

Strategies for Meeting Title and Special Education Paraprofessional Requirements

The recently reauthorized IDEA of 2004 restates the original requirements of IDEA. In addition, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) also applies requirements to certain paraprofessionals working with students with disabilities.

Specifically, special education paraprofessionals working in Title I School-wide programs must meet the requirements set forth in NCLB.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act -

IDEA (1997; 2004) states that paraprofessionals and assistants who are appropriately trained and supervised, in accordance with State law, regulation, or written policy, may assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities. In response to IDEA legislation, it is important to acknowledge the following, which was enacted in Minnesota rule in 1998. These requirements directly relate to Minnesota paraprofessionals working in Special Education.

MS125A.08(b) -

(b) For paraprofessionals employed to work in programs for students with disabilities, the school board in each district shall ensure that;

1. Before or immediately upon employment, each paraprofessional

develops sufficient knowledge and skills in emergency procedures, building orientation, roles and responsibilities, confidentiality, vulnerability, and reportability, among other things, to begin meeting the needs of the students with whom the paraprofessional works;

2. Annual training opportunities are available to enable the paraprofessional to continue to further develop the knowledge and skills that are specific to the students with whom the paraprofessional works, including understanding disabilities, following lesson plans, and implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities; and

3. A district wide process obligates each paraprofessional to work under the ongoing direction of a licensed teacher and, where appropriate and possible, the supervision of a school nurse.

No Child Left Behind Act -

NCLB (2001) provides three options for paraprofessionals who assist with instruction to meet the requirements as stated here:

Option A: Two years of study at an institution of higher education;
Minnesota's standard: A minimum of 60 semester credits or the amount required to complete two years of full time enrollment as determined by the institution attended;

OR

Option B: An Associate's (or higher) degree; Minnesota's standard: An AA, AS, AAS (or higher) degree;

OR

Option C:

A demonstration, through a formal state or local academic assessment:

- a. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and math; or
- b. knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness as appropriate.

Minnesota's standard (for C) can be met one of three ways:

1. A passing score on an assessment from the state approved list;*

OR

2. Demonstrating all Minnesota Paraprofessional Core Competencies (1-8) by local district validation of a portfolio through: transferable work experience, college courses, workshops and conferences, Para eLink and demonstration of skill using Para eLink or a similar curriculum that focuses on recent training addressed in Competency 9 of Reading, Math and Writing.

OR

3. A state approved local assessment.** (criteria listed below)

*The ParaPro test has been approved for statewide use. The cut score for ParaPro is 460.

**Criteria for Local Assessments:

A local assessment must satisfy the following criteria, and be submitted to the Minnesota Department of Education for approval: Reliable, valid, accessible, objective, comparable to two years of higher education, and able to measure knowledge and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and math (or reading, writing and math readiness) in the language of instruction. Local Education Agencies interested in this option may choose to explore assessments, which meet local needs. Examples of current local choices include "WorkKeys" and "Accuplacer." Requests for approval of a local assessment should be sent to the Commissioner.

Paraprofessional Resources:

Legislation – Federal and State

Minnesota Core Competencies

Paraprofessional Website

<http://ici2.umn.edu/para/>

Para eLink - Web Based Curriculum

Portfolio / eFolio

ParaPro Assessment

Teachers Directing the Work of Paraprofessionals

<http://ici2.umn.edu/para/teachers>

Paraprofessional WEEK, January 17- 21, 2005

State Conference, April 29-30, 2005

Para Trainer Conference, coming '06