner.

Professional knowledge/technical expertise also includes understanding of related services and when they are needed by students. Seeking and using feedback to improve performance and identifying areas of learning. Seeking education, training, and relevant experiences to enhance current job performance and/or promotion potential. Sharing expertise in areas of the work with others.
Here is an example provided by a paraprofessional demonstrating effective behavior in professional knowledge/technical expertise. The District’s Special Education and Organizational Excellence websites are great sources of information on available live and online training.
Let’s check our understanding. Match the competency with the correct descriptor by dragging the competency to the descriptor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional/Technical Expertise</td>
<td>□ Knowing consequences of action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility Adaptability</td>
<td>□ Continuous learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>□ Assuming new responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound Judgment</td>
<td>□ Realizing role in public service/trust</td>
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Communication skills is next. Communication skills encompasses both verbal and non-verbal communication. It requires showing attention through verbal and non-verbal behaviors.

It is important to adapt your communication style to an individual’s level of proficiency. In any given situation, it is ideal to respond to, rather than react to, a situation.

Communication skills includes:

- Providing specific, immediate and appropriate feedback to students. Always considering the level of proficiency of the student when communicating. Communicating students’ progress to teachers, and NOT directly to families, and relaying information from families to teachers when necessary. Focusing on the student rather than on the disability.
- Providing positive reinforcement to students in the form of verbal praise and encouragement when appropriate. Using multimodal means of communication when addressing a student - for example: sign language, pictures, appropriate technology. And, using and reinforcing academic language of the respective curriculum.
A student in class was very excited and telling everyone that she was going on vacation. So I smiled and nodded at her and listened. Then I redirected her to her seat and told her to go back to the lesson being discussed, which she did.

In this first example, the paraprofessional listened to the eager student and acknowledged what she wanted to share and then redirected her back to the lesson. The paraprofessional responded thoughtfully to the situation rather than simply reacting.

I was working with a student on a math problem, but the student was having difficulty understanding it. So I asked the student to explain his thinking and then reminded him of several problem solving strategies he could use. The student was able to solve the problem after several attempts and I “high fived” him and acknowledged his success.

In the second example, the paraprofessional took into consideration the level of proficiency of the student and explained the math problem in simpler terms, and provided positive reinforcement by doing a “high five” when the student was able to solve the problem.
Now, safety focus. Please note that the safety of the student is always a primary consideration, as is your own safety and that of those around you. It is important to maintain awareness of surroundings, personal and students’ safety to avoid injury or property damage during all work activities. Adhering to all safety practices of the workplace. Determining the severity of a situation and escalating to appropriate staff in cases of emergencies. Ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students at all times. Understanding and practicing Universal Precautions. Observing proper dress code. Exercising proper hygiene at all times. Utilizing proper body mechanics for lifting and moving students and equipment to prevent injury. Staying current with required health and safety certifications.
It is important to always be aware of your surroundings. In the first example, the paraprofessional makes it a habit to look around the classroom at the beginning of and throughout the day to check for spills or anything that may cause someone to trip.

The second example pertains to being proactive when it comes to making sure that all required licenses and certification remain valid. A Special Education Assistant, for example, is required to have a First-Aid Certificate issued by a recognized First Aid training program within 60 days after appointment and must keep it valid during the term of employment. So it is incumbent upon the Paraprofessional to stay on top of the validity/expiration of his/her First Aid/CPR Certificate.
Next we have interpersonal skills. Effective behavior in interpersonal relationships includes:

- Presenting a sincere and approachable demeanor when interacting with all stakeholders.
- Interacting positively with students, teachers, administrators, families, and the rest of the community.
- Showing interest in what people have to say.
- Maintaining professional relationships with teachers, students, other school personnel, and the community.
- Recognizing the role differences of all team members.
- Respecting others regardless of differences in interest, perspectives, backgrounds, opinions and organizational level.
- Collaborating with providers to support student skill development.
- Consistently collaborating with teachers on relevant student issues.
I try to create a positive environment around me whenever I can by simply greeting everyone I see. It may be a simple gesture to say good morning or have a good day but it affects them positively and it makes me happy. It does not hurt to be pleasant.

A simple smile or greeting goes a long way. It is an effective ice breaker, a good start to a working relationship. It always affects people positively.

I try to maintain a good relationship with the teachers I work with so I can support them effectively. I find time to ask about the student’s IEP and also provide feedback when necessary as I sometimes work more closely with the students.

It is important to forge a professional partnership with Certificated Staff. In the second example, the paraprofessional makes it a point to maintain a good working relationship with the teacher. Also, the paraprofessional took the initiative to learn more about the student’s IEP and also asked how he could support the Teacher in and outside of the classroom, for example during playtime in the yard, games, etc.
Finally we have dependability/reliability. Effective behavior in Dependability/Reliability includes:

Reporting to work on time and being ready to assume your responsibilities. Demonstrating proper notification and use of leave time. As soon as you know when you may be required to take time off, let your supervisor know – this makes it easier for your supervisor to get someone to cover your absence if necessary. Attendance is very important given the responsibilities that paraprofessionals have, especially paraprofessionals who are assigned to students. With regards to attendance, the District’s goal is 96% attendance or better.

Always maintaining calm, professional demeanor and attitude even in challenging circumstances. Demonstrating resilience against challenges and obstacles. Following through to achieve results. Being proactive in bringing attention to areas that may require additional training in order to benefit students and the Division of Special Education.
As soon as our vacation plans were finalized, I filed my vacation request, even though it was months away. When it came closer, I reminded my administrator about my time off to ensure there would be proper coverage while I was away.

In the first example, the paraprofessional gave as much notice as he could with regards to his vacation, He also went above what was required or expected of him, by reminding his supervisor of his upcoming travel plans as the date of his vacation approached.

During a test, I went and checked on my students in the class. I explained a few problems that they did not understand and advised the teacher as well. The teacher went to the board and addressed the whole class as he saw that a lot of students were having a hard time. He explained the problem again.

The second example pertains to a paraprofessional supporting instruction by letting the teacher know that the students could not understand the problems and so the Teacher went back to the board to explain the problem again. The paraprofessional did this after several students he was working with were having difficulty understanding the problem.
Let’s check our understanding. Please match the competency with the correct descriptor by dragging the competency to the appropriate descriptor.
For more information, please visit achieve.lausd.net/CGDC and select the "For Special Education Paraprofessionals" tab.

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We also recommend that you complete the Special Education Paraprofessional Self-Assessment. This tool was designed to assess your performance in all of the competency areas described in the Special Education Paraprofessional Framework. Your assessment will indicate the competencies that you may need to work on. Note that the results of the self-assessment are not shared with others unless you choose to share them.

Additionally, on the CGDC site, we have posted a crosswalk which maps out recommended free, online courses aligned to the framework competencies. You may use this list as a guide when searching for courses offered through Organizational Excellence.
Tools for growth and development are available to all classified employees of the district. Use all or some of the tools we will be discussing in the next slides to improve your effectiveness in the competency areas, learn new skills or just to brush up on your knowledge.
There are lots of tools available for growth and development. The most readily available and most commonly utilized are training courses. The District has live and online courses that paraprofessionals have free access to.

We also recommend reflecting regularly on your work and keeping a journal. This habit will allow you to gain self awareness. Having a record of your work, including how you responded to circumstances, provides you with examples of evidence you can use during performance evaluation discussions and even during promotional interviews.

The district provides tuition reimbursement for continuous education including attending college courses, conferences and seminars. Check your bargaining agreement for the available annual reimbursement amount. Also note that Organizational Excellence has other programs that support employees working on finishing their Bachelor’s Degrees or even Master’s degrees.

The LA Public Library offers other perks on top of lending books to library card holders. You can access online programs as a cardholder for free for sites such as Lynda.com and mango languages.

There are online tutorials from Organizational Excellence for just in time training on a
variety of topics, including computer skills.

Another option is to arrange for a more-experienced colleague to be your mentor or ask your supervisor if you might shadow a peer or cross train in a different role.

Lastly, it is highly recommended that you establish open communications with your supervisor for continuous feedback and progress updates.
Organizational Excellence is your one stop shop for classified training. It offers in person as well as online training options. It links to Learning Zone to register for courses offered through the Special Education Division and live training through Organizational Excellence, as well as linking to MyPLN for online courses that are aligned to the framework. All the training options are available to you at no cost. Discuss with your supervisor how you can utilize your professional development time for online training. Explore the website and check out the available courses.
Need support - here’s our contact information

- CGDC Web page
  http://achieve.lausd.net/CGDC
  Click on “For Special Education Paraprofessionals” link on the left side of the page
- Heidi Hrowal, Program & Policy Development Advisor
  heidi.hrowal@lausd.net
  (213) 241-4683
- Lia (Olga Maria) Castano, HR Specialist II
  olgamaria.castano@lausd.net
  (213) 241-4943

If you need additional information please feel free to contact us via phone or email. We are happy to assist you.