

COP Classroom



Handbook
2025-2026

This handbook is a resource to be used by the COP classroom staff for the 2025-26 school year. The handbook is by no means all-inclusive. When used in conjunction with: the COP Professional Personnel Handbook, online Safeschools Trainings, and the COPESD Paraprofessionals Contract, it should provide much information necessary to have a successful school year. ~Josh

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Section 1: General Overview Information

COPESD Why

To engage learners in ways that foster growth and success.

COPESD Mission

The mission of Cheboygan-Otsego-Presque Isle Education Service District is to maximize the learning and citizenship of all, by providing education leadership, facilitating sustainable evidenced-based practices and services, and providing professional development that involves member districts, this ESD and the entire community.

Classroom Vision:

- We believe that it is important to be intentionally consistent and unified in the implementation of math, communication and literacy instruction.
- We value a whole team approach that empowers all students the opportunity to express themselves.
- We believe that all students need to understand concepts of math to use in their daily lives to be able to be productive and functioning throughout their lives successfully.

COPESD Vision (developed in the Spring/Winter of 2022)

Overarching COP Classroom Goal:

All students will actively engage in daily comprehensive literacy and math instruction (that includes the use of concrete/visual representations) supported by access to the ULS curriculum.

Classroom Demographics

COPESD programs serve students across Cheboygan, Otsego and Presque Isle counties with moderate and severe cognitive impairments, ranging from ages 3 to 26. Within the three counties, there are a total of 9 program classrooms:

- 2 MOCI classrooms Cheboygan
- 2 SCI and 3 MOCI classrooms in Gaylord
- 1 MOCI classroom in Onaway
- 1 Transition Service Gaylord/Cheboygan

COP Classroom Schedules (revised 8-12-25)

Classroom	Teacher	Paraprofessionals	COP Teacher/Para Start and End Times	COP Drop Off and Pick Up Times	LEA Student Start and End Times
Cheboygan Middle School MOCI	Tyson Eustice	Carol Hebert Jeanne Philips Donna Wirgau	7:30-3:00	8:00-3:00 7 hours 35 hours/wk	7:45-2:45
Cheboygan High School MOCI	Holly Crittenden	Katie Godin Cathy Howarth Hannah Harris	7:30-3:00	8:00-3:00 7 hours 35 hours/wk	7:45-2:45
Onaway MOCI	Autumn Decker	Danette Sievers Stephanie Thornton Sierra Riley	8:00-3:00	8:10-2:40 7 hours 32.5 hours/wk	8:00 - 2:50
Gaylord Primary SCI	Amy Mertz	Ashley Langowski Randy Roberts	7:45-2:45	8:00-2:30 6.5 hours 32.5 hour/wk	7:50-2:30
Gaylord Secondary SCI	Brandon Shirley	David Duczkowski Traci Newland Carmen Pollice	7:45-2:45	8:00-2:30 6.5 hours 32.5 hour/wk	7:50-2:30
Gaylord Elementary MOCI (GIS)	Caleigh Madej	Mellissa Hall Katie Nutter Angie McKnight	7:55-2:55	8:10-2:40 6.5 hours 32.5 hour/wk	8:00-2:45
Gaylord Middle School MOCI	Sarah McGlynn	James Sadenwater Camille Ostrom Kristi Pake	7:30-2:30	7:45-2:15 6.5 hours 32.5 hour/wk	7:55-2:30
Gaylord High School MOCI	Kiersten Przeslawski	Jamie Coonrod Irv Moyer Stacy Smith	7:50-2:50	8:10-2:40 6.5 hours 32.5 hour/wk	7:58-2:28
Floating Paraprofessionals		Joanne Kuck (Gaylord) Shawna Smalley (Cheboygan/Onaway)			
Transition Service Gaylord/Cheboygan	Elizabeth Vergara	Sarah Reminder			

COP Classroom Calendars - 2025-26

[**Cheboygan Staff Calendar**](#)

[**Cheboygan Parent Calendar**](#)

[**Gaylord Staff Calendar**](#)

[**Gaylord Parent Calendar**](#)

[**Onaway Staff Calendar**](#)

[**Onaway Parent Calendar**](#)

Curriculum and Instruction

- The [Essential Elements](#) guide the instruction in the COP classrooms, along with the Literacy Elements and Math Trajectories.
- The combination of the Unique Learning System (ULS) curriculum and differentiated instruction creates a foundation for students to maximize their learning.
 - ULS utilizes age-appropriate, direct, systematic instruction to help our learners with special needs master the state's standards.

Differentiated instruction is the use of multiple teaching techniques in order to meet the unique learning needs of each and every learner. This could include but is not limited to: use of sensory/tactile materials, visuals, audio/music, individualized support to achieve success, choices, use of movement.

[LITERACY ELEMENTS:](#)

Daily Emergent Interventions

1. Symbol-based Communication (with few exceptions)
2. Alphabet & Phonological Awareness
3. Shared (Interactive) Reading
4. Self-Directed Reading
5. Independent Writing with access to full alphabet
6. Predictable Chart Writing

Daily Conventional Interventions

1. Communication with symbols + spelling (broad expressive ability)
2. Word Study (Key Words + Word Wall + Making Words + Phonics)
3. Guided Reading (Reading Comprehension)
4. Self-Directed Reading
5. Independent Writing w/AAC if needed

MATH:

1. Learning Trajectories
2. Prototype for Lesson Construction

Section 2: Employee General Responsibilities

Universal Precautions

To protect the health of both staff and students, the following universal precautions should be used when handling all exposure or potential exposure to body fluids – nasal discharge, vomit, urine, feces, menstrual discharge, and blood.

Disposable gloves are to be worn when diapering, toileting and/or cleaning students. These gloves are to be discarded after use with a single student.

Hand washing is the single most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infection. It's easy to do and should only take 15 – 20 seconds.

- If the paper towel dispenser requires it, advance the paper towel first.
- Turn on the water (use warm water).
- Wet your hands.
- Dispense an appropriate amount of soap into your hands.
- Work up lather, and using friction, clean all surfaces of hands (remember to include in between fingers and around/under nails).
- Rinse well, keeping hands directed down.
- Dry hands thoroughly, starting at fingertips, progressing to wrists.
- Use the paper towel to turn off the tap.

Gloves are to be worn when dealing with all types of body fluids. Cleaning and bandaging an injury requires gloves as does changing a student's wet clothes after urination. When in doubt, wear gloves.

Reporting Suspected Abuse or Neglect

All staff are **required** to report any neglect or abuse to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and/or appropriate legal authorities. **All reports must be made to MDHHS within 24 hours.**

Reports can be done in one of two ways within 24 hours:

- Via Phone 855-444-3911, followed by a written DHS 3200 reporting form sent to MDHHS within 72 hours of calling.

- Via Online: Filling out the form online counts as both the oral and written report process. The Michigan Online Reporting System can be accessed at:https://newmibridges.michigan.gov/s/isd-partnershiplanding?language=en_US

All reports of suspected abuse or neglect are treated as confidential by the MDHHS. However, you may be contacted for additional information.

In the event that abuse is suspected, notify the classroom teacher who will then notify the Supervisor immediately. In addition, a copy of the filed report will be sent to the Supervisor on the same day of the suspected abuse or discovery of the incident. When sending the report electronically, write the word “CONFIDENTIAL” and do not include any identifiable information in the subject line.

If you are reported as abusing a child under your care, an investigation will be conducted by both COPESD and Protective Services to determine the accuracy of the charge(s) against you. Each case will be handled confidentially and immediately.

Required Trainings

There are several online SafeSchools trainings that are to be completed by all employees at the beginning of each school year or at the time of employment. Please see your supervisor if you do not receive these trainings.

Roles and Responsibilities

Each staff member will have various shared roles and responsibilities in the classroom. Some of these roles/responsibilities may include but are not limited to: following student's schedule and/or behavior plan, diapering students, complete necessary documentation, feeding students lunch, assisting in cleaning the classroom, assisting with laundry, transferring students, and supervising students on community outings, group activities, individual activities, and table work activities. Or, whatever else may be asked of you throughout the day by the teacher or your supervisor.

Timesheets

Timesheets are due according to the due dates that Peggy Bush, HR director, sends out to the staff. Failure to do so could result in delay of pay and/or disciplinary action.

[25-26 Payroll Schedule](#)

Staff Absence Notification

Employees shall be individually responsible for notifying the sub caller, the teacher, and employee's supervisor when the employee will be absent from school. In emergency situations where the employee could not possibly have anticipated the absence ahead of time, such notification must be made on the day the absence is to occur at times designated by the assigned substitute caller for the Gaylord-based classrooms and for the Cheboygan-based/Onaway-based classrooms. If the emergency occurs during the

day, notify the teacher, sub caller, and supervisor. **Classroom staff are not to contact substitutes on their own.**

Any absence from work also requires the employee to fill out an Employee Absence Report in Script. Failure to do this within five (5) work days, after return to work could result in loss of pay for the work absence time period.

Behavior and Incident Reports

School personnel are required to fill out behavior reports electronically on the COP Classroom Behavior Report on the students in their care whenever there is a major behavior incident.

[Behavior Form](#)

School personnel are required to fill out a student accident report when a student has an injury that is not due to student behaviors(ie: the student fell off a swing).

[Accident Form](#)

These incident reports will be sent home to parents/guardians with the students and a copy of the report given to a supervisor. Other Students involved in the situation should not be named in the report being sent home. Remember the importance of confidentiality.

School personnel should always contact parents on the same day as the occurrence if any significant incidents or injuries occur involving their child.

Breaks

Paraprofessionals shall have one (1) fifteen (15) minute break within the school day. Schedule for breaks will be developed by each classroom group.

Lunch

Lunch is eaten while supervising students. If you bring your lunch, there is a refrigerator and microwave available for your use in the classroom or building. Staff members are responsible for cleaning up after themselves.

Dress Expectations

All staff are expected to report to work appearing neat, clean, and well groomed. Clothes should be in a good state of repair.

Staff are expected to be positive role models for students so dress and grooming should be appropriate for the work and school environment. Keep in mind that wearing long necklaces, ties, large earrings, or shoes with high heels could put you at risk for being injured.

Personal Possessions

Check with the classroom teacher as to where you can store your personal possessions.

Social Media

It is strongly recommended that personal social media is not shared with parents, families and students. The relationship with current, future and former students and families should always be professional.

Sharing of Student Information, Photos, and Videos

Refer any person seeking information about students to the classroom teacher or program supervisor.

Photos/videos can be taken of students only for the purpose of sending to the teacher to post for parents. Staff are not allowed to post pictures of students on any personal social media sites, share with people outside of COP, or for any other reasons. Release of any student photos/videos to the media requires a signed written release from the parent/guardian.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

Smoking is prohibited in all school buildings and in the vicinity of students while involved in school related activities. There is no vaping, chewing tobacco, drugs or alcohol allowed on school property or while on a school related activity.

Any staff prescriptions or over the counter medication need to be kept with personal belongings or locked in the classroom. COP is not responsible for any medication, therefore it is recommended that medication stays locked up.

Inclement Weather

Days lost to inclement weather shall be made up by ESD employees only when there is a legal obligation to do so.

All inclement weather days and PD are counted as "worked" days. On your timesheet, put hours in the "worked" column, but put "snow day" or "PD" in the comments.

No additional compensation for days rescheduled for inclement weather.

Employees will not be charged for prior arranged personal or sick days on days when classes are not held due to inclement weather.

Interactions with Parents and Students

To ensure families receive complete and consistent information, all questions or concerns from parents should be directed to the teacher. Paraprofessionals are encouraged to share brief, factual observations about a student's day, such as, 'Joey enjoyed art class today,' or, 'Please check the note sent home for more details.' This helps maintain clear communication while ensuring parents get the most accurate information about their child's progress.

Please remember to maintain a professional relationship with students and staff at all times. If encountering the student or family members within the school or the community, be professional and respectful as you represent the school district at all times. Know who is within earshot of your conversations in order to maintain confidentiality.

Interactions with Others

It is important to remain calm and present yourself in a positive manner at all times throughout the school day. Appropriate language is expected at all times towards students and other staff members. Demeaning students, staff or parents with words or actions is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

School Visitors

Classroom visits will be arranged by the teacher. There will be no visits allowed in the absence of the teacher with the exception of COP staff and others pre-arranged by the teacher.

All visitors must report and check into the school office prior to entering the classrooms.

Staff Children at School Functions

Staff children of any age are not permitted to attend any school activities, either within the building or on school-related outings and field trips without prior approval by the Supervisor of Special Education.

Employee Evaluations

- See Master Contract Language

Section 3: Emergency Protocol

The emergency protocol of the local buildings should be followed to provide a positive and safe learning environment for all students and staff.

Emergency Procedures:

It is the responsibility of all COP staff to familiarize themselves with all building emergency procedures for all critical incidents (i.e. lock down, secure mode, tornado drill, fire drill). All COP staff must follow local building procedures.

If you have any questions regarding emergency procedures, please ask your classroom teacher or classroom supervisor.

Section 4: Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is a framework for creating safe, positive, equitable schools, where every student can *feel valued, connected to the school community and supported by caring adults*. By implementing evidence-based practices within a PBIS framework, schools support their students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioral success, engage with families to create locally-meaningful and culturally-relevant outcomes, and use data to make informed decisions that improve the way things work for everyone. (pbis.org)

PBIS Fact Sheet

Each COP classroom developed a PBIS matrix centered around RISE (Respect, Independence, Safety and Effort). Be sure to review the classroom matrix that is housed in each classroom.

Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) techniques are used to de-escalate and manage student behavior to achieve positive outcomes. All COP staff are required to attend the initial training as well as a refresher course every year after.

Section 5: Student Transportation

Transportation Schedule

Classroom arrival and departure schedules followed as instructed by the classroom teacher.

Emergency Transportation Problems

When transportation emergency problems occur and students in the special education classroom are not picked up at the scheduled time, you may be asked to stay and help supervise students for health and safety reasons until transportation arrives. It is recommended that two staff people remain with students. Notify the supervisor if such a situation arises.

Loading/Unloading of Student Bus

- All staff are expected to assist in loading/unloading of students.
- If a student requires wheelchair positioning or special equipment, the staff is responsible until the student is on the bus.
- Once a student is on the bus, he/she should stay on the bus.
- Do not discuss confidential information with the bus driver and/or bus aide, unless the driver and/or aide needs to be aware of the information for the health and safety of the student.
- A student should never be removed from the bus forcibly.
- The bus driver should determine the need for priorities in loading students.
- The bus driver should inform the COP staff when priorities in loading are required.

Section 6: Student Information

Student Attendance

Daily attendance is to be taken and entered in PowerSchool.

The classroom supervisor should be notified of any pre-planned or prolonged student absences.

Medicaid Billing

Teachers and paraprofessionals are responsible for completing Medicaid Billing in EdPlan. The classroom teacher will determine the responsibility of the paraprofessional with this. Training will be provided by the COP administration or the admin assistants.

Confidentiality

Information about students and their families is strictly confidential under the Family Educational Rights and Protection Act. All classroom records are to be kept in secure areas.

Refer any person seeking information about students to the classroom teacher or program supervisor.

Sharing of student information or other classroom information with substitutes or classroom volunteers should be done on a need to know basis.

Section 7: Other Important Reminders

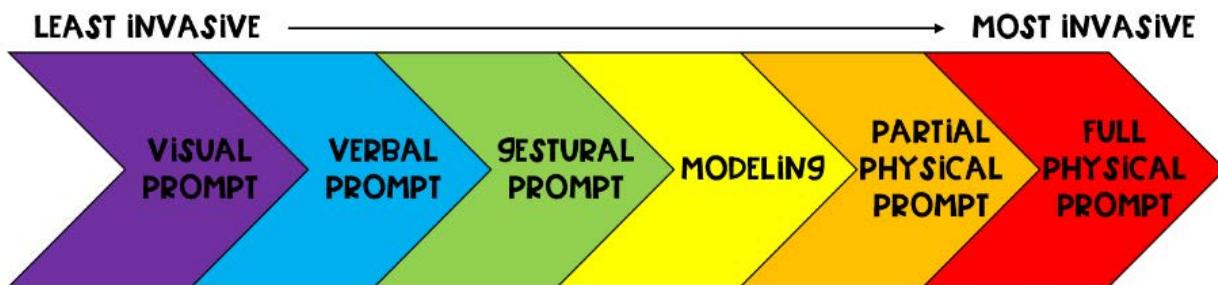
- Creating a safe learning environment must be everyone's top priority.
- At no time is a staff member to act in a manner that demeans a student or a group of students or other staff members.
- Being to work on-time, every time, is a minimum level job requirement.
- Be sure to complete an accident or incident report if there is an accident or serious incident. The forms can be found on the COPESD website.
- It is important to document, document, document.
- Much of the communication at COP is through email and it is important that everyone stays informed. Therefore, school email should be checked at least once a day.
- Making personal phone calls, using personal email, text messaging, and non-instructional internet use is to be done during non-student contact time. It is also important to remember that there is no privacy associated with electronic communication.
- The priority is to help the students learn and to keep them safe. Therefore, during instructional and non-instructional times (i.e. recess, free play,) the adults are to be interacting with the students, not on their phone or having personal conversations with other adults. The adults are responsible for the safety of the students. Therefore, if there is a lack of supervision, there could be legal consequences.
- Speak to students in an age appropriate manner. Older students should be spoken to like young adults. Be sensitive to those with significant processing problems and simplify your directions or use visual supports to clarify/communicate accordingly.
- Remember that the students have feelings too, even if they have difficulty expressing them. Do not say anything that you wouldn't want said to yourself or your children. Use positive and respectful communication at all times.
- “Do Unto Others...” Act as if it were YOUR child.
- Confidentiality is a must!

Section 8: Helpful Resources

Communication

Some students at COP Educational Service District can verbally discuss their wants and needs while others rely on nonverbal means of communication. In addressing all students, a few points are stressed:

- Use simple language (one and two stage commands, sentences of no more than seven to ten words in length are best).
- Accompany your speech with a gesture when appropriate.
- Precede your direction/instruction with the student's name to obtain his/her attention.
- When giving directions, use specific/explicit language. Define action i.e. "Please, sit at the carpet for reading" not "go over there."
- Wait for a response. Allow the student adequate wait time after giving a direction or asking a question. If the student needs additional prompting work from least to most invasive prompting as needed in order to assist the student. Reference prompt hierarchy below.



- If you do not understand the student's response, ask him/her to repeat the response or try to show you what he/she means through sign, gesture or taking you to the desired item.

Nonverbal Communication Supports and Strategies

Students with limited to no verbal communication may use non-verbal communication strategies to express their wants, needs, thoughts and jokes:

- Gestures
 - Nodding or shaking their head
 - Facial expressions (smile, frown)
 - Pointing
 - Reaching toward/touching preference
 - Showing and or taking a person to
 - Beckoning by tapping, clapping etc.
- Sign Language
- Eye Gaze
- Visuals
 - Yes/No Visual
 - Choice boards
 - Visual cues in the environment
 - Visual Schedule
- Use of Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC)
 - Single switch activated by touch to say a prerecorded phrase
 - CORE Board

- Mid to high tech voice output systems
- Written communication via print or typing

Suggestions for Transfer of Students in Wheelchairs

Avoid risking an injury to your back by using appropriate body mechanics and planning the move.

1. Plan the transfer before beginning and inform those who are assisting.
2. Explain to the student what you are doing before you do it.
3. Protect all special appliances (i.e. feeding tube, bags used for waste removal, etc.)
4. Encourage the student to assist whenever possible during the transfer, especially during weight-bearing.
5. For students who are unable to assist in the transfer, a two-person transfer or the use of a Hoyer lift is required.
6. Lock all wheels before starting transfer or lift to prevent slipping.
7. Use your leg muscles, not your back muscles; you must spread your feet, bend your knees and pivot your legs – do not twist your back.
8. Put the wheelchair at right angles and/or as close as possible to the surface being transferred to or from.
9. Avoid having the student grasp you around the neck.
10. In a standing transfer, get as close as possible to the student with your knees supporting the student's knees.
11. With a student who has a one-sided involvement, generally move the student toward his/her strong side while you assist the weak one.
12. Make sure you have enough help or proper assistive equipment for a safe student transfer.

COP CLASSROOM PROGRAMS HANDBOOK - 2025-26

I understand the contents of the COP Classroom Programs Handbook and have no questions.

I read the handbook and have the following questions/concerns regarding the handbook:

Staff Member Signature _____

Name of Staff Member Printed _____

Date _____

Please return this form to Josh Menkes no later than 10 days after your hire or the beginning of the school year.