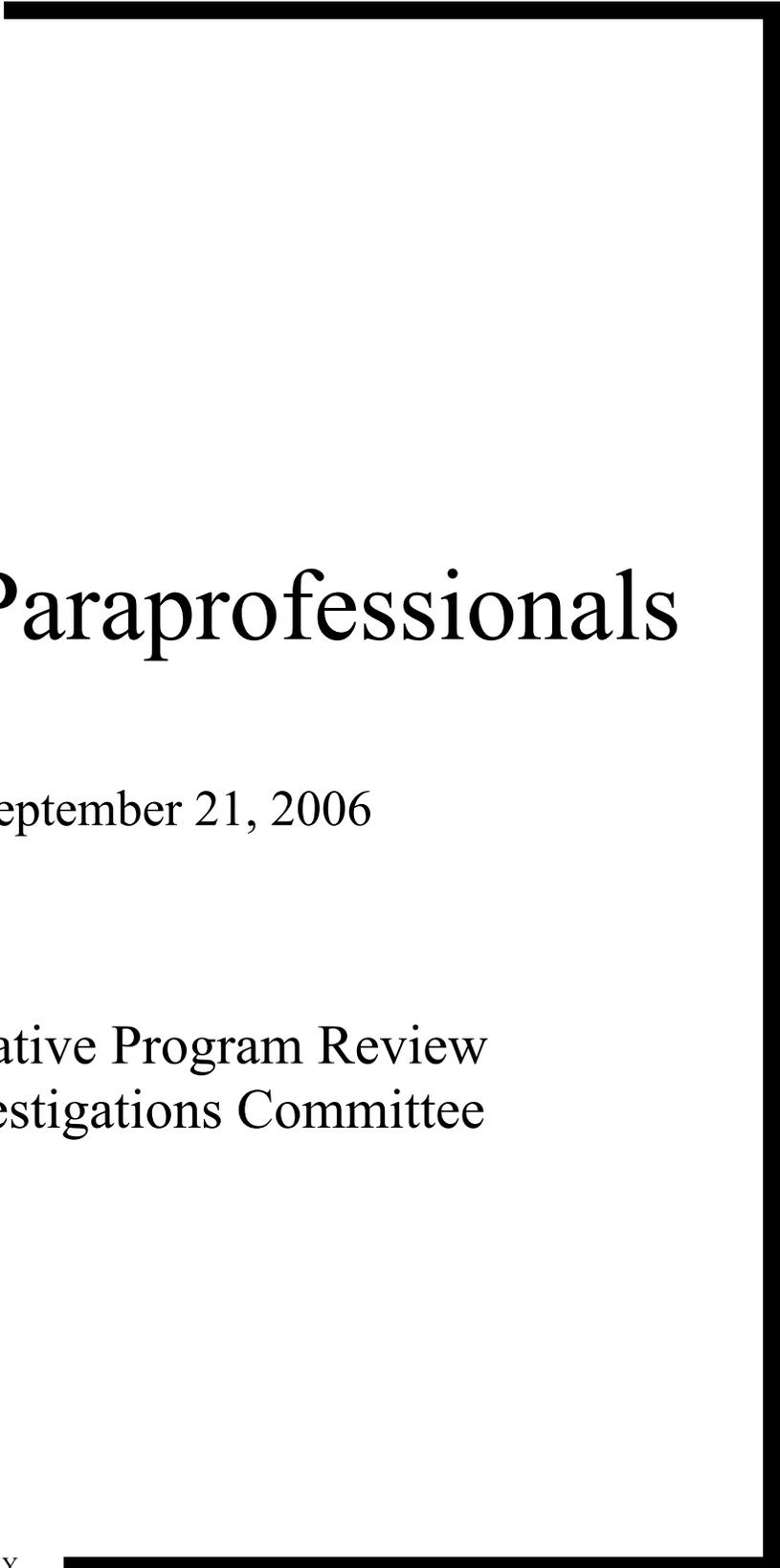


Staff Briefing



School Paraprofessionals

September 21, 2006

Legislative Program Review
& Investigations Committee

Introduction

School Paraprofessionals

In public school classrooms across the country, certified teachers work with noncertified employees who help deliver instructional and related support services to students under the supervision of the teachers. This arrangement is intended to give the teachers more time to spend on activities such as lesson planning and direct teaching.

The individuals providing the support services are often referred to as paraprofessionals, sometimes with modifiers such as building, classroom, educational, instructional, or special education in front of the word paraprofessional. Other job titles are also used for people in these positions. Frequently used titles include instructional aide, instructional assistant, paraeducator, and teacher's assistant. Table 1 lists commonly used titles for paraprofessionals in Connecticut, where approximately 12,000 people are employed annually by public school districts in these instructional-related jobs.

Table 1. Other Job Titles Used For Paraprofessionals In Connecticut	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educational Assistant• Instructional Aide/Assistant• Library Aide/Assistant• Media Assistant• Paraeducator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reading Assistant• Special Service Aide• Teacher Aide/Assistant• Teaching Assistant• Tutor

Federal Standards

In 2002, federal legislation established minimum education standards for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in certain programs or schools that receive federal Title I funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). (See Appendix A for a description of the provisions of that law.) In broad terms, such employees must have at least two years of college or pass a formal assessment. Newly hired employees have to meet the federal standards immediately, while existing paraprofessionals were given until 2006 to fully comply.

Some states in the country also have their own education and experience requirements for at least some school paraprofessionals, but Connecticut is not one of those states. However, local school districts in Connecticut can set standards for their employees, and some districts do have minimum education or experience requirements for paraprofessionals. For example, a few districts now require all newly hired paraprofessionals providing instructional services to meet the federal Title I requirements, even if the position is not covered by the federal law. Other districts indicate a preference for specific educational credentials, such as a certain number of college credits, or require prior experience working with children.

Scope of Study

In April 2006, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI) voted to study public school paraprofessionals. The scope of the study is focused on

paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who work with students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). The definition of a *paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities* being used in this study is:

a noncertified, school-based employee who works under the direct supervision of a teacher or other certified professional educator and who assists the teacher or other professional educator with the delivery of instructional and related support services to students.¹

The primary focus of the committee's review is on whether the state should establish minimum standards for public school paraprofessionals who perform instructional tasks. (Although the term *paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities* is used throughout this document, the intent is to include all noncertified instructional staff who perform the same functions, regardless of their job title.) The committee is looking at whether different categories of requirements should be established for different duties and what the estimated costs of any new requirements might be to those working as paraprofessionals, those employing paraprofessionals, and those overseeing compliance with the standards.

Methodology

The program review committee staff is compiling information about school paraprofessionals in Connecticut as well as other states. Resources include local school districts, the State Department of Education (SDE), federal education agencies, private organizations, and academic literature. The primary tools used to obtain Connecticut specific information are two data collection forms and a series of interviews.

Data collection forms. In order to understand the current use and status of paraprofessionals in Connecticut and evaluate the impact of potential changes that the committee might propose, data about the geographic distribution, qualifications, day-to-day duties, professional development, and compensation (i.e., wages and benefits) of existing school paraprofessionals are being compiled. Although some of this information is available from reports filed annually with SDE by local school districts, the key sources of information being used in this study are responses to two data collection forms developed and distributed by program review staff this summer.

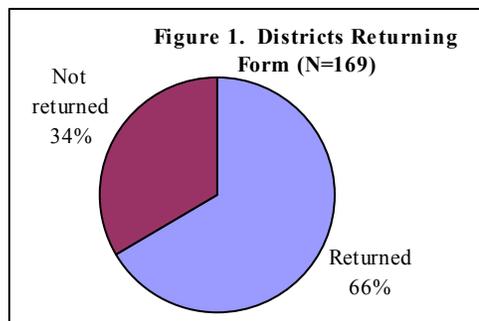
The first form was sent to the superintendents of all local school districts in the state that operate one or more public elementary, middle, or high schools. The form requested information about the K-12 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities employed by each district. In particular, the four-page form asked about:

- the demographic composition (i.e., gender, race, and age) of these employees;
- their length of employment with the district and their hours of work;

¹ This definition is based on the federal Title I definition of a paraprofessional and several definitions developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education over the years. The primary source of the language is "Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Paraprofessionals to Commissioner Gerald N. Tirozzi" (March 1990), p. 9.

- the primary functions they perform;
- district policies regarding their qualifications, supervision, and professional development;
- educational levels achieved; and
- wages and benefits.

This form was mailed in mid-July to 169 school districts, with several follow-up letters and telephone calls to districts that had not responded by specific dates. As of early September, 112 districts had returned the form, for a response rate of 66 percent.² (See Figure 1.)



Although the information in the PRI database reflects self-reported information from less than the entire pool of school districts, the respondents appear to be a representative sample of the total population based on the information displayed in Table 2. In terms of the total number of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in the state, the districts that responded to the data request employ nearly 60 percent of all the comparable, full-time equivalent (FTE), noncertified instructional personnel reported to SDE as working in the state in October 2005. Table 2 summarizes characteristics of the respondents versus the total group of districts that received the data collection form.

<i>Number of:</i>	<i>Sent Data Form</i>	<i>Returned Data Form (% of all sent form)</i>
Districts in total	169	112 (66%)
Districts that operate elementary schools	158	106 (67%)
Districts that operate middle schools	121	77 (64%)
Districts that operate high schools	124	76 (61%)
K-12 students in public schools	~550,000	~325,000 (59%)
K-12 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities	~12,000	~7,100 (59%)
District towns with populations < 5,000	25%	25%
District towns with populations between 5,000 and 11,500	25%	29%
District towns with populations between 11,501 and 24,000	25%	23%
District towns with populations >24,000	25%	23%
Sources of data: State Department of Education, U.S. Bureau of Census, and PRI database		

² The data collection form was sent to the 166 local public school districts in the state plus the three endowed academies that serve as regional high schools for local school districts in their respective areas, making a total of 169 districts. (The form was not sent to any charter or magnet schools nor the state's technical high school system.) The committee staff is very appreciative of the large number of local school districts that voluntarily completed the detailed data request form. The names of all of the districts that responded as of September 12, 2006, are included in Appendix B.

A copy of the PRI data collection form is provided in Appendix B. Frequency data from the returned forms is presented elsewhere in this document, particularly in Section II. Additional analysis of the information is underway, and the results will be presented in the committee staff findings and recommendations document in December.

The second data collection form was mailed in mid-August to the 19 labor unions that represent paraprofessionals in one or more school districts in Connecticut. That form is seeking:

- complementary information about the distribution and compensation of paraprofessionals in the state; and
- the existence of formal contract language concerning qualifications, professional development, and compensation.

The response deadline for that form was extended into mid-September. Information from this source will be included in the staff findings and recommendations document noted above.

Interviews. Other important sources of information about the day-to-day functioning of paraprofessionals included a meeting with several paraprofessionals currently working in local public schools as well as interviews with representatives of the two largest unions that represent paraprofessionals in Connecticut. (Additional meetings with paraprofessionals are being scheduled.) Committee staff also met with employees of the State Department of Education regarding state and federal requirements affecting paraprofessionals.

Report Content

This report is divided into four sections. The first describes the role of school paraprofessionals, including the evolution from primarily clerical duties to assisting with instructional duties. Section II provides a detailed profile of Connecticut paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, based primarily on the responses to the program review data request. Section III summarizes federal, state, and local employment requirements affecting paraprofessionals in Connecticut. It also contains some information about how other states regulate these workers. Section IV briefly describes the state entities that are involved in general oversight and training for paraprofessionals. Appendix A summarizes key federal laws relevant to the use and employment of paraprofessionals today. Appendix B contains a copy of the program review data collection form and a list of the names of the local school districts that responded as of early September.

Duties and Responsibilities

Paraprofessionals provide an array of services to students and teachers. A general function of many paraprofessionals is to provide direct services to students and to assist teachers with classroom activities. The overall duties and responsibilities of paraprofessionals vary, however, depending on different factors including the paraprofessional's level of experience and/or education. The role of paraprofessionals has also changed over time.

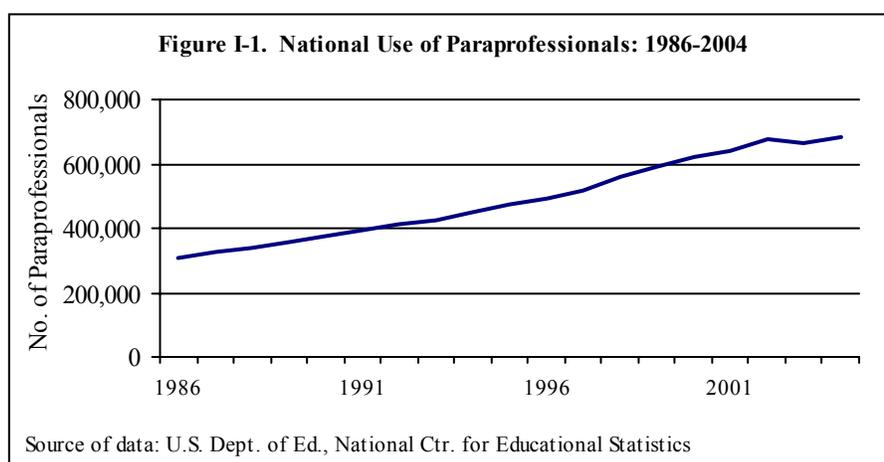
Evolution of Duties and Number of Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals began working in public schools in the 1950s as an additional resource to help alleviate increased workload resulting from a shortage of teachers following the end of World War II. At that time, paraprofessionals performed clerical functions. Their role was intended to allow teachers more time to focus on students.

During the 1960s and 1970s, several major federal acts were passed to help address social changes occurring nationwide at that time. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965) and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHC) of 1975 were passed to help meet the educational and economic needs of the country's disadvantaged and disabled children and youth. (See Appendix A for a more detailed discussion of both federal laws.) The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 also provided school districts with federal funds to establish educational programs for students with limited English speaking ability.

These major federal laws meant increased access for students into the public school system. For example, with the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, all public school districts accepting federal funds were required to provide equal access to education for children with physical and mental disabilities. Students with special needs were now being integrated into the public school system and educated in the "least restrictive environment" possible. As a way to help meet the growing needs of an increasingly diverse student population, the use of paraprofessionals increased.

Figure I-1 shows the increased use of paraprofessionals in public school systems continued during the 1980s, 1990s, and into the 2000s. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of full-time equivalent instructional aides (i.e., paraprofessionals) nationwide over the last



two decades increased 123 percent between school years 1985-86 and 2003-04 -- from 306,860 aides to 685,242 aides. (Information about the number of paraprofessionals in Connecticut is provided in Section II). In comparison, according to the federal education department, the number of students in public elementary and secondary schools (grades pre-K-12) increased 23 percent during the same time period.

Overall, the increasing and changing role of paraprofessionals over the past several decades can be attributed in large part to more demands being placed on schools and teachers. Federal laws, including EHC, later named the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), have resulted in greater access to public schools and increased individualized attention in public school settings for children of varying backgrounds and abilities, especially those with special needs. To assist with fulfilling federal requirements of providing more individualized services to an increasing number of students, there has been a greater use of paraprofessionals as a resource to assist teachers with student instruction in addition to performing clerical and administrative tasks.

Although the increase in the number of paraprofessionals has begun to level off during the early 2000s, increased attention has been given to the overall qualifications of paraprofessionals. As part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002, certain types of paraprofessionals are now required to meet specific minimum qualifications as a condition of employment. This is discussed more in Section III, and additional analysis of the impact of these requirements on Connecticut's public school paraprofessionals will be conducted by committee staff during the next phase of this study.

Mainstreaming/inclusion of special education students. The scope of the committee's study includes examining the role of paraprofessionals in "mainstreaming" special education students. As mentioned above, the number of paraprofessionals has steadily increased since the 1980s. This increase is in large part a response to federal legislation requiring greater access and more individualized attention for special education students in public schools.

In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and, similar to its enabling act, IDEA requires special needs students to be educated with their nondisabled peers using the same curriculum, extracurricular activities, and any other programs as their nondisabled peers in the least restrictive environment (LRE) within a school. The terms "mainstreaming" and "inclusion" are frequently used to describe the integration of special education students in the public school system.³

For the most part, the terms denote the same underlying premise that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities are provided the same access to a public education in the least restrictive setting (i.e., general education classroom) as all other children. The term "mainstream" and the phrase "least restrictive environment," have evolved into the concept of "inclusion." "Mainstreaming" has generally come to mean integrating children with disabilities and regular school children for a part or all of the school day. This could mean that although a

³ Even though the study scope uses the term "mainstream," program review staff is examining the role of paraprofessionals in educating children with special needs so as to include both the mainstreaming and inclusion concepts.

special education student is provided access to a public school education, the student may receive services in a setting within the school that is separate from general education students.

"Inclusion" is generally described in the national literature as placing a greater emphasis on the obligation to provide quality support services to children with disabilities in the general education classroom rather than in a separate setting. This typically involves bringing the necessary supports for the special education student to the general education classroom to the greatest extent possible, including the use of paraprofessionals to provide instruction within the general classroom setting.

Current Duties and Responsibilities

As the role of paraprofessionals has evolved over time, paraprofessionals with instructional duties have a different role than their "noninstructional" colleagues in at least one aspect of their current daily responsibilities. Paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities are responsible for assisting certified teachers with student instruction and various instruction-related duties, while other paraprofessionals do not provide these services.

Aside from this key difference, the present-day duties and responsibilities of all paraprofessionals may overlap. Paraprofessionals with student instructional responsibilities may perform similar duties during the course of a school day as their noninstructional counterparts. For example, there may be times when all paraprofessionals do the same type of work such as monitoring lunchroom and hallway activities, supervising students during recess, or basic clerical tasks. Additional examples of the various duties and responsibilities performed by paraprofessionals are provided in Table I-1.

Table I-1. Examples of Duties and Responsibilities of Instructional and Noninstructional Paraprofessionals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist teacher with classroom management • Organize instructional materials • Provide one-on-one tutoring outside normal classroom hours • Modify or adapt classroom curriculum • Provide support in library or media center • Facilitate student's inclusion in general education classroom • Act as a translator or interpreter • Give individualized attention to one or a small number of students within classroom while teacher works with other students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide computer laboratory assistance to students • Provide speech-language assistance to students • Assist students with lunch, snack, cleanup, and toilet routines • Conduct parental involvement activities • Provide input into assessments and/or grades • Monitor recess and "specials" (i.e., art, physical education, music) • Facilitate interaction with student's peers • Assist with individualized programs for special needs students

It should be noted that paraprofessionals with instructional duties are limited by federal and state law in the type of student instruction they may provide. The federal No Child Left Behind Act prohibits paraprofessionals from providing any type of "initial" instruction to students in schools receiving federal funds under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary

Education Act. This means that a certified teacher must first introduce a lesson or concept to students prior to a paraprofessional providing instruction on that same subject matter. In other words, the role of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, at least in schools receiving Title I funds, is to augment the instruction/lesson plans already introduced and taught by a certified teacher.

Under Connecticut regulation (Conn. Regs. Sec. 10-145d-401), appropriate certification is required for any person employed by a local public school district who provides instruction to students. If the person providing the instruction is not certified, then direct supervision of that person by a certified professional employee is required. Appropriate state certification is also required for those school employees (i.e., teachers) responsible for planning instructional programs for students and evaluating students' progress.

Paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities typically work with students either individually or in small groups during the school day, although there may be some work done outside of school hours. How instruction is provided to students by a paraprofessional and the type of setting where the instruction is provided generally depends on the needs of the student or the type of lesson being taught. In theory, allowing paraprofessionals to assist teachers with instruction provides teachers with more time to concentrate on other tasks such as lesson planning or more focused student instruction.

Paraprofessionals work in various settings. Some paraprofessionals may be assigned to work in a particular classroom or with a particular student, while others may be considered "floaters" and work in multiple classrooms and/or grade levels during the course of a school day. As such, paraprofessionals may be assigned to work under multiple teachers and perform varying duties, depending on the needs of each teacher. In addition, the modern-day general education classroom could have several adults in the room at the same time responsible for students with various levels of need. Depending on the types of students in the general education classroom, the potential exists for the general education teacher and a paraprofessional to be present in the classroom along with a special education teacher and/or a special education paraprofessional.

Some paraprofessionals may provide more specialized services than those working in a general education classroom setting. For example, there may be paraprofessionals who work as library or media aides, while others may assist students in computer labs or other technology-related areas. Regardless of the particular assignments paraprofessionals may have, they are typically supervised either by the teacher(s) with whom they work or their school's principal.

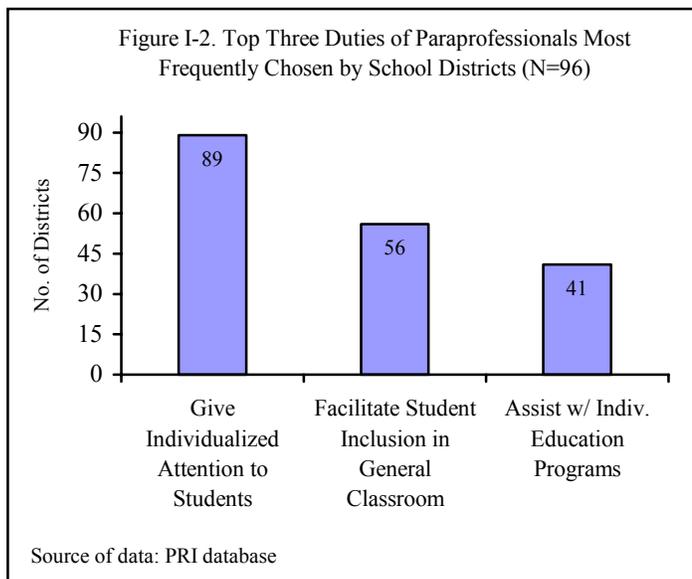
Most Commonly Performed Duties in Connecticut

Although paraprofessionals perform various duties and responsibilities in diverse areas, the vast majority of noncertified instructional paraprofessionals in Connecticut work in the area of special education. According to SDE data, two-thirds of the 12,045 FTE noncertified instructional paraprofessionals working in local public schools during the 2005-06 school year were considered special education paraprofessionals.

The program review data request sent to local school districts asked about the duties and responsibilities of paraprofessionals who assist with student instruction in grades K-12. Districts

were specifically asked to indicate the three functions most commonly performed by paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities from a list of 16 duties on the form. (See Question 12 in Appendix B for the full list of duties.) Figure I-2 shows the top three duties selected by the respondents.

The duty “give individualized attention to one or a small number of students within the classroom while teacher works with other students” was chosen by 89 districts (93 percent), making it the most frequently chosen duty for paraprofessionals.⁴ “Facilitate student’s inclusion in general education classroom,” was the second most frequently indicated duty, chosen by 56 districts (58 percent). The third most frequently identified duty -- “assist with Individualized Education Programs” -- was chosen by 41 districts (43 percent). (See Appendix A for a description of Individualized Education Programs.)



The next three duties of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities most commonly indicated by school districts were:

- “organize instructional materials” (33 percent);
- “assist teacher with classroom management” (30 percent); and
- “modify or adopt classroom curriculum” (21 percent).

As might be expected, two of the top three most-performed duties of paraprofessionals indicated by school districts directly relate to assisting special education students. As discussed, the inclusion of special education students into the general classroom setting has increased over time, and a vast majority of noncertified paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut currently work with special education students.

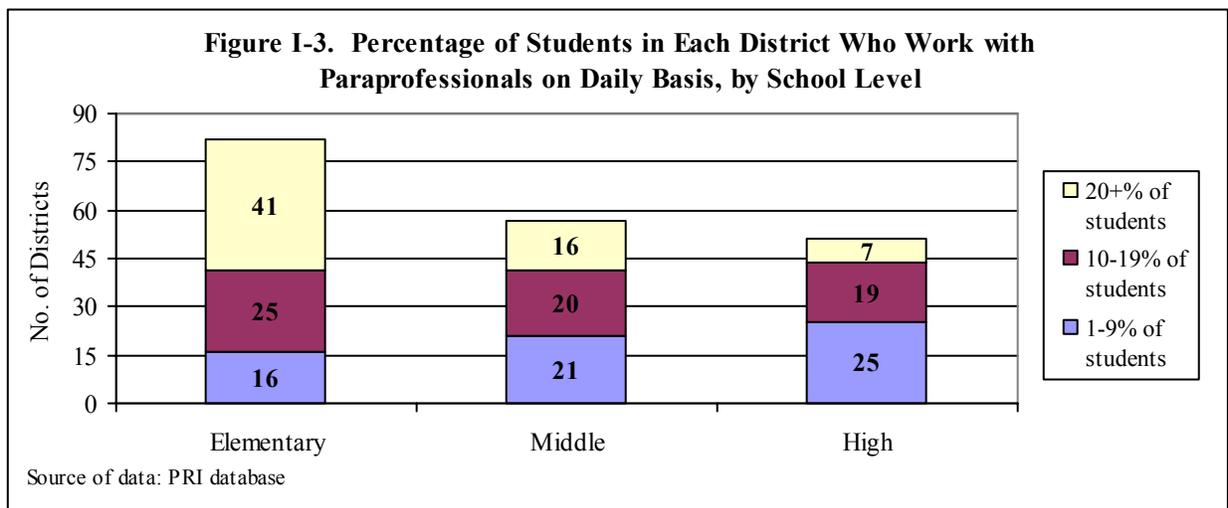
Interaction with Students

In addition to understanding the various duties and responsibilities performed by paraprofessionals, the overall level of interaction between paraprofessionals and students is important. According to data from the local school districts that responded to the program review committee’s data request, the proportion of public school students in Connecticut who interact on a daily basis with paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities varies

⁴ The data in the figure do not account for the 16 districts that either made more than three choices or did not choose any of the listed duties. It is worth noting, however, that all 12 of the districts selecting more than three duties included “give individualized attention to students” among their selections.

considerably from district to district. It also differs by school level, with the portion of students working daily with paraprofessionals decreasing as their grade level increases.

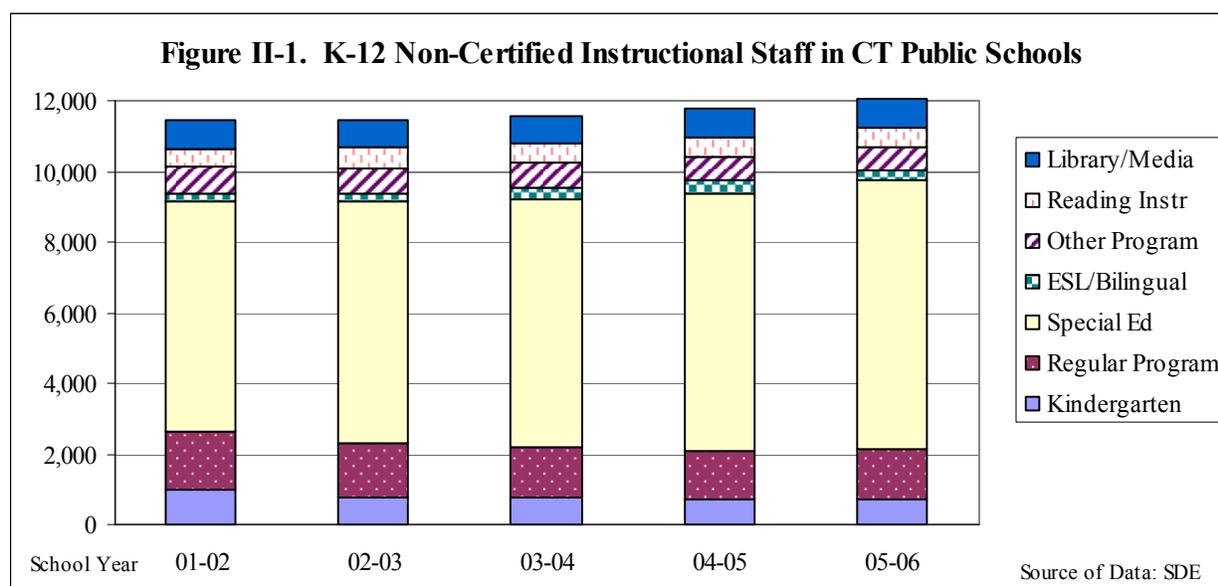
Figure I-3 illustrates by school level the extent of the interaction between students and paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities for those districts that reported specific numbers to PRI. (The numbers provided for each school level are based on the number of responding districts that operate schools at the specified level.) Half of the 82 districts with elementary schools that responded indicated 20 percent or more of their students work daily with instructional paraprofessionals. Among the 57 districts operating middle schools that responded, one-quarter indicated 20 percent or more of the students receive instruction from such paraprofessionals daily, while only 14 percent of the 51 districts operating high schools that responded indicated 20 percent or more of the students at that level had daily contact.



Paraprofessionals In Connecticut

The Connecticut State Department of Education collects limited information from local school districts about the public school personnel referred to in this study as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities. The department does request an annual count of full-time equivalent, noncertified instructional staff, with the information subdivided into seven groupings for the personnel working in kindergarten through twelfth grade.⁵

Figure II-1 shows the data compiled by SDE for school years (SYs) 2001-02 through 2005-06. The total count increased 5 percent during the past five years, rising from 11,440 to 12,046. To put these numbers in context, for school year 2005-06, there were also almost 25,000 noncertified, *noninstructional* staff employed by districts to work in grades K-12. Statewide there were approximately 35,000 classroom teachers and about 565,000 K-12 students.⁶



Several noticeable changes in the composition of instructional paraprofessionals over time were a 27 percent increase in ESL/bilingual noncertified instructional staff and a 17 percent increase in the number of staff in the special education category. Since SY 2001-02, a majority of all K-12 noncertified instructional staff have worked in the special education area, with the number and percent growing annually. In SY 2005-06, they represented 63 percent of the total, while in SY 2001-02, they were 57 percent.

⁵ Based on conversations between program review staff and administrative staff in several local school districts, it appears the FTE personnel counts reported to SDE may not exactly match the number of paraprofessionals reported to program review on its data collection form. The definitions used in each case are slightly different, and some district personnel filling out the program review form may have interpreted the requests differently. However, the total numbers in both cases should be close.

⁶ State Department of Education website [www.csde.state.ct.us/public/cedar/index.htm]

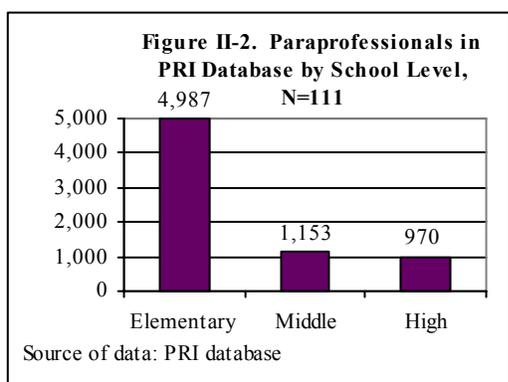
Demographic Profile

In order to better understand who is employed as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut's public school systems, the program review committee staff sought demographic information from all of the school districts in the state. For the most part, the information requested was for SY 2005-06. Data requiring specific employee counts are primarily from October 1, 2005, an annual reporting date used by SDE for many of its reports.

As of early September, 112 districts had returned completed forms to program review, for a response rate of 66 percent. Responses to many of the questions are described in full below. In summary, however, the database indicates that a *majority* of the approximately 7,100 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities employed by the local school districts that responded to the program review data request are:

- working at the elementary school level;
- female;
- white;
- under the age of 50;
- working full time during the 10-month school year;
- likely to have worked less than six years;
- earning at least \$11.43 an hour;
- offered some type of health and dental insurance and the opportunity to participate in a retirement plan; and
- covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

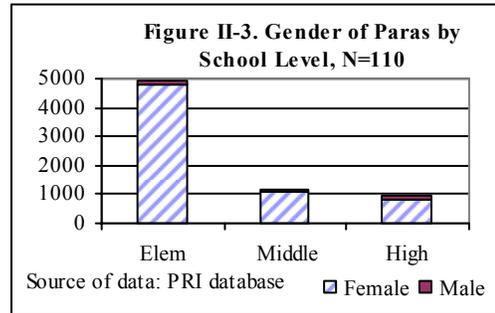
Number of employees. As previously shown in Figure II-1, the number of FTE noncertified instructional staff employed by individual school districts in grades K-12 during SY 2005-06 totaled 12,046. For the same school year, the districts in the program review database reported employing nearly 60 percent of that total, or about 7,100 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, ranging from one to 494 per district.



In terms of grade-level assignments, Figure II-2 shows the distribution of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in the program review database by school level. The number of paraprofessionals is much higher for the elementary school level. Conversations with school administrators and SDE staff indicated the use of this type of personnel generally decreases as students get older.

Gender. Figure II-3 displays the distribution of male and female paraprofessionals in the database. Broken down by school level, the percent of males ranged from 3 percent (at the elementary level) to 7 percent at the middle school level to 14 percent (at the high school level). Indeed, half of the reporting districts that operate elementary

schools employed no male paraprofessionals in their elementary schools, nearly half that operate middle schools employed no male paraprofessionals in those schools, and one-third of the reporting districts operating high schools employed no male paraprofessionals at that school level.



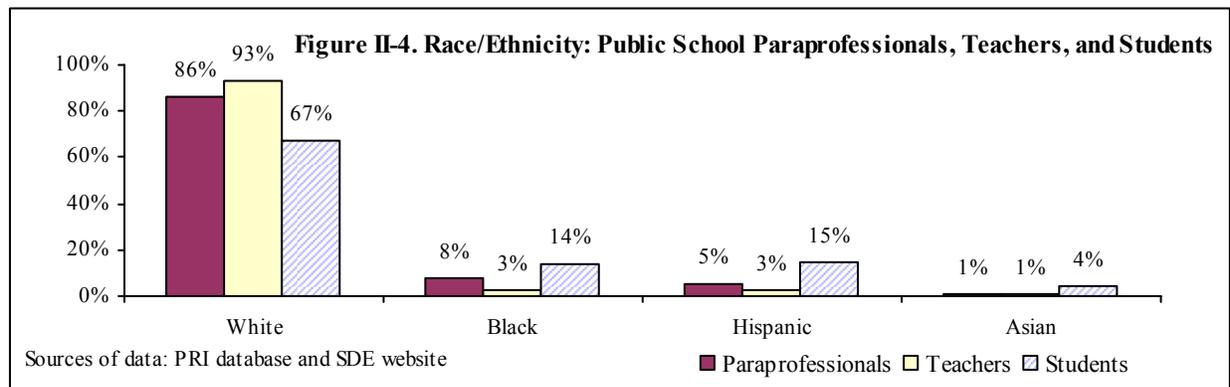
Overall, the portion of males employed as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities is lower than the proportion of male public school teachers. Statewide during the 2004-05 school year, 26 percent of public school teachers were male, but only 5 percent of the paraprofessionals in the PRI database were males. At the same time, the distribution of students in public schools was almost equally divided between males and females.⁷

Race/Ethnicity. Table II-1 provides information from October 2005 about the racial/ethnic makeup of the paraprofessionals in the program review database at each school level. The elementary school level had the highest proportion of minority group members -- 15 percent. The middle school level was 11 percent, and the high school level was 12 percent.

School Level	No. White	No. Black	No. Hispanic	No. Asian	No. American Indian	Total
Elementary	3,829	396	268	27	1	4,521
Middle	944	67	37	7	0	1,055
High	782	58	41	7	0	888
TOTAL	5,555 (86%)	521 (8%)	346 (5%)	41 (1%)	1 (0%)	6,464

Source of data: PRI database

Figure II-4 summarizes the racial/ethnic makeup of the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in the database in total as well as showing the comparable numbers for certified teachers and public school students. For SY 2005-06, a higher portion of the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities were members of minority groups (14 percent) than the proportion of public school teachers (6 percent) reported as minority group members. However, minority representation among paraprofessionals was still lower than the total student population -- 33 percent minority in SY 2004-05, the most recent year available.⁸



⁷ SDE website

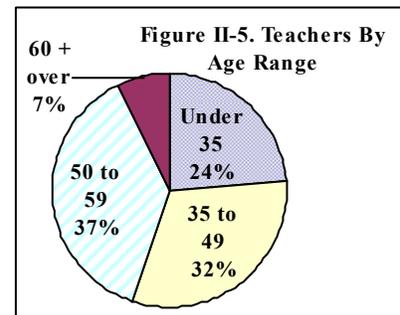
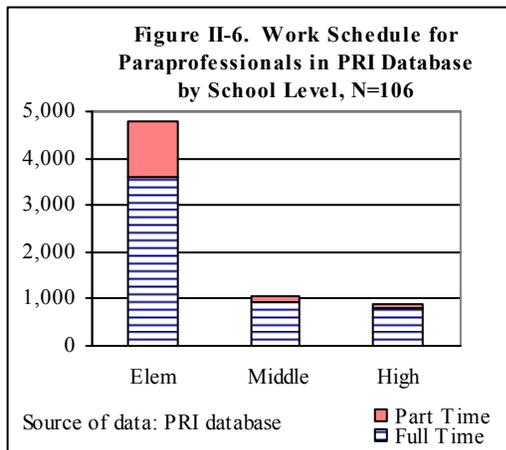
Age. Table II-2 summarizes information about the age distribution of the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in local public schools last year. Not all districts were able to answer this question, although some were able to do so by reporting all school levels together. For the 101 districts that did respond, almost half of the employed paraprofessionals were between 35 and 49 years old.

Table II-2. Paraprofessionals by Age, October 1, 2005 (N=101)					
<i>School Level</i>	<i>Number within specified age ranges</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>Under 35</i>	<i>35 - 49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60 and over</i>	
Elementary	493	1,934	1,153	359	3,939
Middle	119	352	286	108	865
High	98	268	258	95	719
Separated levels not available	139	327	262	63	791
TOTAL	849 (13%)	2,881 (46%)	1,959 (31%)	625 (10%)	6,314
Source of data: PRI database					

In comparison, data from June 2004 indicated only one-third of the active teachers at that time were between the ages of 35 and 49.⁹ Figure II-5 shows the complete distribution of ages for public school teachers at all grade levels.

Work Schedules

Another aspect of the employment of paraprofessionals of interest to the program review committee is the extent to which such individuals work full time versus part time. Figure II-6 shows the proportion of paraprofessionals in the program review database who fall into each category. The vast majority at each school level work full time, with the proportion increasing as the school level increases.



Three-quarters of the elementary school paraprofessionals are working full time as are nearly 90 percent of the middle and high school paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities.

Table II-3 shows the number of hours per week that different school districts consider to be full time versus part time. The hours vary among districts and by school level. Overall among respondents, full-time employees work between 25 and 38.75 hours per week, with an average of 32 hours. There is more diversity in the hours that part-time paraprofessionals work. The number per week for responding districts ranged from five to 32.5 hours.

⁸ SDE website

⁹ Gabriel, Roeder, Smith & Company, *Connecticut State Teachers' Retirement System: Report on the Actuarial Valuation as of June 30, 2004*, p. C-1.

Table II-3. Hours Worked by Paraprofessionals by School Level (N=111)		
<i>School Level</i>	<i>Range of Hours: Full Time</i>	<i>Range of Hours: Part Time</i>
Elementary	25 - 38.75	12 - 32.5
Middle	27 - 37.5	5 - 32.5
High	30 - 37.5	10 - 32.5
Source of data: PRI database		

Overwhelmingly, paraprofessionals work the 10-month school year. The PRI database showed only a couple of people in just five districts work other than a 10-month school year.

Tenure

In terms of length of employment, Table II-4 shows that the paraprofessionals employed by the districts in October 2005 were fairly evenly distributed among the four ranges indicated in the table. Slightly more than half had worked less than six years, with 28 percent having worked two years or less.

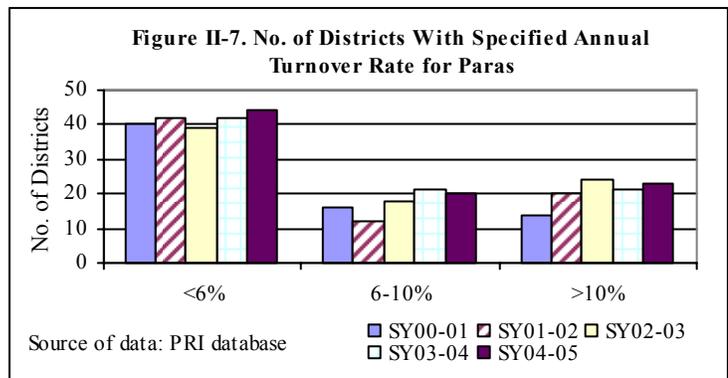
Table II-4. Paraprofessionals by Length of Service, October 1, 2005 (N=106)					
<i>School Level</i>	<i>Number with specified length of employment</i>				<i>Total</i>
	<i>2 years or less</i>	<i>3 - 5 years</i>	<i>6 - 10 years</i>	<i>>10 years</i>	
Elementary	1,196	955	1,100	982	4,233
Middle	265	243	225	212	945
High	230	177	225	168	800
Separated levels not available	199	204	179	261	843
TOTAL	1,890 (28%)	1,579 (23%)	1,729 (25%)	1,623 (24%)	6,821
Source of data: PRI database					

In comparison, as of June 2004, only one-quarter of the teachers actively working at that time had worked four years or less, and 53 percent had worked 10 or more years.¹⁰

The program review data request also asked districts about the percentage of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who had not returned the following fall, after each of the past five school years. Fewer districts were able to provide data for the earlier years, but in all years, the average rate was less than 10 percent. Figure II-7 summarizes the responses.

Compensation

Most school districts in the PRI database reported wage information for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities using hourly rates. In most cases, salary ranges for part-time and full-



¹⁰ Connecticut State Teachers' Retirement System: Report on the Actuarial Valuation as of June 30, 2004, p. C-1.

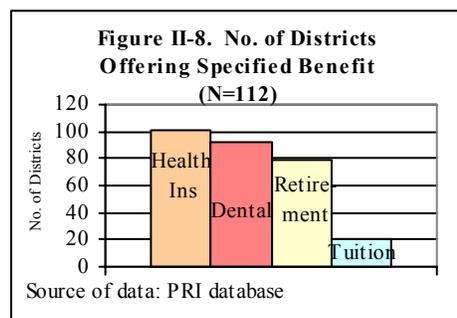
time employees were the same. However, a few districts paid all of their paraprofessionals who work part time a flat hourly rate. Table II-5 shows the range and median hourly rate reported.

	<i>Range of Minimum</i>	<i>Minimum median</i>	<i>Range of Maximum</i>	<i>Maximum Median</i>
Full Time	\$7.89 - \$17.13	\$11.26	\$9.29 - \$23.96	\$14.71
Part Time	\$7.89 - \$17.13	\$10.76	\$8.68 - \$23.96	\$14.56

Source of data: PRI database

The median numbers in the table reflect the rates paid by districts in the database. The median minimum wage earned by the paraprofessionals in the database is different. To calculate that amount, the number of employees per district had to be taken into consideration. Based on the hourly wage information in the database for 5,247 paraprofessionals, a majority of them are earning at least \$11.43 an hour.

Fringe benefits. Figure II-8 summarizes the extent to which the districts in the PRI database offer fringe benefits to paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities. A high percentage offer health insurance (90 percent), dental coverage (82 percent), and retirement plans (71 percent), but there are variations in the scope of the individual benefit programs. Only 20 districts offer any type of tuition reimbursement or education assistance.

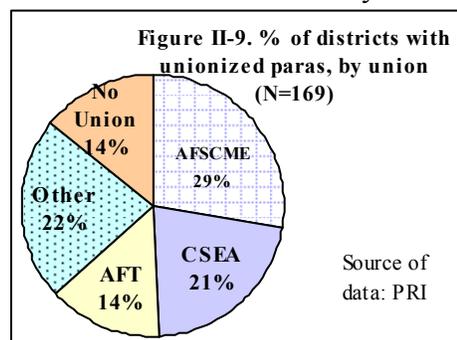


The opportunity to receive benefits differs between full-time and part-time workers. In most districts in the database, an employee must work a minimum number of hours per week to qualify for benefits, especially for participation in medical and dental insurance programs. The specific number of hours required varies considerably, ranging from 12 to 37.5 hours.

In terms of the scope of benefits, in some districts, only the district employee is eligible for insurance coverage or the employee may have to pay the entire cost of the insurance. In terms of retirement benefits, the types of products ranged from municipal pension plans to 401(k) style programs. This benefit was also the one for which districts were most likely to have a minimum length of service requirement before employees could participate.

Union Representation

Of the 169 local public school districts sent data collection forms, paraprofessionals in 145 districts (86 percent) are unionized. Figure II-9 provides a breakdown of the various unions representing paraprofessionals and the percentage of districts they represent. Three unions -- the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME, Council 4), the Connecticut State Employees Association (CSEA, Local 760), and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) -- represent the paraprofessionals in nearly two-thirds of the districts.



Section III

Employment Requirements

Individuals working as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut public schools are not required to meet any state education or experience requirements. The only action the state requires of these employees is one that other school personnel also must complete. Under C.G.S. Sec. 10-221d, all school personnel have to submit to a criminal history records check within 30 days of employment.

However, this does not mean there are no job-related criteria for any paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in Connecticut. In recent years, the federal government has established standards for some paraprofessionals, while an increasing number of local school districts are requiring or indicating a preference for specific amounts of education or experience. The remainder of this section describes existing federal and local provisions.

Federal Requirements

For all schools receiving federal funding under Title I of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act requires that paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who are paid with Title I funding or who work in certain schools meet specific education standards. The requirements immediately applied to all such paraprofessionals who were newly hired after January 8, 2002. In most cases, paraprofessionals already employed by affected schools had until 2006 to meet the standards, if they wanted to keep their jobs as paraprofessionals.

As shown in Figure III-1, the base minimum requirement for all paraprofessionals paid for with Title I funding is a high school or General Educational Development (GED) diploma. Beyond that, paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities must also meet one of three additional requirements:

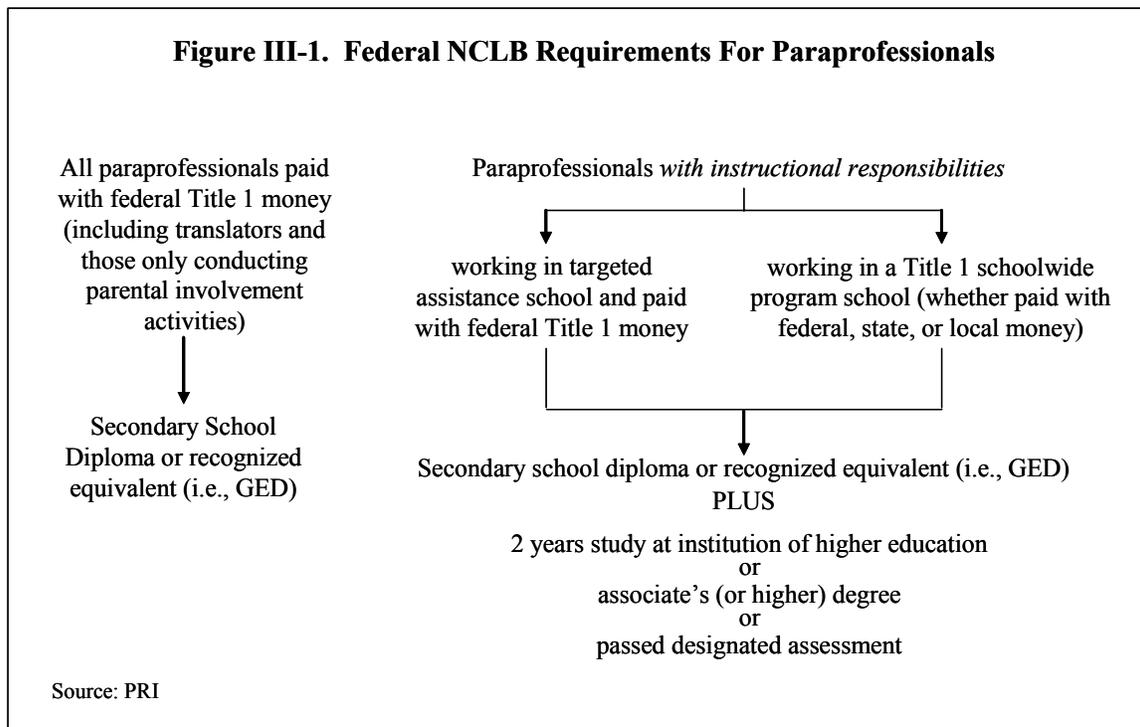
- obtain an associate's or higher degree;
- complete two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- meet a "rigorous and objective" standard of quality that is demonstrated through a formal academic assessment.

The high school diploma requirement took effect immediately for all paraprofessionals covered by the law. The deadline for the other requirements depended on a person's date of employment.

In Connecticut, there are 1,091 public schools. In SY 05-06, a total of 353 schools in 127 districts received Title I funds and were designated as "targeted assistance schools." In such schools, only paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities whose salaries were paid with Title I money needed to meet the federal minimum requirements.

Another 147 schools in 12 districts received Title I funds and were designated as "schoolwide program" schools. All of the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities

working in those schools had to meet the federal standards, regardless of what source of funding was used to pay their salaries. (See Appendix A for descriptions of “targeted assistance” and “schoolwide program” schools.)



Designated assessment. Under federal law, each state selects the formal assessment tool that will be accepted within its borders in lieu of college level study. According to federal guidelines, the assessment used should be “rigorous and objective,” and the content:

should reflect both the State academic standards and the skills of a child at a given school level (preschool, elementary, middle, or high school), and the ability of the candidate to effectively provide instructional support to assist students in mastering the content.¹¹

Connecticut is one of 36 states using the ParaPro Assessment, an examination administered by Educational Testing Service (ETS), a private, nonprofit corporation. The ParaPro consists of 90 multiple-choice questions covering reading, mathematics, and writing. Approximately two-thirds of the questions concern basic skills and knowledge; the rest focus on applying skills in the classroom.

The test is only available in English, but there are two formats. A paper and pencil version is offered six times a year at multiple locations, and results are available about four weeks later. An internet version is available continuously, but it can only be accessed through participating local school districts. Unofficial results of the internet version are available

¹¹ U.S. Department of Education, *Title I Paraprofessionals, Non-Regulatory Guidance* (March 1, 2004), p.10.

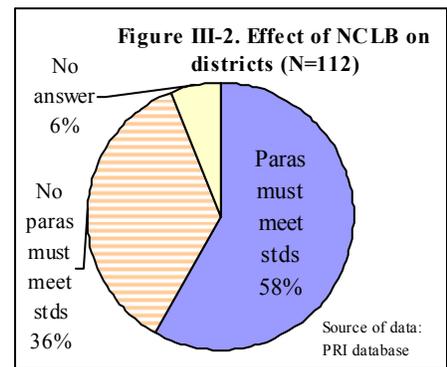
immediately upon completion of the test; official results are mailed about two weeks later. Either test costs \$40, each time it is taken.¹²

Possible scores on the ParaPro range from 420 to 480. Each state using the test sets its own passing score. Connecticut requires a score of at least 457, while passing scores in other states range from 450 to 467.¹³

Compliance. Local school districts in Connecticut are responsible for verifying that the school personnel required to meet the NCLB education requirements for paraprofessionals do in fact meet the standards. According to the districts responding to the program review data request, the staff most commonly involved in the verification process are the school principals, human resource directors, directors of pupil services, superintendents, and assistant superintendents.

Districts currently use several different methods to confirm that individual employees either have the appropriate number of college credits or have passed the ParaPro test. The primary method is requiring the submission of ParaPro test results or college transcripts. Other methods include telephone calls to verify information and a personal interview.

At present, the actual status of compliance with the federal law is unclear. As shown in Figure III-2, of the 112 school districts returning the program review data form to date, 65 districts reported employing one or more paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who had to meet the NCLB requirements, for a total of 1,647 employees. (Forty districts indicated no paraprofessionals had to meet the standards, while seven districts did not answer the question.) In half of those 65 districts, 10 or fewer employees had to meet the federal standard. In five districts, more than 75 paraprofessionals had to meet the federal requirements.



In addition to the question seeking to quantify the specific number of individuals in each district required to meet the NCLB standards, another question asked about the highest level of education all paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities had achieved. Eleven of the 65 responding districts who had paraprofessionals covered by NCLB did not answer both questions for all of their paraprofessionals.

The revised deadline for compliance with the federal requirements was the end of the 2005-2006 school year. This means all paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who are covered by the NCLB requirements must now be in compliance. Eight districts in the PRI database indicated that as of June 30, 2006, less than 100 percent of their existing staff with high school diplomas who needed to pass the ParaPro exam had done so. Since the assessment test was offered this summer, the level of non-compliance and the corresponding effects of not

¹² Educational Testing Services website [www.ets.org (Tests; ParaPro)]

¹³ Passing scores in the other New England states that use the ParaPro assessment are: Maine (459), Massachusetts (464), Rhode Island (461), and Vermont (458).

having qualified paraprofessionals available should become clearer after the new school year gets under way. Accordingly, additional information on this issue will be included in the December staff findings and recommendations document.

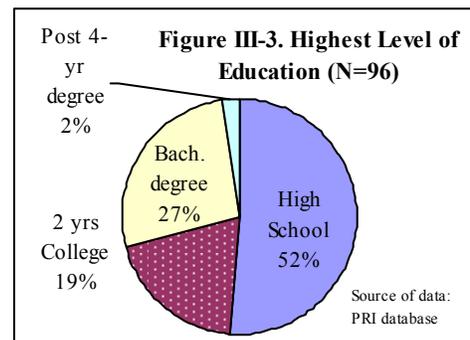
Local Requirements

In Connecticut, local school districts have the option of establishing specific education and experience requirements for the public school employees they hire. Based on the responses to the PRI data form, it appears an increasing number of local school districts are adopting some standards for paraprofessionals, or, at the very least, expressing a preference for candidates with certain credentials.

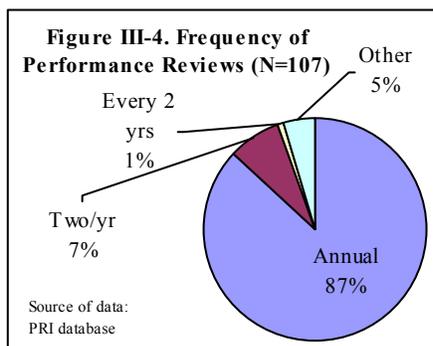
Several local school districts now require all paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities to meet the federal requirements, regardless of how they are paid or which school they work in. Another requirement some local school districts are imposing is a specified amount of prior experience working with children.

Fifty-nine of the districts responding to the PRI data request currently have specific requirements, while four others have preferences. Among those 63 districts, the requirements reported most frequently on the data collection form were a high school diploma (38 percent) and two years of college or the ParaPro test (41 percent). At least five districts require a bachelor's degree for some positions, primarily tutors.

Ninety-six districts were able to provide information about the highest level of education achieved by at least some of their paraprofessionals. Of the 4,305 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities for whom educational information was currently available, 19 percent had two years of college, while 29 percent had a bachelor's or master's degree. (Only two people did not have a high school diploma.) Figure III-3 provides a summary of this data.



Performance evaluations. Based on the responses to the program review data collection form, nearly all school districts that responded (96 percent) have a system in place to regularly evaluate the performance of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities. Figure III-4 summarizes the frequency of the reviews. In most schools, the evaluation occurs annually. Some districts also conduct an initial review within 90 days of a person being hired.



In two-thirds of the districts, the person conducting the evaluation is the school principal either alone or with other staff. In about 20 percent of the districts, the teacher whom the paraprofessional works with is involved in the evaluation, usually in conjunction with a school administrator or supervisor.

Performance results. Part of the reason for establishing standards for school personnel is the belief that the personnel responsible for helping students learn need to have attained at least a certain level of knowledge themselves. The difficulty arises in knowing what specific education or skills will improve the ability of someone to successfully help the students. With respect to paraprofessionals who perform instructional duties, little research is available about the specific effect of their efforts on the performance of the students they work with.

One approach increasingly considered in recent years as a way to evaluate teachers has been the use of “value-added models” that employ statistical procedures to examine multiple years of student achievement data. That information is used to estimate a teacher’s relative contribution to student learning, based on student growth. Two concerns about this approach, however, are: (1) the likely absence of randomization in the pairing of teachers and students; and (2) the impact of characteristics beyond the control of the teacher, such as the physical condition of the school and the availability of resources.¹⁴

The issues raised about the use of “value-added models” to evaluate teachers would seem equally applicable to paraprofessionals. During the remainder of the program review study, attention will be given to identifying mechanisms that can be used to determine whether minimum standards for paraprofessionals make a difference in student performance.

On the program review data collection form, districts were asked whether they have established any academic benchmarks or other measures to assess the performance of students that work with paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities on a daily basis. Nineteen districts answered yes, but many limited their measurements to paraprofessionals working with students in the special education area. The benchmarks mentioned were usually ones already in place as part of the on-going plan for a student, such as in his or her Individualized Education Program.

Other States

Although the state of Connecticut has not established any mandatory education or experience standards for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, at least a dozen other states have mandatory requirements for some or all of their school paraprofessionals. The requirements vary from state to state, but may include provisions related to age, moral character, education, criminal history, and letters of recommendation. In a few states (e.g., New Hampshire and Oklahoma), certification is available to paraprofessionals who meet specific requirements, but attaining this credential is optional.¹⁵

Table III-1 contains a brief summary of regulatory provisions affecting paraprofessionals around the country. Additional information about this topic will be provided in the December staff findings and recommendations document.

¹⁴ Henry I. Braun, “Using Student Progress to Evaluate Teachers: A Primer on Value-Added Models,” Educational Testing Service Policy Information Center (September 2005), pp. 3-4.

¹⁵ All of this information about other states is from: Education Commission of the States, “50-State Scan of Instructional Paraprofessional Certification Requirements,” updated July 2006.

Table III-1. Summary of Statutory Requirements For Paraprofessionals In Other States

<i>STATE</i>	<i>Designation</i>	<i>Issuing Entity</i>	<i>Requirements</i>
Delaware	Permit (Title I Paraeducator, Instructional Paraeducator, or Service Paraeducator)	Department of Education	high school diploma; can renew with 15 hours of professional development
Georgia	Certificate	Professional Standards Commission	high school diploma and satisfy federal requirements appropriate to designated position; can renew if still employed by Georgia school system and have six hours college work, 10 Georgia Professional Learning Units, or 10 continuing ed units
Illinois	Statement of Approval	State Board of Education in consultation with State Teacher Certification Board	good character, U.S. citizen or legally present, free from communicable disease, and high school diploma PLUS for teacher aide: 30 hours college, complete approved training program, pass ParaPro test or Work Keys test (with classroom performance evaluated); if under Title I, meet that standard
Iowa	Certificate (Paraeducator Generalist, optional area of concentration, and Advanced)	Board of Educational Examiners	high school diploma, 18 years old, not convicted of child or sex abuse or felony, and 90 hours training in specified areas; if completed paraeducator program, recommendation from official
Maine	Authorization (Educational Technician I, II, or III)	Department of Education	good moral character, 18 years old, criminal record check, and high school diploma (Tech I), 60 college credits or two years relevant paid experience (Tech II), 90 college credits or three years relevant paid experience (Tech III)
Minnesota	Credential	Board of Teaching	high school diploma PLUS two years of college, associate's degree or higher, or pass statewide assessment
New Hampshire	Certification [optional]	Department of Education	Title I requirements; can renew with recommendation from superintendent and 50 hours continuing education
New Mexico	License (Educational Assistant I, II, III, or IV)	Public Education Department	high school diploma, 18 years old, and completion of orientation session pertinent to assignment (Level I) PLUS two years experience (Level II), 48 hours college and passing score on state designated test (Level III), associate's degree (Level IV)
New York	License (temporary) Certificate (continuing, Teaching Assistant I, II, or III)	State Education Department - Office of Higher Education	high school diploma PLUS training/experience appropriate to position ("license"), six hours college and one year experience (continuing certificate), satisfactory score on NY state assessment of teaching assistant skills (Level I), six hours college and NY assessment (Level II), 18 hours college, NY assessment, and one year at Levels I or II (Level III)
North Dakota	Certificate of Completion (serve students w/disabilities)	Department of Public Instruction	20 hours of in-service training within one year of employment; if under Title I, meet that standard
Ohio	Permit	State Board of Education	good character, high school diploma, and employer recommendation; if under Title I, meet that standard
Oklahoma	Credential	State Board of Education	high school diploma, criminal record check, and state-approved career development program; if under Title I, meet that standard
Oregon	Requirements	--	moral character and high school diploma or such knowledge/experience determined sufficient by local superintendent
Rhode Island	Qualified	Department of Education	good character, high school diploma PLUS two years college, associate's degree, or pass state/local assessment
South Dakota	Requirements	Department of Education	high school diploma PLUS two years college, associate's degree, or pass state/local assessment
Texas	Certificate (Educational Aide I, II, or III)	State Board for Educator Certification	high school diploma and experience working with students/parents (Level I) PLUS two years at Level I, 15 hours college, or demonstrated proficiency in specialized skill area (Level II), three years at Level I/II or 30 hours college (Level III)
West Virginia	Certificate	Department of Education	high school diploma, 18 years old, one year experience, and 36 hours of post-secondary education

Source of data: Education Commission of the States, "50-State Scan of Instructional Paraprofessional Certification Requirements," Updated July 2006.

Section IV

State Organization and Roles

There are several entities at the state level that have a general oversight role in regard to paraprofessionals or offer professional development and training services for paraprofessionals. State government, however, does not regulate paraprofessionals to a great degree. The use of paraprofessionals and any conditions of employment for paraprofessionals in Connecticut are at the discretion of local school districts.

Department of Education

The state Department of Education is the administrative arm of the State Board of Education and serves as the lead agency for education in Connecticut. The department, through the board, has general supervision and control of public education in the state. The department oversees programs that impact education, including special education, at the local level and is also charged with implementing the various requirements outlined in federal education law as discussed in Section I.

The department's oversight and regulation of paraprofessionals, however, is minimal. Paraprofessionals are not required to obtain any type of state license, certification, or registration either prior to becoming a paraprofessional or as an ongoing condition of employment.¹⁶ Individual school districts across the state have discretion in determining the requirements applicable to paraprofessionals. Further, SDE is not responsible for ensuring that the NCLB requirements applicable to paraprofessionals are implemented.

Personnel development grants for paraprofessionals. Approximately 10 years ago, the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provided discretionary grants (i.e., "sliver grants") to states to use for personnel development purposes. Through a competitive bidding process, SDE awarded grants of approximately \$10,000 to between 10 and 12 local school districts annually. Some of the districts used the grants for training purposes for special education paraprofessionals.

As funding for the grants decreased, OSEP began offering funding through the "State Improvement Grant" during the late-1990s. The grant money was used for discretionary purposes, including professional development for paraprofessionals, although the process to receive grant funding became more competitive with additional reporting requirements.

Funding from the Office of Special Education Programs has since evolved into the "State Personnel Development Grant." Part of the grant money is used for paraprofessional development purposes, with an emphasis on training paraprofessionals to become special education teachers.

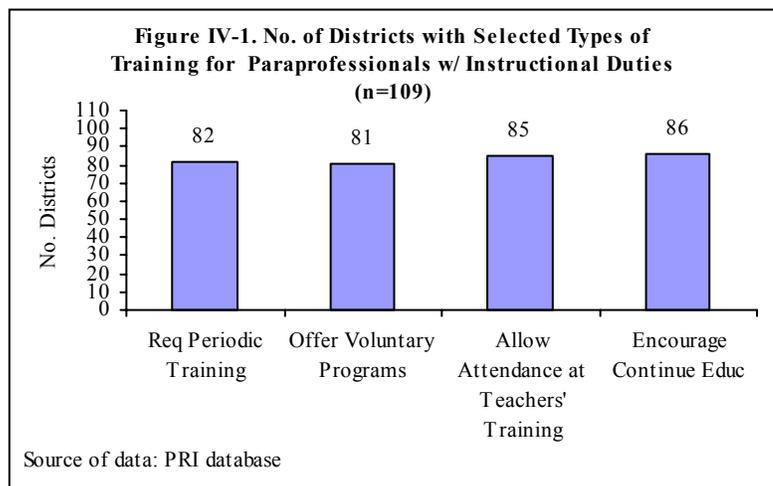
¹⁶ One formal state requirement (Conn. Regs. Sec. 10-76d-2(g)) related to paraprofessionals requires that each special education aide (i.e., paraprofessional) be supervised by a person certified and/or licensed in the area of specialization to which the aide is assigned.

At present, Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU) has been awarded \$2.24 million as part of the state personnel development grant process. The purpose of the five-year grant to SCSU is to provide paraprofessionals in New Haven, Bridgeport, Hartford, and Waterbury with an opportunity to receive their state teacher certification through the university. The program is designed to help address teacher shortages experienced in urban areas. Paraprofessionals currently working in urban districts are seen as a natural fit to help increase the number of teachers in those districts. Increasing the number of paraprofessionals who become certified teachers is also a key component to maintaining the overall staff demographics of school districts. The ideal is that paraprofessionals currently working and living in the same school district who want to become teachers in that district will help better reflect the makeup and diversity of the district's student population.

Full implementation of the SCSU program -- formally known as "Paraprofessionals as Certified Educators" (PACE) -- will occur over several years. Currently, 25 paraprofessionals from the New Haven school district are enrolled in the PACE program. PACE is designed to provide assistance to a yearly enrollment of 30 paraprofessionals per city. As a condition of acceptance into the program, participants are required to have at least obtained an associate's degree and meet, or be in a program designed to meet, the state's minimum requirements for obtaining teacher certification, including the required education/experience and passing the required skills/knowledge tests. Recruitment of paraprofessionals in the Hartford school district is scheduled to begin in Fall 2006, with students beginning their coursework in mid-2007.

Similar to the PACE program, Connecticut established a pilot program in 1989 to assist minority paraprofessionals working in the state's five largest urban school districts to become certified teachers. "Teaching Opportunities for Paraprofessionals" (TOPs) administered by the Department of Education became a full program in 1991. At that time, the number of districts participating in the program was also increased to 10. Program expenditures, however, ceased in FY 02, and the program was disbanded.

Current professional development efforts. The vast majority of the local school districts that responded to the program review data request either offer some form of professional development or training for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities or encourage their paraprofessionals to continue their education. As shown in Figure IV-1, 82 (75 percent) of the 109 districts responding to the question indicated they "require attendance at periodic training," while 81 districts (74 percent) "offer voluntary programs specifically for paraprofessionals." Eighty-five of the districts (78 percent) "allow attendance at programs for teachers," while 86 districts (79 percent) "encourage paraprofessionals to continue their education."



State Education Resource Center

State law requires the state education board to maintain a special education resource center. The State Education Resource Center (SERC), located in Middletown, fulfills that mandate.

The State Education Resource Center is under contract with the Department of Education to provide professional development services to education professionals, including paraprofessionals, service providers, families, and community members. SERC provides professional development through both statewide programming activities and on-site opportunities in public schools. Assistance is provided in different fields, including early childhood and special education services.

One program recently developed by SERC to enhance the skills of paraprofessionals focuses on “job embedded study groups” for paraprofessionals. Based on adult learning and professional development literature indicating that people learn best from each other and within their own work environment, SERC established the study group initiative in late 2005. The purpose of the study group process is to create a forum for paraprofessionals within individual school districts across the state to discuss issues important to paraprofessionals. SERC’s goal for the initiative is for paraprofessionals to “enhance their knowledge, competency, skills, and abilities needed to perform their jobs at a highly qualified level.”

Districts willing to participate were asked to identify a paraprofessional facilitator to work with a study group of eight to 10 paraprofessionals from a particular school in their district. Over the past year, SERC assisted the facilitators with getting their groups together, identifying issue areas for discussion, and providing follow-up/support to the facilitators. SERC also held quarterly meetings with the facilitators to discuss the process as a whole and any particular problems paraprofessionals were facing in their individual schools. In total, nine schools completed the process during the past year. Although the first year results are still being analyzed by SERC, it expects to expand the study group process during the 2006-07 school year.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD)

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires state educational agencies to ensure that personnel necessary to carry out the provisions of IDEA, including paraprofessionals, are appropriately and adequately prepared and trained. The law further requires states to implement and maintain a “statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, interagency system” to provide early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families (i.e., a Comprehensive System for Personnel Development).¹⁷

The state education department has assigned the responsibility for coordinating, developing, and evaluating Connecticut’s service delivery system for children and young adults ages three through 21 with disabilities to SERC. Responsibility for statewide coordination of

¹⁷ 20 U.S.C. 1412 and 20 U.S.C. 1433.

programs serving infants and toddlers with disabilities has been given to the Department of Mental Retardation's Birth to Three (B-3) program.

As a way to integrate the two systems and enhance a coordinated approach for service delivery and oversight of the various entities working toward fulfilling the federal requirements for special education, the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Council (CSPDC) was established. A key function of the council is to ensure an adequate supply of well qualified personnel, including paraprofessionals, exists to work with children and young adults with disabilities.

The CSPDC is a 51-member body with a diverse membership. Teachers, principals, administrators, support personnel, other school personnel, early intervention and related services personnel, and parents of individuals with disabilities are represented on the council. A steering committee guides the council's work and any ideas/recommendations regarding personnel development go to SERC or the B-3 program for implementation. One of the council's current goals is to assess the impact of recently-published guidelines for paraprofessionals (discussed below) and examine professional development for paraprofessionals as it relates to NCLB. Committee staff will follow the council's progress in these areas during the next phase of the program review committee's study.

Paraprofessional Task Force. In November 2000, the State Advisory Council on Special Education (SAC)¹⁸ requested the state Department of Education examine the issue of standards for special education paraprofessionals. SAC asked that a task force be created and include school administrators, special education and regular education teachers, parents, private special education facilities, and paraprofessionals.

The education commissioner gave the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Council the responsibility of reviewing the request and examining the pertinent issues. The CSPDC convened the Paraprofessional Task Force in September 2001. The task force included representatives from CSPDC, SAC, the educational community, employee unions, and parents.

The task force examined several components of the paraprofessional profession, including: 1) roles and responsibilities; 2) credentials; 3) training; and 4) supervision and evaluation. The final product of the task force was a document entitled *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21*, which was published in May 2004.

The guidelines were developed for local school districts and programs as a tool "to define and execute a comprehensive support system for paraprofessionals and for staff who support paraprofessionals."¹⁹ They are intended to help school districts (as well as the state's Birth to

¹⁸ The State Advisory Council for Special Education is a mandated requirement of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act. The council, as outlined under C.G.S. Sec. 10-76i, consists of a diverse membership and advises the legislature, state education board, and state education commissioner on matters regarding the education of children with disabilities.

¹⁹ *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21*, May 2004, p. 5.

Three program) outline the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals and help identify training, supervision, and evaluation methods and resources for school districts and other programs utilizing paraprofessionals. The guidelines offer a framework of key competencies specific to paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who assist certified/licensed staff in Connecticut.

The task force developing the *Guidelines* document also examined whether standards should be implemented and what the standards should be. It was determined, similar to several other studies done in Connecticut in the past, that a system of state credentialing of paraprofessionals would not be considered by the task force.²⁰

The Department of Education loaned staff and resources to the task force and worked on the guidelines from the standpoint of special education. The department, however, never formally endorsed or adopted the document. Since then, SDE has used the document as a base to develop a broader training tool dealing with more than just special education. The department is working to make the *Guidelines* report a more encompassing document for all paraprofessionals.

Regional Educational Service Centers

The state's six Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs)²¹ currently offer professional development opportunities for paraprofessionals. According to the *Guidelines* document referenced above, each RESC offers training workshops to help paraprofessionals with the testing requirement required by No Child Left Behind. Additional information about those professional development programs will be compiled by program review staff.

²⁰ Two earlier reports in Connecticut that examined this issue were: Committee to Study the Role of Paraprofessionals (1990); and Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Task Force on Paraprofessionals (1996)

²¹ Regional Educational Service Centers are public educational authorities formed by four or more boards of education for the purpose of cooperative action to furnish programs and services.

Summary of Relevant Federal Laws

Several federal laws enacted over the past 30 years have affected paraprofessionals in Connecticut. Two key laws -- the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) -- have probably had the most influence on the increased use of paraprofessionals within the public school system and on their qualifications.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

The Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHCA) was enacted in 1975 as the nation's "special education law." In 1990, amendment of the act changed the name to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The law has been amended several times since its original enactment, with the most recent amendments in 2004 and related final regulations published in 2006. IDEA currently provides roughly \$12 billion to states to help educate approximately seven million children.²²

Among the purposes of IDEA are:²³

1. A) ensure children with disabilities have the same opportunity to receive a "free appropriate public education" as their nondisabled peers that emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs and prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living;

B) ensure the rights of children with disabilities and parents of such children are protected; and

C) assist states, localities, educational service agencies, and federal agencies to provide for the education of all children with disabilities;
2. ensure that educators and parents have the necessary tools to improve educational results for children with disabilities by supporting system improvement activities; coordinated research and personnel preparation; coordinated technical assistance, dissemination, and support; and technology development and media services; and
3. assess, and ensure the effectiveness of, efforts to educate children with disabilities.

²² Public Law 108-446 (Part B Sec. 611); U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System

²³ 20 U.S.C. 1400(d)

IDEA mandates that special needs children between the ages of three and 21 receive a free public education designed to meet their individualized needs in the most appropriate and least restrictive environment possible regardless of the level or severity of their disability. The law provides federal funds to assist states in the education of students with disabilities and requires that states make sure these students receive an individualized program for their education based on their unique needs, again in the least restrictive environment possible. The law also provides guidelines for determining what related services are necessary and outlines a due process procedure to ensure children's needs are adequately met.

IDEA mandates that an Individualized Education Program (IEP) be developed for each child who is enrolled in a special education class. Following an initial determination of a child's disability, the IEP is developed by a team consisting of: the student, when appropriate; one or both of the student's parents; family members or guardians; the student's teacher; a person from the school district (other than the student's teacher) who is qualified in special education or special education supervision; and other people (including paraprofessionals) who are involved in the education of the student as identified by the school or the parent. The IEP is a written, legal document used as the primary guide for the child's educational program. The IEP is to include measurable goals and be reviewed annually by the child's IEP team.

IDEA requires that students with disabilities be educated to the greatest extent possible with students who do not have disabilities. The law further requires that unless a child's IEP requires some other arrangement, the child must be educated in the school which he or she would attend if not disabled. Removal of the child from the regular classroom may occur only when education in regular classes cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

As indicated earlier in Section 1, the passage of EHC/IDEA provided greater access for children with special needs in public schools. Since EHC/IDEA, there has also been an increase in the use of paraprofessionals to help with the inclusion of special needs children in the public school system. Currently, the vast majority of noncertified staff with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut work with special needs students.

Elementary and Secondary Education Act and No Child Left Behind

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was originally enacted in 1965 as a way to help ensure all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. As the largest single federal investment in schooling, Title I of ESEA appropriated just under \$23 billion in Federal Fiscal Year 2006 in financial assistance to public schools with high numbers or percentages of poor children.²⁴ Title I funds may be used for children from preschool age to high school, but most of the students served (65 percent) are in grades 1 through 6; another 12 percent are in preschool or kindergarten programs. Overall, Title I (Part A) funding, which is the grant portion of the act for economically disadvantaged children,

²⁴ U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html#sec1002>

reaches about 12.5 million students enrolled in public and private schools. Approximately 50,000 public schools nationwide receive Title I funds.²⁵

Individual public schools with poverty rates above 40 percent may use Title I funds, along with other federal, state, and local funds, to operate a "schoolwide program" as a way to upgrade the instructional program for the whole school. Schools with poverty rates below 40 percent, or those choosing not to operate a schoolwide program, are considered a "targeted assistance program." ESEA requires schoolwide and targeted assistance programs be based on an effective means of improving student achievement and include strategies to support parental involvement.

No Child Left Behind Act. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 is the most recent federal reauthorization of ESEA and incorporates some significant changes to federal education policy. Similar to the goals of ESEA, No Child Left Behind is designed to help improve student academic performance and assist disadvantaged children in attaining high educational standards.

NCLB amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education in several key areas, with the goal of increasing the overall educational performance of the nation's poor children. Among other changes, states are now required to create an accountability system of assessments, graduation rates, and other indicators. State must make "adequate yearly progress" toward those indicators and increased measurement of students' progress in reading and math, mainly for those in grades 3-8, is also to occur. States and school districts are further required to prepare detailed "report cards" and give them to parents with the goal of providing parents with information about the performance of their child's school and which schools are performing well and which are not.

The act also requires additional standards for teachers and paraprofessionals to help ensure high quality instructors, which as discussed in this report, directly affects paraprofessionals in Connecticut. The rationale behind requiring additional standards for paraprofessionals stemmed in part from studies indicating paraprofessionals in many Title I schools have been used for teaching and assisting in teaching when their educational backgrounds do not qualify them for such responsibilities.²⁶ Current federal law allows paraprofessionals in schools supported with Title I funds to provide instructional support services only under the direct supervision of a teacher.

NCLB requires paraprofessionals working in schools supported by Title I funds to meet specific academic standards. For schoolwide programs, this means all paraprofessionals with instructional duties regardless of the source of funding for such paraprofessionals. For targeted-assistance schools, only paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities paid for with Title I funds are required to meet the standards. At minimum, *all* paraprofessionals with instructional duties and paid for with Title I funds must at least have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Paraprofessionals working in a Title I-supported school and providing student instruction must also meet one of the following requirements:

²⁵ U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

²⁶ U.S. Department of Education: Title I Paraprofessionals, *Non-Regulatory Guidance*, p. 1, March 1, 2004.

1. completed at least two years of postsecondary study;
2. obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or
3. met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).

For paraprofessionals hired after the NCLB passage date (January 8, 2002), the educational standards requirement became effective immediately upon passage of the act. Paraprofessionals already employed at that time were given a period of no later than four years after the date of enactment (until 2006) to meet the requirements.

The NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals do not apply to paraprofessionals working primarily as translators or solely on parental involvement activities. Paraprofessionals working in noninstructional roles (i.e., hall or playground monitor, food service, or personal care services) are not required to meet these academic standards.

APPENDIX B
 Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
Data Request Regarding K-12 Public School Paraprofessionals

Please answer the questions below based on all of the public schools operated by your school district. Please provide data from October 1, 2005, unless otherwise specified. If any questions are unclear, please contact the committee staff office for clarification (Tel. 860/240-0300).

Name of your school district: _____

School Level	No. of Public Schools in Your District	Total No. of Students in Those Schools on October 1, 2005
Elementary		
Middle		
High		

Note: When the term “paraprofessional with *instructional* responsibilities” is used in this document, it refers to a non-certified, school-based employee who works under the direct supervision of a teacher or other certified professional educator and who assists the teacher or other professional educator with the delivery of instructional and related support services to students. School districts may refer to such individuals by various titles (e.g., paraprofessional, paraeducator, classroom aide, teacher’s assistant, instructional aide, tutor, etc.).

1. What job title(s) does your school district use for personnel who fit the description of “paraprofessional with *instructional* responsibilities” described in the Note above?

- 1a. When you submit this form, please provide a copy of the job description for each title listed in Question 1.

Demographic Information

2. For all paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities who were employed in grades K-12 by the schools operated by your school district on October 1, 2005, please indicate the number of individuals within each of the categories listed in the table below.

School Level	Total Number of Paraprofessionals with <i>Instructional</i> Responsibilities	No. Male	No. Female	No. White	No. Black	No. Hispanic	No. Asian	No. American Indian
Elementary								
Middle								
High								

3. For the same paraprofessionals described in Question 2, please indicate the number who fall within each of the age ranges listed in the table below.

School Level	Number within specified age ranges			
	Under 35	35 - 49	50-59	60 and over
Elementary				
Middle				
High				

4. For the same paraprofessionals described in Question 2, please indicate in the table below the number employed full time versus part time, the standard number of hours each category typically works per week, and the percentage who work the specified portions of the year.

School Level	Number of:		Number of hours per week typically worked by:		<i>Percentage</i> of paraprofessionals who work specified portion of the year		
	Full-time paras	Part-time paras	Full-time paras	Part-time paras	Less than 10 months	10-month school year	12 months
Elementary							
Middle							
High							

5. For the same paraprofessionals described in Question 2, please indicate the number who were employed by your school district for the specified periods of time listed in the table below.

School Level	Number with specified length of employment, as of October 1, 2005			
	2 years or less	3 - 5 years	6 - 10 years	More than 10 years
Elementary				
Middle				
High				

Qualifications

6. How many paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities who were employed in grades K-12 by your school district on October 1, 2005, were in positions that required them to meet the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) qualification requirements related to Title 1 by the end of the school year? _____

6a. Who (i.e., job title) within your school district is responsible for confirming individual paraprofessional compliance with the NCLB requirements? _____

6b. What methods are used to determine paraprofessional compliance with the NCLB requirements?

7. Does your school district have any minimum education or experience requirements for paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities in addition to the ones required under NCLB? yes ___ no ___

7a. If yes, what are those requirements? _____

8. Does your school district conduct any type of performance evaluation of paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities at any time after they are hired? yes ___ no ___

If yes: 8a. Who (i.e., job title) does the evaluation? _____

8b. How often is the evaluation conducted? _____

9. For all of the paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities employed in grades K-12 by your school district, please indicate in the table below the highest level of education achieved by each as of *June 30, 2006*.

Highest Level of Education Achieved as of <i>June 30, 2006</i>	Number of paraprofessionals with <i>instructional</i> responsibilities who are:	
	required to meet NCLB requirements	<u>not</u> required to meet NCLB requirements
(a) Do not have high school diploma or GED		
(b) High school diploma or GED		
(c) Associate's degree or two years of college study		
(d) Bachelor's degree		
(e) Post four-year college degree		
(f) Unknown		

10. As of *June 30, 2006*, what **percentage** of the paraprofessionals listed in row (b) of Question 9 who are required to meet NCLB requirements have passed the ParaPro Assessment? _____ percent

Professional Development

11. Regarding professional development for the paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities employed by your district, please indicate which of the following actions your district takes. (Please check all that apply.)
- a. Require attendance at periodic training
 - b. Offer voluntary programs specifically for paraprofessionals
 - c. Allow attendance at programs for teachers
 - d. Encourage paraprofessionals to continue their education
 - e. None of the above

Responsibilities

12. From the functions listed below, please select the three that are most commonly performed by the paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities currently working in grades K-12 in your school district. (Please check only three items.)
- a. Assist teacher with classroom management
 - b. Organize instructional materials
 - c. Modify or adapt classroom curriculum
 - d. Give individualized attention to one or a small number of students within classroom while teacher works with other students
 - e. Provide one-on-one tutoring outside normal classroom hours
 - f. Provide support in library or media center
 - g. Provide computer laboratory assistance to students
 - h. Provide speech-language assistance to students
 - i. Provide input into assessments and/or grades
 - j. Conduct parental involvement activities
 - k. Work with gifted and talented students
 - l. Act as a translator or interpreter
 - m. Assist with Individualized Education Programs
 - n. Facilitate student's inclusion in general education classroom
 - o. Facilitate interaction with student's peers
 - p. Visit home-schooled students
 - q. Other (please specify) _____

13. Within your school district, what percentage of the students at each school level work with paraprofessionals in an *instructional* capacity on a daily basis?

School Level	Percentage of students working with paraprofessionals in an instructional capacity on a daily basis
Elementary	
Middle	
High	

Wages and Benefits

14. Please indicate in the table below the minimum and maximum annual salary or hourly wage for paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities employed by your school district during the 2004-2005 school year, as well as the number of steps from the bottom to the top of the pay scale. (If your district has more than one category of paraprofessionals, instead of filling in the table, please submit a copy of the district salary schedule for all relevant positions.)

	Minimum annual salary <u>or</u> hourly wage	Maximum annual salary <u>or</u> hourly wage	Steps in Range
Full Time			
Part Time			

15. Do any paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities employed by your school district receive the following fringe benefits:

- health insurance? yes ___ no ___
- dental coverage? yes ___ no ___
- opportunity to participate in a retirement plan? yes ___ no ___
- education assistance or tuition reimbursement? yes ___ no ___

16. If you answered yes to any part of Question 15, in order to receive those benefits, do paraprofessionals:

- have to work a minimum number of hours per week? yes ___ no ___ If yes, how many hours? _____
- have to be employed a minimum length of time? yes ___ no ___ If yes, how many months? _____
- have to perform certain duties? yes ___ no ___
If yes, what duties? _____

17. Are the paraprofessionals in your school district represented by a union? yes ___ no ___

If yes, which union? _____

Turnover

18. For each of the past five school years, what percentage of the paraprofessionals with *instructional* responsibilities who were employed in grades K - 12 by your school district during each school year did not return the following year?

After School Year	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Percentage who did not return					

Student Performance

19. Has your district established any academic benchmarks or other measures to assess student performance for students who work with paraprofessionals in an *instructional* capacity on a daily basis? yes ___ no ___

- 19a. If yes, please describe the benchmarks/measures and any results reported to date.

Person to contact, if there are questions about the information provided in this form:

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. (____) _____

School Districts Responding to the Program Review Data Request (as of September 12, 2006)

Andover	Hampton	Regional School District #10
Ashford	Hartland	Regional School District #13
Avon	Hebron	Regional School District #15
Barkhamsted	Kent	Regional School District #16
Bethany	Ledyard	Regional School District #17
Bloomfield	Manchester	Ridgefield
Bozrah	Marlborough	Rocky Hill
Bristol	Meriden	Salem
Brookfield	Middletown	Salisbury
Canaan	Milford	Scotland
Canton	Monroe	Sharon
Chaplin	Montville	Sherman
Chester	New Britain	Somers
Clinton	New Canaan	Southington
Colebrook	New Hartford	Sprague
Columbia	New Haven	Stafford
Cornwall	New London	Stamford
Coventry	New Milford	Stratford
Cromwell	Newtown	Thomaston
Deep River	Norfolk	Thompson
Derby	North Canaan	Tolland
East Granby	North Haven	Torrington
East Haddam	North Stonington	Trumbull
East Hampton	Norwalk	Vernon
East Hartford	Orange	Voluntown
East Haven	Oxford	Wallingford
East Lyme	Plainfield	Waterford
Eastford	Plainville	Westbrook
Easton	Plymouth	Weston
Enfield	Preston	Westport
Essex	Putnam	Wethersfield
Fairfield	Redding	Willington
Farmington	Regional School District #1	Windsor
Granby	Regional School District #4	Windsor Locks
Griswold	Regional School District #7	Wolcott
Groton	Regional School District #8	Woodbridge
Guilford	Regional School District #9	Woodstock
		Woodstock Academy