

► Fitting In

Regardless of what job you do in your school district, it's important to build relationships with your fellowworkers and that's not only with fellow support staff. Getting to know the other staff members and the administration will help make your time at work more pleasant. Knowing what staff members do can help you better understand their specific needs.

The Supervisor

Assess your supervisor's style as soon as possible. Talk to your colleagues to get some idea of what he/she is like. At the same time, don't take everything you are told as the absolute truth. Don't make hasty judgments. Probably the best advice is to try to deal with as many things as possible on your own or with the help of the association. Reserve going to the supervisor for major issues.

The Principal

The principal may or may not be a factor in your daily work life but he/she is still someone to know. Follow the same advice for the principal as you would for your supervisor.

The Teachers

"Make friends before you need them," is good advice in dealing with the teachers in your building. Getting to know who teaches what and what their classroom rules are can make doing your job easier. It may sometimes feel as if teachers are just another level of supervisors above you. Remember-you all share the same concern-kids. Doing what's best for the teacher can also be what's best for the students.

The School Secretary

Many people consider the secretary to be one of the most important staff members. Secretaries can hold things together and keep the school running smoothly, even when no administrator is present. They can answer school-related questions, handle your paperwork for the district, and help you with emergencies. It's a good idea to get to know the secretaries. You can help them do their job by doing everything they request in a timely fashion.

The Custodian and Maintenance Staff

Like many other support staff employees, good custodians don't get paid nearly what they're worth. With their help, the building runs smoothly and efficiently. Find out what their specific job duties are. Can you change a light bulb or is that in their job description? If you have a concern about the cleanliness of a room, talk to them first before going to their supervisor.

The Cafeteria Staff

It seems that food service employees come with their own built-in reputation of being mean and never smiling. Yet every day they try to please everyone with a nutritious meal that many times relies on limited resources. If your work takes you into the food service area, know the rules and help these employees keep a safe and happy work environment.

The Paraprofessionals

In comparison to other support staff employees, this group probably has the most daily contact with students. The parapro may be your direct route into a teacher's classroom when there is a question or concern about a student or a classroom need. Find out who they are and what they do.

Library or Media Specialist

They are in charge of one of the most used areas in a school building. In addition to being a storehouse for all books and magazines, the media center may also be a place for meetings, to house technology and to serve as a classroom. The media specialist may also be the only person doing that job in the whole district.

The School Nurse

If your district or school is lucky enough to have a nurse on staff, you can help keep them informed of health-related situations you encounter. Many times support staff employees are more aware of bruises, upset stomachs and bloody noses than classroom teachers are.

The Bus Driver

Each day they perform the miraculous job of getting students safely to school and home again while driving a massive piece of machinery. Since their job demands that they stick to a schedule, their needs are usually urgent. Safety is their primary concern and they will do everything necessary to make sure that their bus is in the best working condition possible. Realize that the school bus is their classroom.

Security

In our school buildings, security officers stand on the front line, protecting students and staff. Security personnel help insure a safe learning environment for students, while also providing an outlet for them to express their concerns. With the rash of violence in schools across the country in recent years, school security has become more important than ever.

The School Board

They are your ultimate employers. They decide the rules and policies that run the school district. Find out who your board members are. Did you vote for one of them in the last election? Find out how he/she is doing by going to a board meeting.