

## **Title I Paraprofessional Requirements and Standards**

### **Purpose**

The following guidance is intended to clarify the qualification requirements for instructional paraprofessionals in all Title I, part A programs. Additionally, this guidance provides further information about local assessment options that LEAs may use to evaluate a candidate's qualifications. This information ultimately will support LEAs in maintaining compliance with Title I regulations, and in hiring individuals with the capacity to assist students most in need.

### **Paraprofessionals in Title I programs**

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I, part A statute requires instructional paraprofessionals to meet specific qualifications in order to support the academic growth of students most at risk. This statute prohibits LEAs from hiring individuals into an instructional paraprofessional role prior to meeting one of the established criteria.

Paraprofessional qualifications may be determined at the local level, but they must minimally meet the federal requirements for Title IA instructional paraprofessionals as shown below:

1. All Title IA instructional paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent.
2. In addition, Title IA instructional paraprofessionals must also have:
  - a. Completed at least 2 years of study (defined as a minimum of 48 credit hours) at an institution of higher education; or
  - 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, mathematics; and
    - ii. Knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate.

The latter option (2.c.) may be fulfilled through standardized assessments such as ParaPro, The Master Teacher Learning Network, or through a locally-developed portfolio or other evaluative process. LEAs may also choose to accept comparable qualifying documentation from other school districts or states.

### **Contact Information:**

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact:

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The above requirements apply to any paraprofessional working in a Title IA program. This includes all instructional paraprofessionals in a school operating a schoolwide program, and any instructional paraprofessional funded with Title IA dollars in a school operating a targeted assistance program.

### **Working with candidates who do not meet Title I qualifications**

In a case where an individual has not met the Title I, part A qualification before hire, the LEA/school must hire the candidate into a non-instructional role. Individuals may not be contracted as an instructional paraprofessional in a Title IA program before meeting the above requirements. Roles that classify as non-instructional may be a personal aide, family engagement liaison, temporary substitute, or another role that works in the school but *does not provide direct instruction to students*. A non-instructional role will provide an opportunity for the candidate to learn the routines and systems of the school while familiarizing themselves with student needs.

Individuals may remain in this preliminary role during an initial probationary period established by the LEA. A supervisor teacher or other administrator may be responsible for assisting the paraprofessional candidate in the non-instructional role with developing their expertise, preparing for and passing an established written assessment, performing a live assessment or building a portfolio to demonstrate they have gained the necessary skills to be promoted into the role of an instructional paraprofessional. This paraprofessional preparation pathway develops the skills needed to be successful as an instructional paraprofessional within Vermont's Title I schools.

### **Optional framework to assess paraprofessional candidates**

The Vermont Agency of Education team has developed recommended standards and a rubric tool to support Vermont LEAs with evaluating candidates for instructional paraprofessional positions in Vermont's Title I schools. This evaluation framework aims to provide a pathway for individuals to qualify as instructional paraprofessionals through an alternative to the ParaPro or other common written assessment exams. These standards may be used as a framework by the LEA to ensure each instructional paraprofessional is able to support the achievement of Vermont students, in particular those most vulnerable in need of support.

LEAs have the option to adapt and use the Title I [Paraprofessional Assessment Framework](#) to assess an individual candidate's qualifications for an instructional paraprofessional position. If an individual demonstrates proficiency with the standards through previous experience, education, training and/or content knowledge, they may be hired into an instructional paraprofessional role directly. For individuals who have not yet met proficiency in all required areas, LEAs may decide to hire that individual into a probationary, non-instructional position initially, while supporting their professional development as the candidate works towards attaining the required Title IA qualifications.

## **Addendum:**

### **Vermont Title I Paraprofessional standards**

#### **Standard One: Learner Development**

The Paraeducator understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas and engages in developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences under the supervision of licensed staff. Effective Paraeducators:

- a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of how students learn and adjust instructional supports (including strategies, equipment, materials, technology, etc.) to meet students' intellectual, social and behavioral development needs.
- b. Collaborate with classroom teachers, special educators, and other professionals as needed to promote learner growth and development.
- c. Demonstrate an ability to assist students at their developmental stage and report student concerns or risk factors to certificated staff or supervisor.
- d. Demonstrate an awareness of student emotion, and the skill to help direct or express a student's emotions, thoughts, impulses, and stress in constructive ways.
- e. Respect students' differing strengths and needs and are committed to using this information to further each student's development.

#### **Standard Two: Learning Differences**

The Paraeducator uses an understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards. Effective Paraeducators:

- a. Seek to understand students' differentiated needs, including those associated with disabilities, and use individualized strategies and resources to provide developmentally and age-appropriate instructional support for individual students.
- b. Demonstrate an ability to assist in administration of work, assessments, and monitoring of student progress as directed by certificated/licensed staff.
- c. Respect learners as individuals with differing personal, family, and linguistic backgrounds and various skills, abilities, perspectives, talents, and interests.
- d. Access credible resources to extend and expand their own understanding of how race, culture, gender identity, wealth, and exceptionalities impact students' education.
- e. Recognize that individual students' experiences with school and society are impacted by their identity, and that considerations of these factors are essential to creating opportunities that maximize and celebrate their strengths.

#### **Standard Three: Learning Environments**

The Paraeducator works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. Effective Paraeducators:

- a. Communicate verbally and nonverbally in ways that demonstrate respect for and responsiveness to the backgrounds and differing perspectives students bring to the learning environment.
- b. Demonstrate an ability to implement behavior support systems/strategies as directed by certificated staff or supervisor.
- c. Protect the health and safety of oneself and others by knowing and executing health, safety, and emergency protocols/procedures with fidelity.
- d. Use knowledge of individual's strengths and interests to encourage engagement in varied school and community activities as determined by the instructional team.
- e. Demonstrate the ability to assist students to access family, school, and community resources of support.
- f. Recognize purposes, benefits, and limitations of adaptive equipment, are trained to use student adaptive equipment correctly, and support students to use such equipment independently where possible.

#### **Standard Four: Supporting Instructional Strategies in Content Areas**

The Paraeducator has basic knowledge of instructional strategies across various content areas and supports the teacher in providing meaningful learning experiences for students. Effective Paraeducators:

- a. Demonstrate proficiency in academics including oral and written communication, literacy, and mathematical skills appropriate to the assignment.
- b. Use developmentally and age-appropriate reinforcement techniques to facilitate student learning of vocabulary, skills and knowledge identified as essential by content area teachers.
- c. Use multiple representations and explanations that capture key ideas in the discipline, and guide learners through learning progressions.
- d. Make responsive adjustments to instructional support consistent with professional development guidelines as determined by the instructional team.
- e. Facilitate learners' independent use of tools and resources to maximize content learning in varied contexts.
- f. Collaborate with licensed staff to facilitate learning experiences based on collected and observed data on individual student strengths and needs.

#### **Standard Five: Professional and Ethical Practice**

The Paraeducator demonstrates an ability to maintain a high level of ethical behavior, confidentiality, and privacy with information regarding all job-related matters, and conducts oneself as a professional team member. Effective Paraeducators:

- a. Maintain the distinctions in the roles and responsibilities of teachers, paraeducators, administrators, families, and other team members.
- b. Adhere to confidentiality as consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, policies, procedures, and professional ethics.
- c. Implement legal and ethical practices in behavioral interventions as determined by the instructional team.
- d. Model appropriate academic, professional, social, and conflict-management skills for students and colleagues.
- e. Collaborate with licensed staff in supporting students through effective communication and positive relationships with staff, students, and families.
- f. Provide accurate and timely information about students' academic, social, emotional and health requirements to individuals who have the need and right to know as determined by the instructional team.