



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



TO: Clerk of the Senate
Clerk of the House of Representatives

FROM: Stefan Pryor
Commissioner of Education

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stefan Pryor", written over the printed name of the Commissioner of Education.

DATE: March 19, 2012

SUBJECT: Annual Report on Paraprofessionals

In accordance with Section 10-155k of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), enclosed is a copy of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Annual Report. Also, please note that by copy of this letter, I am distributing this report in accordance with C.G.S. Section 11-4a.

If you have any questions or require additional copies, please contact Shana Kennedy-Salchow at 860-713-6582. Thank you.

SP:iw
cc: Education Committee
Legislative Library
Office of Legislative Research
State Library

Enclosure

School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Annual Report

January 24, 2012

In 2006, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study of school paraprofessionals. Findings and recommendations were made in several areas affecting paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, including the development of a state credential, professional development, supervision, implementation of guidelines for paraprofessionals established by a previous state task force, and data collection. The study helped to illustrate how the role of the paraprofessional has changed from the time when paraprofessionals first began working in public schools many years ago. At that time, many paraprofessionals assisted teachers with clerical duties. Paraprofessionals now help to ensure students receive quality education time by assisting teachers in such areas as, classroom management, academic engagement, one-to-one instruction, reinforcement of skills, as well as personal care to children who are physically disabled. Many paraprofessionals reside in the community, in which they work; therefore, providing a valuable link between the community and the school.

For the past three years, the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council ("Council") as required by Section 10-155k of the Connecticut General Statutes, has met on a quarterly basis to provide the Commissioner of Education and the General Assembly the effectiveness of the content and delivery of existing training for paraprofessionals.

The members of this Council are as follows:

Regina Birdsell, Assistant Executive Director, CAS
Darlene Brodbeck, Teacher, ACES
Stefanie Carbone, Consultant, SERC
Marcia Cattanach, Paraprofessional, Hartford Public Schools, Representing AFT Connecticut
Ann P. Dombroski, Assistant Executive Director, ACES
Cheryl Kaiser, Teacher, Watertown Public Schools
Rhonda Kempton, Consultant, Bureau of Special Education, CSDE
Annie MacDonald, Paraprofessional, Wallingford Public School, Representing Connecticut Independent Labor Union
Anthony Maida, Assistant Executive Director, CES
Donna Morelli, Education Specialist, CREC
Kevin Murphy, Director, Collective Bargaining, AFSCME Council 4
Janet Scialdone, Program Coordinator, TABS, CREC
Craig Struble, Consultant, SERC
Ellen Tyler, Principal, Center School, Old Lyme
Bill Walkauskas, Paraprofessional, ACES, Representing CSEA
Loyola Welsh, Education Director and Steward Coordinator, CEUI/MEUI
Iris White, Consultant, Bureau of Accountability and Improvement, CSDE

During this time, the Council has worked on the following:

- assisted in the development of Connecticut State Department of Education (“CSDE”) resource materials for educators, including the Scientific Research-Based Interventions and paraprofessionals brief and provided guidance on the publishing of a monthly newsletter that has included important resources and provided information on many key professional development topics (e.g., assistive technology, creating student independence, and paraprofessionals and instructional support). The Council continues to explore avenues to ensure that this information is made available to educators in all districts;
- assisted in the development of surveys to districts which identified the professional development needs of instructional paraprofessionals and problem areas that may exist. This information has been used to inform statewide professional development offerings that meet the needs of paraprofessionals; and
- developed the Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year Program to recognize the important role of the paraprofessional in supporting student achievement.

Recognizing Governor Malloy’s pledge to make 2012 the year of school reform and supporting his commitment to improved teacher and administrator preparation and effectiveness, the Council submits the following recommendations:

1. Field experiences for teacher candidates should include opportunities to observe effective collaborative practices between teachers and paraprofessionals and the appropriate utilization of paraprofessionals in the classroom. Such field experiences will better prepare candidates to understand the appropriate roles of teachers and paraprofessionals, strengthening their ability to be collaborative partners with their colleagues. It will also support Domain 6 of the Common Core of Teaching: Professional Responsibility and Teacher Leadership, which references the teacher’s role in guiding and coaching paraprofessionals.
2. Collaboration with paraprofessionals should be integrated into The Teacher Educator and Mentoring Program. Module 5, which focuses on professional responsibilities and teacher leadership, would be an appropriate place to integrate the knowledge and skills teachers need to effectively communicate and collaborate with paraprofessionals. CSDE materials, such as, the *Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals and the Teacher Supervisory Checklist*, can be used as a resource for teachers as they complete the module.
3. Training programs for school administrators should include coursework on how to supervise and evaluate paraprofessionals. Coursework should also include a study of current legislation regarding required professional development and training for paraprofessionals. This recommendation will ensure that all administrators can effectively evaluate paraprofessionals and promote their ongoing professional

development. It will also ensure that administrators are aware of the importance of the roles and responsibilities of the paraprofessionals.

4. Districts should be encouraged to involve their paraprofessional workforce in regular professional development activities each school year aimed at ensuring that these staff members: 1) remain current on all instructional practices related to their assignments; and 2) continue to develop and enhance their instructional competencies in core areas (such as, working with students with autism, managing behavior, instructional strategies for students who are struggling, school climate, etc.). This recommendation would ensure that paraprofessionals would have the necessary tools to help students reach their academic potential.