



# Connecticut State Department of Education

## June 2013 Update for District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues

### CSDE Transitions to the Term “Paraeducator”

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study of school paraprofessionals in April 2006. The study focused on whether Connecticut should establish minimum standards for public school paraprofessionals who perform instructional tasks for students in kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) and whether different categories should be established for different duties. 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.

One of the committee’s recommendations was for the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to adopt the term “paraeducator” as the team conducting the study felt the title better captured the dimensions of the role. At that time, the CSDE felt it appropriate to retain the paraprofessional title because the term continued to be used in both, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA) of 2004 and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, legislation. Last year, The School Paraprofessional Advisory Council agreed with the legislative committee’s recommendation and with the CSDE’s approval, plans are now being made to transition to the term “paraeducator.”

Other organizations and states such as the National Resource Center for Paraeducators (NRCP), University of Vermont, Iowa, Utah, Washington, and Kentucky also now use the term. Today, many Connecticut schools and providers continue to use multiple terms (paraprofessional, paraeducator, instructional assistant) as a means to define job roles, responsibilities, compensation and benefit packages, and career leaders. These delineations are often helpful and may be reflected in contract language and policy and procedures for the program or school. Districts should continue to use the term(s) it feels are appropriate.

#### **SAVE THE DATE!**

*SERC’s 18th Annual Statewide Conference: Paraprofessionals as Partners*



Thursday, November 14, 2013, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cromwell

For more information, please contact Tyrese Bolden, 860-632-1485, x210

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**The NRCP held its 31st annual conference, April 18-20, 2013, in Salt Lake City, Utah. The NRCP was founded in 1979 with funding from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (currently the United State's Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs).** Their mission is to address policy questions and other needs of the field, provide technical assistance and share information about policy questions, management practices, regulatory procedures, and training models that will enable administrators and staff-developers to improve the recruitment, deployment, supervision, and career development of paraeducators. The NRCP hosts an annual national conference that provides training and dissemination of materials and information. This year's conference focused on the theme of Paraeducator/Teacher Teams and offered sessions on topics, such as: *Common Core State Standards 101 for Paraprofessionals*, *Essential Elements of Math Instruction for Students with Severe Disabilities*, *Bridging the Gap Between Communication and Behavior*, and a presentation from Dr. Peg MacDonald and Donna Morelli from the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) on "*Creating Relevant Learning Opportunities for Paraprofessionals Utilizing the Learning Forward Professional Development National Standards.*" Many of the presentations from the conference are now available on the Center's website: [www.nrepara.org](http://www.nrepara.org).

Anne Arendt presented a session on Open Educational Resources for Paraeducators. Open Education Resources include digitized materials offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use and reuse for teaching, learning and research. Some examples of these resources are below:

There are a number of sites that are resource repositories for educational videos: Teacher Tube <http://www.teachertube.com>.

Public Broadcasting Systems (PBS) Learning Media <http://www.pbslearningmedia.org> or YouTube Education at <http://www.youtube.com/education>.

Reference Materials: Another type of learning resource is the availability of reference materials. This includes items such as the Library of Congress Web site at: <http://www.loc.gov> or the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Web site at: <http://www.nasa.gov>. Examples can be found at sites such as Curriki at <http://www.curriki.org> which is specifically for K-12 resources.

To peruse a variety of open educational resource a good place to start may be OER Common, an open learning network where teachers can share and assess course materials, which can be found at <http://www.oercommons.org>.

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