

January 2014 Update for District Contacts for Paraeducator Issues

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

Fostering Engagement and Independence for All Learners Paraprofessionals Supporting Students with Disabilities

Date: Monday, February 10, 2014

Time: 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Audience:

Paraprofessionals supporting special education students

Cost: \$100

Participants will engage in a day-long training event designed to develop knowledge and strategies for supporting students in general education settings.

Included is a discussion about fostering engagement in academic tasks and fostering independence among learners, followed by several opportunities for participants to choose from a variety of breakout sessions. Topics will include understanding Common Core State Standards, supporting students with autism in the classroom, creating independent learners and understanding and supporting emotional and behavioral regulation. The day will conclude with a “make and take” opportunity to create tools to use with students for academic support, regulation and communication/organization.

To register, please go to the C.E.S Web site at:

www.ces.k12.ct.us/pdworkshops and click on the ProTraxx link.

For more information, please contact Sarah Hubert at huberts@ces.k12.ct.us or 203-365-8912.

“Paras are truly that glue that keep our schools together!!”

Paraeducator Needs Assessment Results

Thank you to those of you who participated in the *Paraeducator Needs Assessment* developed by the University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and the CSDE. We had 2,737 responses in all (about 20.4% participation based on the estimate of 13,391 instructional paras in CT). According to the results, the majority of the respondents:

- Have 10+ years experience;
- Have an educational level above high school;
- Are not certified teachers;
- Work with students, kindergarten through 4th grade;
- Work with more than one child at any one time;
- Support over 10 children overall;
- Work in the general education classroom;
- Support children who have individual education plans (IEPs);
- Work in the general education classroom;
- Support children who have IEPs;
- Have not seen the child’s IEP;
- Collaborate with a special education and general education teacher daily;
- Meet with a supervising teacher daily; and

The rest of the survey results will be posted later this month on the CSDE Paraeducator Information and Resources page: www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali.

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Why Train Paraeducators?

There are several compelling reasons for paraeducators to be well trained and qualified for the positions they hold.

Paraeducator to Student Ratio is Increasing Rather Dramatically

According to the 2011 report, “*Shifting Trends in Special Education*,” by Janie Scull and Amber M. Winkler, teacher-to-student ratio is flattening, if not declining slightly, and para-to-student ratio is increasing rather dramatically. In the last decade, there has been an increase of 326,000 special education paras to 430,000 special education paras.

Legislative Mandates

The 2004 Reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and the establishment of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requires states to address in-service and pre-service preparation of all personnel including paras. Training programs and job-embedded processes provide the knowledge and skills needed by the paraeducators and by those who oversee the use of paraeducator services.

Paraeducators Assist in the Delivery of Instructional and Related Services to Students

Paraeducators in schools need training in areas such as instructional methods, teamwork, behavior management, facilitating interactions with peers, use of technology, maintaining confidentiality, fostering independence in children and providing personal care.

Paraeducators work with Children with the Most Challenging Educational and Developmental Needs

In schools, which student populations across the country have increased in diversity, the emphasis on high academic standards and achievement has increased the need for individualized and intensive supports for students.

Trained Paraeducators Improve Student/Child Outcomes

When trained paraeducators work with children it leads to improved outcomes in terms of academic engagement, social interactions, inclusion with typical students, student independence and disruptive behavior.

Every program or district should have an annual staff development plan for paraeducators and for those who support paraeducators, which is based on a set of competencies such as those described in the *Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals*. Sound professional development decisions are determined through ongoing assessment of current practices, needs and intended outcomes. It is often helpful to initiate a comprehensive paraeducator training program by conducting a needs assessment. *The Assessment Checklist for Paraprofessionals* (ACP), developed by the State Education Resource Center (SERC) has its foundation in the content of this guideline document. The ACP is an informal assessment of the role, function and responsibilities of the paraeducator within a school or program. The intent of the instrument is to build capacity within PK-12 schools and/or districts regarding the training and support of paraeducators. Both, the *Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals* and the ACP are available for download on the CSDE Paraeducator Information and Resources page: www.ct.gov/sde/para-cali.