

# Pembina Special Education Cooperative

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“Not all great minds think alike.”

## Staff Handbook

**2018-2020**

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## Introduction

The Pembina Special Education Cooperative (PSEC) is one of 31 special education units in North Dakota. Within this unit are four member districts, which are as follows: North Border School District, which includes schools in Walhalla and Pembina; Valley-Edinburg School District, which includes schools in Hoople, Crystal and Edinburg; St. Thomas School District and Drayton School District. It is the commitment and duty of PSEC to inform and guide special educators, employed by our school districts, in the laws and regulations of the *Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA, 2004,)* and to assist our school districts in meeting the needs of our special education students within the cooperative. It is also the responsibility of PSEC to work with general and special educators, building administrators, and parents to ensure free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all students with disabilities. The regulations found within *IDEA* are the special education policies in North Dakota. The following staff handbook is a practical staff guide for the employees of PSEC. The PSEC appreciates the time and attention given to all students with disabilities. If you have additional questions, please call our office, 701-265-8080. The PSEC office is located at 106 B Division Avenue North in Cavalier, North Dakota.

Thank you for all you do.

Lisa Goldade, PSEC Director of Special Education

Mindy Indridson, PSEC Business Manager

Updated May, 2018

## **Statement of Purpose**

This handbook has been developed for the general guidance of PSEC employees and it is the responsibility of the employee to read and understand the information contained in the handbook. The director is available to answer any questions concerning the handbook.

Employees and the PSEC are engaged in an at-will employment relationship, meaning that either party is free to terminate the relationship at any time, with or without reason/notice. When an employee is leaving a position, it is recommended that the employee give the employer two weeks' notice to leave the employment in good standing. This handbook serves as a guideline for employees but is not to be thought to form a contract of employment between the PSEC and its employees. The PSEC Board reserves the right to change the handbook at any time.

This handbook is an outline of the basic personnel policies, practices, and procedures of the PSEC. The PSEC Board may add to the policies in the manual or revoke or modify them from time to time. Administration of PSEC will try to keep the manual current, but there may be times when policy will change before this material can be revised and published. This manual is created as a useful reference for providing information and answering questions relating to personnel concerns and operations of the cooperative. To quickly and easily locate items of interest, please consult the Table of Contents. Input from employees concerning policies is always welcome and encouraged.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission of Pembina Special Education Cooperative is to partner with member districts to ensure free appropriate public education for all students with disabilities.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

**Administrative Responsibility:** All paraprofessional employees will be under the supervision of the respective building administration and/or the PSEC director. The school administrator and/or PSEC director will be responsible for the assignment and work scheduling of paraprofessionals and will be responsible for providing appropriate training and supervision of such personnel with the assistance of the PSEC for training modules and opportunities.

**Pay Periods and Work Hours and Week:** Pay periods run from the first to the last day of the month, with pay being distributed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Employees are responsible for getting the record of hours to the PSEC business manager by 10:00 a.m. on the first day of the month or the first business day after the last day of the month. All employees will be required to complete a time sheet for each pay period which may be mailed or faxed to the PSEC office, or have a timecard submitted by the district business office. An employee's number of hours per day shall be assigned upon initial employment unless otherwise determined by the PSEC director. Actual starting and ending times will be determined by the building administrator with approval of the PSEC director. The established work week will consist of no more than forty hours.

**Direct Deposit:** The PSEC utilizes direct deposit for most employees. Paychecks will be electronically transferred directly into employees' account or mailed to place of residence. The employee will receive a pay voucher with the details of gross pay for the period and all withholdings, authorized deductions and the net pay amount credited to the employee's account.

**Liability Insurance:** The PSEC board provides a comprehensive liability policy that covers all employees, including full and part-time employees.

**Recordkeeping:** Accurate records shall be kept of hours worked by all PSEC employees. The school district in which the employee works shall institute a system of recordkeeping, or hours may be signed by the employee's building administrator and submitted to the PSEC business manager for compensation.

**Payroll Deductions:** Payroll deductions are made for all mandatory deductions, such as federal income tax, state income tax, and FICA.

**Social Security-Medicare:** The PSEC shall pay the matching social security benefit.

**Unemployment Insurance:** Employees who meet the eligibility requirements under unemployment regulations are covered by unemployment insurance. Unemployment compensation benefits are not available during periods of scheduled breaks in the work calendar.

**Withholding Forms:** All employees of the PSEC must have a W-4 on file before being paid. The most current W-4 on file is used to determine withholding for federal and state income tax.

**Workforce Safety & Insurance:** The PSEC furnishes workforce safety insurance coverage for employees. Workforce safety insurance is intended to provide medical care and pay for lost time resulting from injuries on the job and those illnesses caused by the employee's work. Employees must report any accident to their supervisor immediately. Employees should also report a near miss or close call, which occurred to them or they witnessed. Reports must be made on all accidents, not just those resulting in an injury. Employees who are reimbursed by Workforce Safety & Insurance for days absent from work cannot have sick leave payments or any other district provided insurance exceed their regular earnings.

## **LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

**Sick Leave:** Paraprofessionals receive five (5) sick days per year for full-time employees, that will be prorated for employees working less than full-time or less/more than nine months. These days may be cumulative up to 30 days and may be used for sick leave or family sick leave. All absences must be reported to the employer, building administrator or PSEC, as soon as possible. Employees who work 12 months are given 10 days of sick leave.

**Personal Leave:** PSEC 9-month employees are given two personal days per year for full-time employees, and will be prorated for employees working less than full-time or less than nine months. Personal days are **not** cumulative. Employees who work 12 months are given 10 days of personal leave.

**Leave Without Pay:** Unpaid leave, termed as "necessary days," may be granted as determined by the building administrator and the PSEC director on an individual basis. It is the policy of the PSEC that necessary days will **not** be granted except for emergency situations or under unusual conditions. Any sick or personal leave **must** be used for absences prior to requesting unpaid leave.

## **RELATED BOARD POLICIES AND GUIDELINES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER**

PSEC is an Equal Opportunity Employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability or non-disqualifying handicap in its education programs/activities and employment practices. If you have concerns and/or need information regarding the existence and location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible, please contact the director at (701) 265-8080.

## **RECRUITMENT, HIRING & BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL:**

State law requires that new classified employees are subject to state and federal criminal history record checks as a condition of employment. The PSEC uses the local media in the district of the employment to recruit new paraprofessionals to PSEC positions.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Cooperative employees and service providers must follow confidentiality requirements under Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

**PERSONNEL RECORDS:** The PSEC shall keep a personnel folder for each employee. The Business Manager shall maintain records required for payroll purposes, for record keeping under the Fair Standards Act, and other laws pertaining to payroll record keeping, as well as transcripts, employment applications, evaluations, and other related items including, but not limited to, contracts, job descriptions, state correspondence, credentials, and licensure.

**PERSONNEL RECORDS REVIEW PROCEDURES:** Personnel records subject to open records laws shall be available during office hours for review by members of the public.

**JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND MONITORING OF EMPLOYEES:** According to PSEC Board policy, the Cooperative or the school district is responsible for hiring and evaluating the special education paraprofessionals who work in the PSEC school districts. Each employee will be given a job description of the position for which he or she was hired. The details of this description will be explained upon the start of employment. Monitoring of job performance of PSEC paraprofessionals will be conducted by the special education director or school district administrator, as will the employee evaluation. These evaluations will be annual. Job description and environment, including school buildings where staff members are employed, may change according to the needs of the special education students within the PSEC.

**PROFESSIONAL TRAINING:** Each paraprofessional shall complete 20 hours of inservice training required for special education certification early in the first few months of employment. The majority of this time will be used to complete four professional training modules furnished by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, which result in a certification for special education paraprofessionals. An additional four hours each year is required to maintain this certification for special education. Special education staff working with the paraprofessionals will be responsible for assisting them with the module completion and informing them of training opportunities. Paraprofessionals may attend employee trainings together with the staff of the school before school commences in the fall with the permission of building administrators or the PSEC director, but additional trainings may also be held on days determined during the year by district administrators.

**SALARY:** The Cooperative districts hire teaching staff for their school districts and the PSEC provides guidance for special education law and state requirements to special education teaching staff within the unit. The special education paraprofessionals, or aides, are classified staff, and will be hired through the Cooperative office with the assistance of each district's administration, or by the districts themselves. All paraprofessionals will be given a salary amount from the Cooperative policy agreement, with a base hourly salary and salary increases, which may be added according to years of experience and post-secondary education completed. This amount can be adjusted by the PSEC Board. Professional consultants, such as physical therapists and school psychologists who furnish the PSEC special education students with related services, are contracted by individual school districts or by PSEC, but serve the special education students of the PSEC schools. The Cooperative also employs a director of special education and a business manager, who are the only PSEC employees to work 12 months per year.



## **Pembina Special Education Cooperative**

**Position: Paraprofessional (Aide)**

**Reports to:** Building Principal/PSEC Director

**Evaluation:** A performance review will be conducted by PSEC or employer

**Job Goal:** To support special education children academically, socially, and behaviorally, and assist the special education teacher and/or classroom teacher with supervision, clerical duties, and additional duties as assigned or defined by the students' IEPs.

### **Performance Responsibilities:**

- Work with individual students or small groups of students to reinforce learning of materials or skills initially introduced by certified staff, supervise testing, or monitor work completion during study hall time.
- Perform clerical tasks and instructional duties as assigned by the certified staff. Supervise students in the lunchroom, hallway, playground, and on field trips.
- Assist with critical daily activities such as classroom transition times, mealtimes, toileting, and clothing routines when applicable to student assignment.
- Serve as a resource person to substitute teachers, RTI or IEP team members as requested.
- Demonstrate ethical behavior and confidentiality of information about students in the school environment and community.
- Participate in in-service training programs as directed.
- Maintain accurate and up-to-date records, documentation, and data collection as directed.
- Performs other such duties as assigned by PSEC or district administration.

## **Pembina Special Education Cooperative**

**Position: Special Education Unit Business Manager**

**Reports to:** PSEC Board and Director

**Evaluation:** A performance review will be conducted by PSEC annually.

### **Performance Responsibilities:**

- Supervises the management of the financial affairs of the unit
  - Directs the accounting and payroll operations and procedures.
  - Supervises the collection, distribution and protection of all unit funds and other assets.
  - Supervises the unit's insurance and inventory programs.
  - Works with Director in the preparation of the annual financial audit.
  - Advises the Director and Board of Education regarding the financial affairs of the district.
  - Prepares the monthly and annual financial reports as may be required.
  - Prepares the budget in cooperation with the Director,
  - Arranges for the publication and distribution of the adopted annual budget.
  - Assists in the submission of all federal financial reports.
  - Coordinates and submits federal child count information.
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- Performs the tasks of secretary/office manager

## **Pembina Special Education Cooperative**

**Position: Certified Occupational Therapy Assistant**

**Reports to:** Building Principal/PSEC Director

**Evaluation:** A performance review will be conducted by PSEC or employer.

**Job Goal:** To support special education children in the area of occupational therapy, and assist the occupational therapist and staff with supervision, clerical duties, and additional duties as assigned or defined by the students' IEPs.

### **Performance Responsibilities:**

- Implements therapeutic activities and instructs staff and families for the purpose of student support and meeting the goals of the IEP.
- Maintains files insuring compliance with IEPs and regulations, prepares written materials such as progress reports, and attends meetings and workshops to convey or receive information.
- Provides direct OT services to students according to IEP goals, to ensure compliance with established practices and procedures.
- Provides training, instructions and consultation to teachers on the use of adaptive devices and equipment to ensure safety and optimal benefit for students.
- Shall work with the OT for assessing students in the areas of fine and gross motor, motor development, sensory integration, developmental function, etc. for the purpose of determining deficits and developing recommendations.
- Other duties may be assigned by building administrators.