



**JANUARY 2013**  
**UPDATE FOR DISTRICT**



**CONTACTS FOR PARAPROFESSIONAL ISSUES**  
*Improving Paraprofessional Practice: Lessons from Other States*

**“Substantial benefits can accrue for students and teachers when well conceived paraeducator supports are implemented.”-University of Vermont Researcher Michael Giangreco**

To support educators in ensuring that paraprofessionals are used appropriately, Michael Giangreco and his colleagues-with Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) support-developed *A Guide to Schoolwide Planning for Paraeducator Supports* (at <http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/parasupport>). This 10-step action planning process assists school-based teams in assessing their own status in terms of paraprofessional supports.

In Colorado, Challenger Middle School teacher Jami Finn, convened a team of herself (a significant support needs teacher), a resource teacher, paraprofessionals, general education teacher, administrator, and a parent. During a three month period, team members met bi-monthly to craft an action plan. The team identified a number of strategies to address paraprofessional concerns, including handbook and a Web site that included the following:

- Roles and responsibilities.
- Classroom organization and behavior management issues.
- Medical and safety issues.
- Orientation to the program philosophy and goals.
- Ethical issues.
- Curriculum goals.

**Training Teachers to Conduct Paraprofessional Professional Development Sessions**

With OSEP support, Nancy French developed the CO-TOP model for training teachers and other school professionals to supervise and provide professional development to paraprofessionals.

Samuel Palmer and Kathy Sweezy teachers at Eastern Suffolk New York BOCES, completed French’s training. In addition to using French’s curriculum content in the context of supervising paraprofessionals in their own classrooms, Palmer and Sweezy developed and teacher a course on paraprofessionals for teachers at SUNY-Stony Brook.

“Most teachers do not have experience setting up their classrooms to work as a team with paraeducators,” Palmer points out. “They need a range of skills from instructing paraeducators in how to use materials, to making written daily plans, to delegating responsibilities.” Sweezy adds, “We emphasize that working as a team means everybody is on the same page.”

*For other examples of state efforts to improve paraeducator practices, please refer to the CEC Improving Paraeducator Practices site at: <https://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=1855>.*

***2014 Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year***

This winter, information regarding the 2014 Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year Program will be sent to all Superintendents, Directors of Charter Schools, Executive Directors of Regional Educational Service Centers (RESC) and District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues. Information, along with the nomination packet will also be posted on the CSDE Paraprofessional Information and Resources page: [www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali).

This will be the second year of this program, which was established by the CSDE and the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council, to recognize the important role of the paraprofessional in supporting student achievement. The program honors one paraprofessional who has demonstrated exceptional skill and dedication in his/her job, thereby earning them the respect and admiration of students, teachers, administrators, coworkers, and parents. All district nominees, along with the 2014 Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year will be honored during the State Education Resource Center Paraprofessionals as Partners Conference on Wednesday, November 14, 2013.

*The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), established the District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraprofessionals and their supervisors. The focus of this newsletter is to provide resources for more effective teacher and paraprofessional collaboration.*



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## CONTACTS FOR PARAPROFESSIONAL ISSUES

### Paraprofessional's Guide to Data Collection

One method for assessing student behavior is the use of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). An FBA is a problem-solving process for addressing challenging student behavior by looking beyond the behaviors to assess the purpose that it serves. The assessment involves teacher, student, and family interviews as well as direct observations of student behavior. The data must be organized into at least three areas ("ABC"):

- (1) events before the behavior occurs (antecedents);
- (2) the conduct itself (behavior); and
- (3) events after the behavior (consequences).

ABC isn't the only type of observation method. The most commonly used are **frequency** and **duration**.

**FREQUENCY** is the number of times a behavior occurs within a specific period of time. It is better to use this method when it is easy to identify when the behavior starts and stops.

For example: "During the 5 minutes that Mary was waiting for the principal, she cursed at me four times."

**DURATION** is the amount of time a behavior occurs from beginning to end.

For example: "It took Sal 6 minutes to line up to leave the library when asked to do so."

When observing students, the teachers will let you know the target behaviors. They should also provide you with a data collection form and demonstrate how to collect the data.

An operational definition defines behavior as an observable, definable, countable, and measurable action:

- (1) **Observable**: must be able to see or hear the behavior.
- (2) **Definable**: two or more persons agree on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a behavior.

Carrying out observations and keeping data must be done objectively. It is very important to put down what is seen or heard, and to avoid anything that is stigmatized by personal perceptions of an individual or specific behavior. Objective observation means: watching events without being affected by personal biases/prejudices, watching what is happening without guessing at the reasons that cause the action, watching the activity without judging whether it is good or bad, and producing an objective record that states exactly what an observer sees and hears.

For more information regarding Paraprofessionals and Data Collection, please see the *Connecticut Paraprofessional's Guide to Data Collection* available on the CSDE Paraprofessional Information and Resources page: [www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali).

### Presentations from Past In-District and Statewide Conferences

The CSDE has begun to post presentations from past in-district and statewide conferences, on the Paraprofessional Information and Resources page: [www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali).

These presentations include:

*2012 SERC Paraprofessionals as Partners Conference: Effective Paraprofessional Supervision*

*2012 American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Connecticut Conference: Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) for Paraprofessionals*

*August 2012 Windham Paraprofessional Professional Development Session: The Acting Out Cycle*

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