We have been working diligently to understand the impact of the new requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) for paraprofessionals working in Title I school-wide programs and those whose positions are paid with Title I, Part A funds. The federal government recently provided some more guidance regarding these requirements. Our Winter 2002 ParaLink outlined the requirements which we will briefly summarize here as well as provide some additional information. In addition to describing the Federal requirements, we will describe Minnesota's current response.

Background on the NCLB Act
First authorized in 1965, the federal legislation now referred to as the NCLB Act has gone by various names including Title I, Chapter One, ESEA, and the Improving America's Schools Act. Through all of these name changes, this law has always allowed the use of funds for paraprofessionals to support instruction in the classroom. Furthermore, for many years, Title I programs mandated training for paraprofessionals.

The NCLB Act defines “paraprofessional” as an individual who per-

2002 Paraprofessional of the Year, Rose Coykendall, with Barbara Jo Stahl (middle) and Teri Wallace (right). See story on page 4.
The No Child Left Behind Act, continued from cover

Paraprofessionals...a critical link

The No Child Left Behind Act, continued page 11

forms instructional support duties. The law states that a paraprofessional must work under the direct supervision of a teacher, which means that the teacher plans the paraprofessional’s instructional activities and evaluates the students with whom the paraprofessional works. In addition, the paraprofessional must work in close proximity to the teacher.

The NCLB Act pertains to all paraprofessionals working in Title I school-wide programs. This means that a paraprofessional funded with special education resources who is providing instructional duties must meet the requirements of the law. However, paraprofessionals who do not have instructional duties (for example, paraprofessionals who provide only parent involvement or translation services) are not included in the definition of “paraprofessional” in this legislation and thus do not need to meet the requirements of the law.

All paraprofessionals funded by Title I, regardless of their position or responsibilities, must have a high school diploma or GED. In addition, there are three options offered in the law for ensuring that paraprofessionals are prepared for their jobs — a 2-year degree is not the only option. New paraprofessionals must meet these requirements, and current paraprofessionals must meet them by January 8, 2006.

NCLB Requirements for Paraprofessionals

A. Completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education;
B. Obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree; or
C. Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment —
   i. Knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics; or
   ii. Knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

During Spring 2002, 30 Title I practitioners (teachers, coordinators, paraprofessionals) met to define a set of competencies that would align with option C above. The competencies are listed below.

Paraprofessional Competencies

- Knowledge of the paraprofessional’s role and function in the specific academic setting.
- Awareness of Minnesota Graduation Standards, including state, district, and site testing.
- Awareness of factors that
Nomination Reminders

Para of the Year
Now is your chance to nominate an outstanding person for Para of the Year! Please include the following information —

Part 1
1. Name of Para
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years as a para
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator’s address/phone

Part 2
1. Exemplary work skills such as —
   • Communicating effectively
   • Listening attentively
   • Taking initiative
   • Understanding his or her role in the school community/work setting
2. Unique characteristics —
   • Contributions to the school/work environment
   • Differences made in the lives of students or clients
   • Professional development
3. Include statements of support from students, parents, teachers, and/or peers

Para/Teacher Team of the Year
Now is your chance to nominate a positive instructional relationship for Paraprofessional/Teacher Instructional Team of the Year! Please include the following information —

Part 1
1. Names of the members of the Para/Teacher Instructional Team
2. Where employed
3. Work address/phone
4. Number of years each member has been employed as a para/teacher
5. Number, type, and age of students/clients served
6. Name of Nominator
7. Nominator’s address/phone

Part 2
1. How this para/teacher team exhibits a positive, effective working relationship including —
   • Clear and open communication
   • Respect for each other and students
   • Shared educational philosophy
   • Understanding of team role definition and expectations
2. Characteristics or qualities that set this team apart —
   • Contributions to the school/work environment
   • Differences made in the lives of students
3. Include statements of support from students, parents, teachers, administration, and/or peers.

Applications accepted until March 28, 2003
Mail or fax this information to —
Teri Wallace, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, 111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455
Fax (612) 624-9344
Para of the Year, 2002
Rose Coykendall: A Mentor for Students, Paraprofessionals, and Teachers

If you looked up the definition of “mentor” in the dictionary, you would read the following: a wise and trusted counselor or teacher. Peers and students describe Rose Coykendall as a mentor, advocate, and respected paraprofessional at Lakeview Elementary in Robbinsdale. Rose does more than simply work with students in the classroom. She recognizes the strengths and successes of each student, as well as those of other paraprofessionals in the school. When I asked Rose what keeps her going, she replied, “It is my hope I have made a difference for a child or for the teachers I work with.”

A Mentor for Students
Rose has been a special education assistant in the Robbinsdale Schools for the past 24 years. When asked why she became a paraprofessional, Rose responded, “My dream was to be a full-time mom. The job of a para seemed to be as close to achieving that goal as I could find. Secondly, I made a promise to my niece, who struggled for life every day of her short life, that I would try to help children with disabilities.”

Rose sees the potential in each student and devotes herself to his/her success. She helps to adapt and modify her students’ work in the classroom, so they can reach their full potential and be successful. Lisa Marie Rye, a physical education teacher at Lakeview, said, “Rose is a positive and enthusiastic person, a trait that inspires and motivates her students.” Cheryl Gustafsen, special education teacher at Lakeview, said of Rose, “When working with the children she exemplifies the ideal—showing love, concern, firmness, calmness, and persistence.”

When Rose reflects back on her experience as a special education assistant, she says, “The expression on a child’s face when they do well, the note, hug, or compliment they give is the most rewarding.”

A Mentor for Paraprofessionals
When Rose started working as a paraprofessional, she made the decision to be proactive. At the beginning of her career, schools did not offer staff training or continuing education or include paraprofessionals in staff development. Rose felt that paraprofessionals could not be an integral part of the education delivery process without such supports available to them. Her involvement in the Paraprofessional Union and the

Para of the Year, continued on back cover

Rose Coykendall, 2002 Minnesota Paraprofessional of the year receiving her reward.
Recent changes in federal legislation, in the form of the 1997 Amendment to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, require that paraprofessionals be trained to perform special education services and to work in Title I programs. These changes have resulted in increased attention to the development of training programs for paraprofessionals. Minnesota has a long history of working on issues facing paraprofessionals. The Minnesota Department of Children, Families, & Learning (CFL) spearheaded the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium nearly 13 years ago in collaboration with the Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota. Since then, the Consortium has provided leadership in the development of an infrastructure to support paraprofessionals.

What is Para eLink?
Para eLink is an online curriculum for training paraprofessionals in the Minnesota Paraprofessional Competencies. It takes a structured approach to online training; the curriculum relies on a facilitator to guide both its online and face-to-face components. Para eLink is based on a hybrid model that includes real-time facilitated group work—in a classroom or a chatroom—and asynchronous, self-directed work, such as e-mail-based activities, discussion board postings, or reading material and then taking an interactive quiz at home.

Principles of Para eLink
- Competency-based content
- Documentation of competencies
- Facilitator required
- Flexible content
- Increased number of learning choices and opportunities
- Interactivity
- “Just-in-Time” training
- Minimal technology requirements: free software and basic Internet connection
- Resource section to promote further exploration
- School- and district-based activities
- Technical section for general requirements
- Time and location flexibility

Minnesota Paraprofessional Competencies
Minnesota has developed a set of core competencies required of all paraprofessionals working with students in Minnesota schools. In addition, several areas requiring additional
knowledge and skill have been identified and related competencies articulated. Altogether, these competencies provide the basis of Para eLink.

**Core Competency Areas**

1. Philosophical, Historical, and Legal Foundations of Education
2. Characteristics of Learners
3. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation
4. Instructional Content and Practice
5. Supporting the Teaching and Learning Environment
6. Managing Student Behavior and Social Interaction Skills
7. Communication and Collaborative Partnerships
8. Professional and Ethical Practices

**Specialized Competency Areas**

1. Early Childhood
2. Transition to Work and Adult Life
3. Behavior Management
4. Academic Program Assistants (Title I)
5. Physical and Other Health Impairments
6. Autism

**General Benefits of Online Learning**

Online learning offers new and exciting benefits. It provides an increased number of learning choices and opportunities as well as time and location flexibility. Furthermore, online learning is particularly well suited to address learning style differences, to reinforce classroom or on-the-job training, and to provide opportunities for both individual and group work.

**Tips for Para eLink Users**

The following are beliefs, understandings, and skills that Para eLink users should have (or acquire in the course of the training) in order to be successful with the curriculum:

- Willingness and interest in professional development
- Motivation to be a self-directed learner
- Basic knowledge of computers, including use of e-mail and Internet access
- Satisfactory communication skills and the willingness to use them in person, in writing, and online
- Capability to adapt to group and individual learning strategies
- Ability to advocate for own learning needs

**Interested in Facilitating Para eLink?**

Facilitators should be people who conduct staff development, direct the work of paraprofessionals, or teach in higher education. Facilitators should be able to document whether or not paraprofessionals achieve certain competencies.

Facilitators should participate in a facilitator training session. If you are interested in the facilitator training, there is a list being established. Please send an email message to Teri Wallace at walla001@umn.edu indicating your interest and you will be informed of upcoming training opportunities. Please note that space is limited and many people are interested. We are working hard to make facilitation opportunities available.

Contributed by the Para eLink original design team: Teri Wallace, Zoe Cohen, Donna Patterson, Kristin Moffitt, and Marianne Fillhouer.
Call for Presentations

“A Critical Link”
Each year, the Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Conference is attended by over 500 people, including paraprofessionals and those who support their work.

Who Can Present?
The Minnesota Statewide Paraprofessional Consortium is seeking presenters to share strategies/insights which will help prepare paraprofessionals and those who support them to provide quality services to students in the new millennium. Send in your proposal today! (Presenters will receive a $25 stipend plus a mileage reimbursement.)

Dates and Locations
This conference will be held on April 25-26 (Friday evening and Saturday) at Ridgewater College in Hutchinson, Minnesota. Hutchinson is approximately one hour west of Minneapolis.

Conference Structure
There will be two general sessions for all participants and various presentation sessions which participants can choose to attend. The presentations are approximately 50 minutes, and will be on both Friday evening and Saturday.

The conference is initiated by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, and sponsored by professionals and paraprofessionals from Ridgewater College, the Institute on Community Integration (UCE) at the University of Minnesota, AFSCME, EC SU, MVASNP, MSEA, and Education Minnesota.
"A Critical Link" Call for Presentations

Title of presentation
as it will appear in the conference program

Intended audience
- Paraprofessionals/Aides/Assistants/Direct
- Service Staff
- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- Other ______________________________

Brief description of content
Limit to 100 words. Please note: Please make sure that you state the title and the objectives of the presentation. This is the description that will be printed in the program.

Audio/visual equipment
Please check which A/V equipment you will need —
- Overhead projector
- Flipchart or Chalkboard
- VCR and Monitor
- Slide projector
- Other ______________________________

Selection process
Presentation will be scheduled on the basis of relevance to the conference target audience and balance of topics for the indicated tracks. You will be informed of your status by March 1, 2003.

Proposals must be submitted by
February 14, 2003

Thank you for your interest!
Workshops

Mark Your Calendars Now for These Upcoming Conferences!

**Potpourri For Paras and Providers**, February 8, 2003, St. Cloud Technical College, St. Cloud. A regional conference for paras, child care providers, respite-care providers, foster-care providers, school-age providers, and others who care for children with special needs. Keynote speaker is Pete Feigal presenting “A Gift to be Opened, Not a Problem to be Solved.” Breakout sessions include Exploring Temperaments, ADHD, Early Childhood Mental Health, Disability Awareness, Seizure Disorders, and Anger in School-Age Care. Registration fee: $25. For more info, call Sue Martin at 320-202-1941 or 877-251-7272 (toll-free).


**The Council for Exceptional Children’s Annual Convention and Expo,** April 9-12, 2003, Seattle, Washington. In addition to the latest in professional development opportunities for teachers, administrators, and related service providers, the convention and expo will also feature an address by Ted Kennedy, Jr. Preconvention registration rates available until March 13. For more info, visit the CEC Web site at http://www.cec.sped.org/seattle/index.html or contact: CEC, 1110 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201 (1-888-232-7733).

**The 11th Annual Statewide Conference for Paraprofessionals**, April 25-26, 2003, Ridgewater College, Hutchinson. Paras attending this conference will learn about new strategies to assist them in their jobs and network with other paras. Paras attending this conference will earn Continuing Education Units. This conference was initiated by the Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, and is sponsored by the Institute on Community Integration (UCE) at the University of Minnesota, Ridgewater College, ECSU, MSEA, AFSCME, MVASNP, and Education Minnesota. For more info, visit the Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium Web site at http://ici2.umn.edu/para.

**The 22nd National Conference on the Training and Employment of Paraprofessionals in Education, Rehabilitation, and Related Services**, May 1-3, 2003, Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites, Los Angeles, California. Attendees will learn about new dimensions in the roles, preparation, supervision, and career mobility for the para workforce. Call for papers available at http://www.nrcpara.org. For info regarding registration, content, or the opportunity to present, contact Marilyn Likins, National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals, Utah State University, at 435-797-PARA or info@nrcpara.org.
Web Sites on E-Learning

The National Education Association reports on distance learning in higher education, but the research and technology information is transferable to K-12 learning. Visit http://www.nea.org/he/about/he/distance.html.


New Para-Related Publications from the Institute on Community Integration

Paraeducators Supporting Students with Disabilities and At-Risk is the topic of the Fall 2002 issue of the Institute’s quarterly newsletter Impact. This issue explores the growing role of paraeducators in our schools, describing some of their challenges and offering guidance and success stories in the areas of training, teamwork, supervision, and professional development. First copy free, additional copies $4. For more info or to order, call the Institute on Community Integration at 612-624-4512, email publications@icimail.umn.edu, or visit http://ici.umn.edu/products/newsletters.html.

Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Role of the Paraprofessional is part of the “Strategies for Paraprofessionals Who Support Individuals with Disabilities” series, a curriculum series for training paraeducators who work with students with disabilities. This module offers information on the needs and learning styles of K-12 students with Autism Spectrum Disorders. $25 for facilitator (trainer) manual, $15 for student (paraprofessional) manual. For more info or to order, call the Institute on Community Integration at 612-624-4512, email publications@icimail.umn.edu, or visit http://ici.umn.edu/products/curricula.html.

Supporting Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Schools: A Curriculum for Job-Embedded Paraprofessional Development gives special educators a resource for teaching paraprofessionals to work with students with disabilities. Topics include prompting, waiting, fading, natural cues; consequences; supports; and adaptations. $35. For more info or to order, call the Institute on Community Integration at 612-624-4512, email publications@icimail.umn.edu, or visit http://ici.umn.edu/products/curricula.html.
influence cognitive, social, emotional and physical development.

• Understanding of and respect for the diverse backgrounds of students.

• Knowledge and ability to use educational terminology related to specific programs or age levels.

• Ability to instruct students in academic subjects using lesson plans and instructional strategies developed by education practitioners.

• Ability to gather and record data about the performance and behavior of individual students.

• Ability to confer with education practitioners about individual student schedules, instructional goals, progress, and performance.

• Ability to use developmental and age-appropriate instructional methods and reinforcement techniques.

• Ability to effectively use available instructional resources including technology, as directed by the education practitioner.

• Understand various learning styles and assist in the implementation of corresponding teaching methods (e.g., reading, writing, mathematics). For example, pre-teach and/or re-teach students to apply strategies for drafting, revising, and editing their writing.

• Demonstrate a basic knowledge of reading, writing, or mathematics.

• Demonstrate the use of resources in responding to writing, reading or mathematics problem or task.

By the beginning of the 2003-2004 school year, the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, & Learning expects to have in place:

• A set of competencies that describe what Title 1 paraprofessionals should know and be able to do if they are assisting students in reading, writing, and/or mathematics.

• Criteria and protocols for assessments to measure paraprofessionals’ knowledge of content and instructional strategies, including a proposed assessment instrument.

• A curriculum that delineates the academic preparation necessary to meet the Title 1 requirement of “a rigorous standard of quality” for paraprofessionals.

Check the following for additional information.

• The Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning Web site: http://cfl.state.mn.us/LOD/titel1/paraprofessional.html

• The MN Paraprofessional Consortium Web site: http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para


We know that the preparation of our staff impacts the success of our children. The requirements of the NCLB Act help to ensure that preparation.

Contributed by Teri Wallace, Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
Para of the Year, continued from page 4

Educational Assistant Bargaining Unit has allowed her to advocate for paraprofessional training and better health benefits.

Rose has also been a role model for her fellow paras. Karen Benson, an education assistant at Lakeview, says, “She has been a mentor to me in helping with solutions and ideas to try to make students feel better about themselves.”

A Mentor for Teachers

When Rose works in the classroom, not only does she work with her students, but she also takes on the responsibility of adapting lessons so students can be successful. Mitzi Litman, Lakeview, sums up Rose’s dedication to students:

“Rose is determined to have the best program possible for the students of Lakeview School even if she has to organize everything herself.”

Mitzi Litman, Colleague

Mitzi Litman, Colleague and education: “Rose is determined to have the best program possible for the students of Lakeview School even if she has to organize everything herself.”

As a mentor to the students, paraprofessionals, and teachers at Lakeview, Rose is continuously reflecting on her work. She says, “I always have tomorrow to exercise what I have learned or failed to accomplish today.”

Contributed by Kristin Moffitt, Graduate Research Assistant.