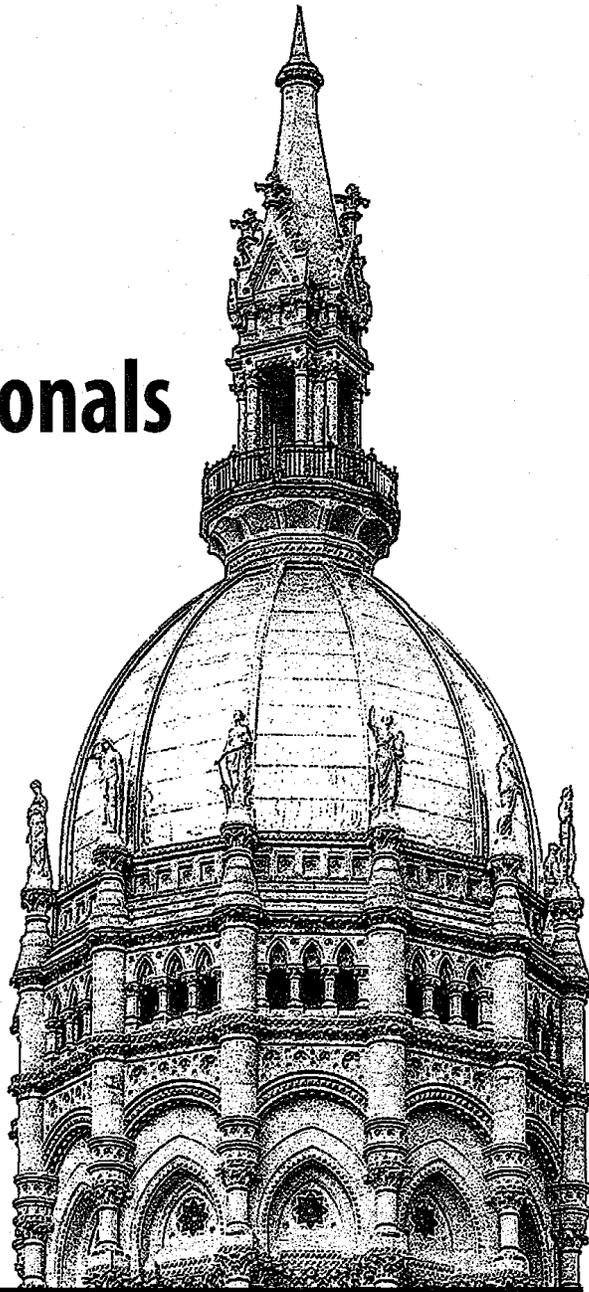


School Paraprofessionals

December 2006



**Legislative Program Review and
Investigations Committee**

Connecticut General Assembly

**CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW AND INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE**

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LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM REVIEW
& INVESTIGATIONS COMMITTEE

School Paraprofessionals

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Executive Summary

School Paraprofessionals

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee authorized a study of school paraprofessionals in April 2006. The study focused on whether Connecticut should establish minimum standards for public school paraprofessionals who perform instructional tasks for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) and whether different categories should be established for different duties. Findings and recommendations were made in several areas affecting paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, including the development of a state credential, professional development, supervision, implementation of guidelines for paraprofessionals established by a previous state task force, and data collection.

Overall, the program review committee found that the recurring themes identified in past studies of paraprofessionals in Connecticut, the sentiments expressed by existing paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities regarding their place in the education system, and the recent creation of federal standards for paraprofessionals working in Title I schools justify the creation of a set of state standards.

Establishing a state-issued credential based on specific standards would be a significant step toward enhancing the overall professionalism of paraprofessionals in Connecticut, while at the same time balancing the needs of local school districts. The committee determined that any state standards for paraprofessionals should be developed through the State Department of Education (SDE) and balance three goals: 1) the needs of paraprofessionals; 2) the autonomy of local school districts regarding education issues; and 3) the resources of state government.

Report Content

A key component of the report is a detailed profile of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in Connecticut's local public schools, which was never previously developed on a statewide basis. The profile -- developed through information collected from school districts and contained in an in-house database -- includes an analysis of various demographic characteristics of instructional paraprofessionals, a summary of wages and benefits provided to instructional paraprofessionals, a synopsis of their main duties and responsibilities, and the educational backgrounds and tenure of paraprofessionals.

The report also contains an analysis of the degree to which individual school districts in the state have implemented specific standards. A summary of the other states that have implemented standards for instructional paraprofessionals is included, as are the various federal requirements for paraprofessionals and the changes made to those requirements over time.

State-level efforts in Connecticut over the past several decades to study specific issues relevant to instructional paraprofessionals were also reviewed in the study. A synopsis of the national literature regarding the overall effectiveness of instructional paraprofessionals on student achievement is provided.

Paraprofessionals in Connecticut

The role of paraprofessionals has changed over time from when paraprofessionals first began working in public schools several decades ago. Originally used as an additional resource to provide clerical assistance to teachers, paraprofessionals in the modern-day classroom perform multiple functions. Chief among those functions is assisting teachers to instruct a wide array of students, particularly students with special needs.

In Connecticut, the State Department of Education reported approximately 37,000 noncertified staff (i.e., paraprofessionals) were employed by the state's local public schools for School Year 2005-06. Of those, roughly 12,000 paraprofessionals provided instructional services to students, with nearly two-thirds working in the area of special education.

Analysis conducted as part of the program review committee study revealed the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals assisting with student instruction in Connecticut's public schools are extremely diverse, and a multitude of titles are used by districts across the state for such employees. Over 50 different job titles are used to describe paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut's public schools.

Because data at the state level about paraprofessionals are limited, a key source of information used in the review was a database developed from information collected from 119 of the 169 (70 percent) public school districts in the state. Information about paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities was collected in several areas, including general demographics, wages and benefits, qualifications, duties and responsibilities, professional development, turnover, and student performance. Using this information, a profile was developed of public school paraprofessionals in Connecticut who assist with student instruction.

Results from the data collection effort showed that, as of October 1, 2005, a majority of the roughly 8,700 instructional paraprofessionals employed by the local public school districts that responded to the program review data request were:

- working at the elementary school level;
- female;
- white;
- under the age of 50;
- high school graduates (and 48 percent had at least two years of college);
- working full time during the 10-month school year;
- not new employees, having worked as instructional paraprofessionals in the district for at least two years;
- earning a minimum of \$11.72 per hour (based on SY 2004-05 data);
- offered some type of health and dental insurance and the opportunity to participate in a retirement plan; and
- covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

In terms of the 119 local school districts that provided information to the program review committee, the database indicates that on average (using median numbers) the districts:

- employed 47 instructional paraprofessionals each in October 2005;
- evaluated their performance annually;
- provided some form of periodic training;
- required full-time paraprofessionals to work 32.5 hours per week;
- paid such full-time employees at least \$11.49 per hour during SY 04-05; and
- retained at least 90 percent of existing paraprofessionals from year to year.

Information received from the school districts also indicated that many paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities were actively involved with students for the entire workday. However, the total number of students who interacted with paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities on a daily basis was low in many districts.

Standards for Paraprofessionals

The changes evident in the modern-day classroom have brought increased attention to the quality of the personnel assigned to help students learn. Although no state-level education or training standards exist in Connecticut for instructional paraprofessionals, the committee found various school districts throughout the state have established their own requirements for paraprofessionals. Of the 119 districts responding to the data request, 60 districts had some form of standards for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, while another four districts had preferences. Typically, districts required some form of formal education -- either a high school diploma or at least two years of college -- for their paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities.

Federal standards. The issue of standards for paraprofessionals was heightened by the imposition of federal requirements for some paraprofessionals in 2002. Following a study by the federal Department of Education, which found a high percentage of paraprofessionals in schools supported with federal funds were instructing students even though they did not have the proper education qualifications to do so, standards for instructional paraprofessionals were implemented under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The standards apply to paraprofessionals working in any “schoolwide” school supported with Title I funds, regardless of whether the funds are used to pay for the paraprofessionals. Paraprofessionals working in “targeted assistance” schools that use Title I funds to pay for those positions must also meet the federal standards.

The program review committee found that several local school districts in Connecticut now require all newly hired paraprofessionals providing instructional services to meet the federal standards, even if the paraprofessionals are not covered under the federal law.

Other states. Nationally, 17 states have established statutory standards for individuals who are instructional paraprofessionals (as defined by the program review committee). The

requirements vary from state to state and are optional in one state (New Hampshire). The three requirements used most frequently in other states for instructional paraprofessionals include possessing a high school diploma, obtaining a specific number of college credits, and having relevant work experience.

Previous Studies in Connecticut

The question of establishing minimum standards for instructional paraprofessionals is not new in Connecticut. Multiple state-level groups have examined this issue and have produced several reports on the topic dating back to the mid-1970s. Although none of the previous studies outlined a state credential based on specific requirements as a condition to work as an instructional paraprofessional, the most recent study in 2001 outlined a draft set of “guidelines” for school districts to use for paraprofessionals working with special needs students. The guidelines, modified from those developed by the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals Model in 1999, sought to clarify the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals and develop a framework of key competencies for instructional paraprofessionals in Connecticut. They also identified methods and resources for the training, supervision, and evaluation of instructional paraprofessionals.

To date, the guidelines have been distributed to all local public school districts in the state, yet are still considered draft. Moreover, neither the State Board of Education nor the State Department of Education has officially endorsed or adopted the guidelines. The department is currently working with the State Education Resource Center to broaden the guidelines to include paraprofessionals working with all types of students, not just those with special needs.

Professional Development

Based on information received from school districts as part of the committee’s data request, a high percentage of districts are cognizant of the need for professional development for paraprofessionals and are addressing the issue in various ways. What is not indicated by the results, however, is the specific nature of the training, the overall quality of the training, whether the training helps instructional paraprofessionals become more effective in their profession, or the paraprofessionals’ satisfaction level with the training they receive.

There are no statewide standards for the amount or type of professional development paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in local public schools must receive. Further, there was general consensus among paraprofessionals, school principals, and special education supervisors interviewed during the study that professional development for paraprofessionals needs to be strengthened.

The committee found concerns among some that there is not enough training for paraprofessionals, not all districts pay the cost of training, and paraprofessionals have to attend training on their own time. Although some of those issues are part of the collective bargaining process and thus outside the scope of the study, the committee believes adequate and appropriate training should be available to instructional paraprofessionals. Any state requirements, however, must be balanced with the needs of paraprofessionals and the autonomy of local school districts regarding education issues.

Professional development is not limited to paraprofessionals. The program review committee found a need for teachers, particularly new teachers, to receive training on the purpose of instructional paraprofessionals and how to interact with paraprofessionals, especially within the classroom. At present, there is variability in training provided to teachers regarding the overall duties and responsibilities of instructional paraprofessionals.

In terms of overall coordination at the state level, the education department works with various groups to ensure professional development for paraprofessionals is offered. The department, however, does not assess the overall professional development needs of paraprofessionals from a statewide perspective. As a result, additional emphasis is needed at the state level to identify and coordinate the training needs of paraprofessionals.

Supervision

State regulation requires anyone employed by a local public school district and not directly supervised in the delivery of instructional services to students to have the appropriate state educator certification. The committee received anecdotal information that there have been instances where paraprofessionals may be put in situations that could be considered “teaching” without the presence or guidance of a certified employee. There is no way of fully knowing the extent this is occurring statewide, yet it is important that local districts make certain that noncertified staff are not placed in situations that violate the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. The Department of Education should take steps to ensure school districts follow state regulations in this regard.

Data Collection

Overall, the information at the state level on paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities employed by local public school districts is limited. The Department of Education collects information about noncertified staff, including paraprofessionals, yet any type of statewide analysis of paraprofessionals based on this information is limited. The department, however, has recently required school districts to report specific information to the department regarding Title I paraprofessionals, which the program review committee believes is important and should be made available publicly.

Recommendations

The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee adopted the following recommendations:

1) The State Department of Education shall develop a state-issued credential for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in Connecticut’s K-12 public schools and submit a plan to implement the credential by January 1, 2008, to the legislative committee of cognizance over education. The State Department of Education shall require that any applicant seeking the credential be a citizen of the United States or an alien legally resident in the United States.

2) The Department of Higher Education should begin working with institutions of higher education in Connecticut to establish a network of programs within the community-technical college and state university systems that will provide instructional paraprofessionals with career development opportunities through relevant, accessible, and affordable programs.

3) The State Department of Education should periodically contact a sample of paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators -- through unions, school districts, the State Education Resource Center, and Regional Education Service Centers -- to identify the professional development needs of instructional paraprofessionals and any problem areas that may exist. Following such an assessment, the department should begin coordinating, from a statewide perspective, professional development offerings that meet the needs of instructional paraprofessionals. As part of that effort, SDE should report the results of the assessment to the Department of Higher Education.

4) The State Department of Education should encourage all local public school districts to provide training to teachers, particularly new teachers at the beginning of each school year, on the role and effective use of instructional paraprofessionals. The department should also encourage school districts to develop intradistrict methods and strategies whereby paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators periodically discuss issues or concerns involving the use of paraprofessionals in providing effective student instruction.

5) The State Department of Education should periodically remind local school districts that existing regulations prohibit the use of noncertified personnel in an initial teaching role. Further, the department should develop a mechanism to periodically monitor local school compliance with this requirement.

6) The State Department of Education should finalize those portions of the May 2004 *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21: Working Draft* concerning roles, responsibilities, and training that it believes would be helpful to all paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut and submit that document to the State Board of Education by September 2007 for its approval.

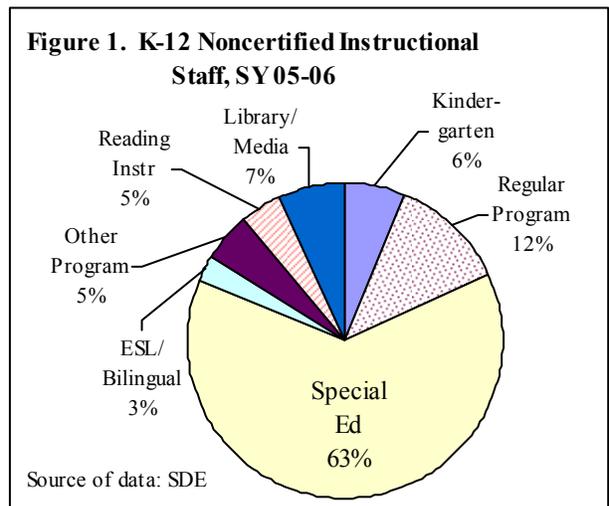
7) The State Department of Education should summarize the information about Title I paraprofessionals that it will collect annually and post the information on the agency's website. At a minimum, the posted data should include the number of paraprofessionals covered by No Child Left Behind requirements, the number who have not met the NCLB requirements, the number of districts with paraprofessionals out of compliance, and the types of actions taken by those districts to comply (i.e., terminated staff, transferred staff, or did nothing).

Introduction

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. According to the federal Department of Education, the use of such paraprofessionals nationwide has increased 123 percent over the last two decades alone.¹

In Connecticut, according to data compiled by the State Department of Education (SDE), during School Year (SY) 2005-2006, approximately 37,000 noncertified full-time equivalent (FTE) staff were employed by local school districts to work in kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12). Of these, about 25,000 were noncertified “noninstructional” staff, while 12,046 were noncertified “instructional” paraprofessionals, assigned to help teachers with instructional and related services.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the noncertified “instructional” staff subdivided into the seven categories used by SDE. As indicated, nearly two-thirds worked in the area of special education.



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 had 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.

¹ U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics (July 2005).

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 focused on paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who work with students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The definition of a “paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities” used in the study was:

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.²

The primary focus of the committee’s review was on whether the state should establish minimum standards for public school paraprofessionals who perform instructional tasks. The committee looked 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.

The program review committee’s recommendations concerning instructional paraprofessionals are intended to reflect the evolution of education in the Connecticut public schools of the 21st century. The specific proposals are guided by three primary themes -- increasing the professionalism of paraprofessionals, preserving local autonomy as it relates to education issues, and balancing state resources. The details of the recommendations and the rationale for each are presented in Chapter Five.

Terminology. Although the term “paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities” was used during the study, the intent was to include all noncertified instructional staff who perform the same functions, regardless of their job title. Indeed, while individuals who provide the support services covered by the committee’s definition are often referred to as paraprofessionals, other job titles are also used for people in those positions. Table 1 lists commonly used titles for such positions in Connecticut.

Table 1. Job Titles Commonly Used For Instructional Paraprofessionals In Connecticut		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Paraprofessional • Classroom Paraprofessional • Educational Paraprofessional • Instructional Paraprofessional • Special Education Paraprofessional 	<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

² 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.

Methodology

Information about school paraprofessionals in Connecticut and other states was obtained from a variety of sources. Limited data were available at the state level so the primary tools used to gather Connecticut-specific information were a data collection form sent to local public school districts in the state and a series of interviews.

The data collection 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. Information was requested about the demographic profile of existing paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, as well as the minimum qualifications, day-to-day duties, professional development, and compensation (i.e., wages and benefits) of those employees. A total of 119 of the 169 forms were returned, for a response rate of 70 percent. The data from those forms were the major source of information about instructional paraprofessionals working in Connecticut today. Chapter Two summarizes the responses to the questions, while Appendix B provides additional information about the data collection process.

A second data collection form was mailed to the 19 labor unions that represent paraprofessionals in one or more school districts in Connecticut. That form sought complementary information about the distribution and compensation of paraprofessionals in the state. The response rate was 53 percent, but many of the questions were only partially completed for a lower response rate on individual questions. Consequently, the responses to that form were not included in this report.

During the course of the study, program review committee staff spoke with employees of the State Department of Education and the State Education Resource Center (SERC), principals who belong to the Connecticut Association of Schools, the executive director of the Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, special education supervisors from two local school districts, and administrators from the state university system and the Connecticut Community Colleges. In addition, the Connecticut Education Association submitted a written statement on its position regarding paraprofessionals.

Program review staff met with three groups of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities from the three unions representing the largest number of instructional paraprofessionals in the state to obtain information about their roles and responsibilities, as well as their perspective on the issues under review. Those workers were employed by 38 different districts. Staff also talked to several individual paraprofessionals, including a few not covered by collective bargaining agreements. In November, committee staff attended a full-day, annual statewide paraprofessionals conference sponsored by SERC.

On September 21, 2006, the program review committee held a public hearing regarding the issues in this and one other study. A total of 11 people spoke or submitted testimony related to the topic of paraprofessionals.

Information about federal requirements and the regulation of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in other states was obtained from printed reports, regulatory websites, telephone conversations, and e-mail correspondence. Various national sources and literature about paraprofessionals were also used.

Report Content

This report is divided into six chapters. The first describes the role of school paraprofessionals, including the evolution from primarily clerical duties to assisting with instructional duties. Chapter Two provides a detailed profile of Connecticut paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, based on the responses to the program review data request sent to local school districts. Chapter Three summarizes federal, state, and local employment requirements affecting paraprofessionals in Connecticut. It also contains some information about how other states regulate these workers. Chapter Four briefly describes the state entities that are involved in general oversight and training for paraprofessionals. Chapter Five contains the program review committee's recommendations regarding school paraprofessionals, while Chapter Six describes an optional model that could be used to establish a credentialing system for instructional paraprofessionals.

Appendix A summarizes key federal laws relevant to the use and employment of paraprofessionals today. Appendix B describes the process used to compile the school district database, includes a copy of the data collection form, and lists the local school districts that responded to the committee's request for information.

Agency Response

It is the policy of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee to provide agencies subject to a study with an opportunity to review and comment on the recommendations prior to publication of the final report. Appendix C contains the response from the State Department of Education.

Chapter One

Duties and Responsibilities

Paraprofessionals provide an array of services to students and teachers, with the role changing over time. 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 factors such as the paraprofessional's level of experience and/or education, and the needs of the particular students in the classroom.

It is also important to reiterate that paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities are not replacements for teachers. The dictionary lists multiple definitions for the word "para," including beside, near, alongside, and assistant. Each of those definitions reflects the fact that there is a connection between the "para" and another person. Thus, the school paraprofessional is not expected to work alone, but instead is part of a team, working under the supervision of the teacher.

Evolution of Duties and Number of Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals began working in public schools in the 1950s as an additional resource to help alleviate the 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.

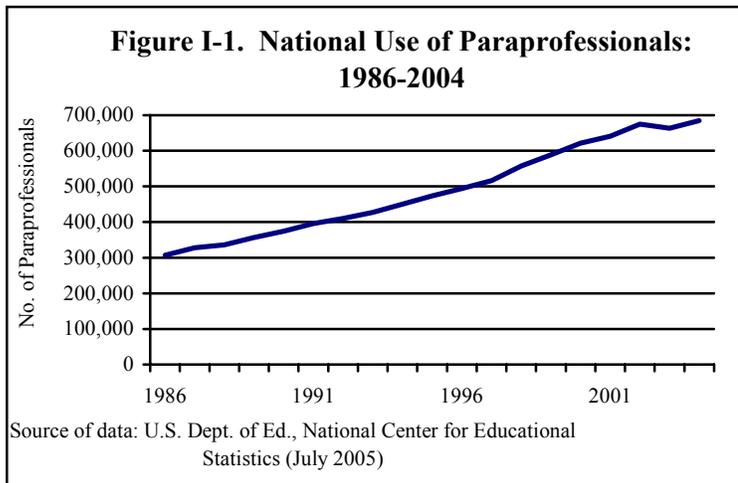
During the 1960s and 1970s, several major federal acts were passed to help address social changes occurring nationwide at that time. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHC) of 1975 were passed to help meet the educational and economic needs of the country's disadvantaged and disabled children and youth. (See Appendix A for a more detailed description 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" (LRE) 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 that 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 Chapter Two.) 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. 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.

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 (NCLB) Act of 2002, certain types of paraprofessionals are now required to meet specific minimum qualifications as a condition of employment. (This is discussed further in Chapter Three.)

Mainstreaming/inclusion of special education students. The scope of the committee’s study included 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 students with special needs in public schools.

In 1990, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Similar to its enabling act, IDEA requires special needs students to be educated with their nondisabled peers using the same curriculum, extracurricular activities, and other programs as their nondisabled peers in the least restrictive environment 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

³ Even though the study scope used the term “mainstream,” the study examined the role of paraprofessionals in educating children with special needs so as to include both the mainstreaming and inclusion concepts.

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 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.

The terms “inclusion” and “mainstreaming” are not used in federal law or regulation. The relevant language under IDEA refers to special needs students being educated with their nondisabled peers to the maximum extent appropriate in the least restrictive environment possible with the necessary supports and services.

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 monitor lunchroom and hallway activities, supervise students during recess, or perform basic clerical tasks.

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.

It is clear that *the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals in Connecticut are extremely diverse*. Examples of the various duties and responsibilities performed by instructional paraprofessionals in Connecticut are provided in Table I-1. The two columns on the right side of the table indicate the extent to which each task is commonly performed within the local school districts that responded to the program review data request. Although the duties and responsibilities are diverse, most 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.

Table I-1. Functions of Instructional Paraprofessionals Identified by Local School Districts in Connecticut		
<i>Functions Most Commonly Performed by Paraprofessionals with Instructional Responsibilities</i>	<i>Among top three (N=100)</i>	<i>Among more than three* (N=15)</i>
Assist teacher with classroom management	31	12
Organize instructional materials	35	14
Modify or adapt classroom curriculum	20	8
Give individualized attention to one or a small number of students within classroom while teacher works with other students	93	15
Provide one-on-one tutoring outside normal classroom hours	3	2
Provide support in library or media center	6	8
Provide computer laboratory assistance to students	2	8
Provide speech-language assistance to students	0	2
Provide input into assessments and/or grades	0	2
Conduct parental involvement activities	0	1
Work with gifted and talented students	0	1
Act as a translator or interpreter	0	0
Assist with Individualized Education Programs	44	9
Facilitate student's inclusion in general education classroom	57	13
Facilitate interaction with student's peers	9	12
Visit home-schooled students	0	1
* Districts were asked to select the three functions most commonly performed. Some districts selected more than three, and those responses were coded separately. (Four districts did not answer the question at all.)		
Source of data: PRI database		

Paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities typically work with students 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.

The actual settings where instructional paraprofessionals work vary from district to district and school to school, depending on the programs offered and the students enrolled. Some paraprofessionals may be assigned to a particular classroom, computer lab, or media center, spending all day in a single location. Other paraprofessionals may be assigned to a specific student, and as needed will accompany that student to different parts of the school. Paraprofessionals who are considered “floaters” will work in multiple classrooms and/or grade levels during the course of a school day and assist multiple teachers, performing a variety of duties, depending on the needs of each teacher.

The use of instructional paraprofessionals means 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. Regardless of the particular assignments paraprofessionals may have, however, they are typically supervised either by the teacher(s) with whom they work or their school’s principal.

The paraprofessionals working in Connecticut with whom program review staff spoke noted that during the course of a single school day, they may be required to perform multiple functions, including some or all of those listed in Table I-1. Furthermore, the tasks that comprise a given function may be very broad, and some may overlap other identified functions. For example, the duties that fall under the most commonly selected function “Give individualized attention to one or a small number of students...” could incorporate aspects of organizing instructional materials or the modification of curriculum. Indeed, the tasks performed by paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working with students might include:

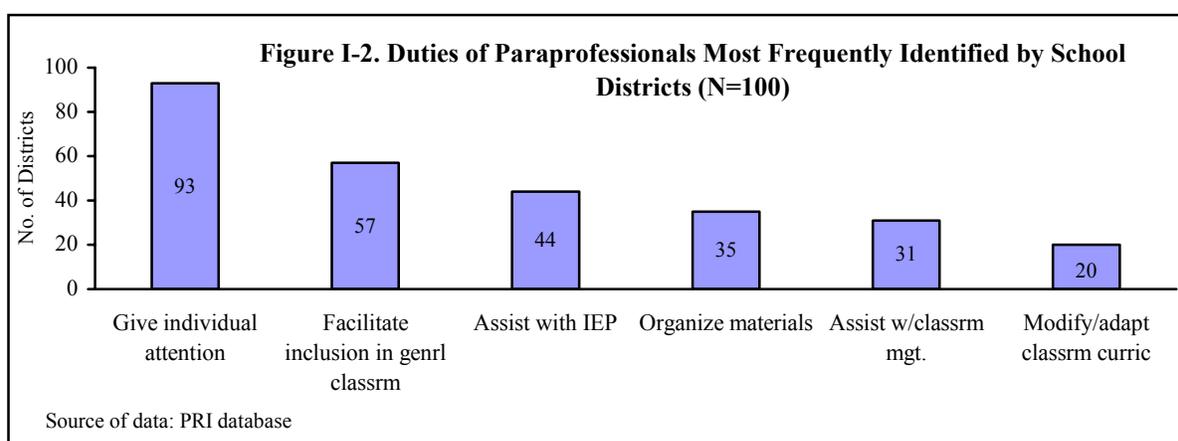
- helping the students interpret and follow directions the teacher has given;
- conducting drills with the students to reinforce mathematical equations or reading vocabulary the teacher previously presented to the entire class;
- reviewing homework assignments with the students based on answers provided by the teacher;
- assisting the students during a test by reducing the number of questions that have to be answered, based on the teacher’s authorization; and
- providing the students with complementary, alternative activities appropriate to their level to keep them “on task” with the teacher’s lesson.

As mentioned previously, in some schools, paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities also have to perform noninstructional tasks. Depending on the students they are working with, they may have to lift students, help with toileting, or accompany a student to an activity, such as recess or an assembly. At certain times of the day, some instructional paraprofessionals are required to monitor playgrounds and lunchrooms, while others may ride the school bus with specific students. The frequency of these assignments ranges from occasionally to regularly.

Many paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut are actively involved with students for the entire workday. Indeed, several paraprofessionals who met with

committee staff expressed frustration that there is little or no time to confer with individual teachers about the progress of the students that the paraprofessional is working with or about overall lesson planning. Consequently, the paraprofessionals must rely on their previous experiences to guide them on how to adapt broad guidance previously provided by the teacher regarding the best ways to help students with their lessons.

From the list of 16 duties listed in Table I-1, districts were asked to select the three functions most commonly performed by the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in their district. Figure I-2 shows the six duties most frequently selected by respondents. The duty “Give individualized attention to one or a small number of students within the classroom while teacher works with other students” was overwhelmingly the most commonly chosen duty for paraprofessionals in the database, having been selected by 93 districts.⁴



The only other duty chosen by more than half the respondents was “Facilitate student’s inclusion in general education classroom,” which was selected by 57 percent of the districts that limited their answer to three choices. The remaining duties chosen by more than 10 districts were “Assist with Individualized Education Programs” (44 percent), “Organize instructional materials” (35 percent), “Assist teacher with classroom management” (31 percent), and “Modify or adapt classroom curriculum” (20 percent).

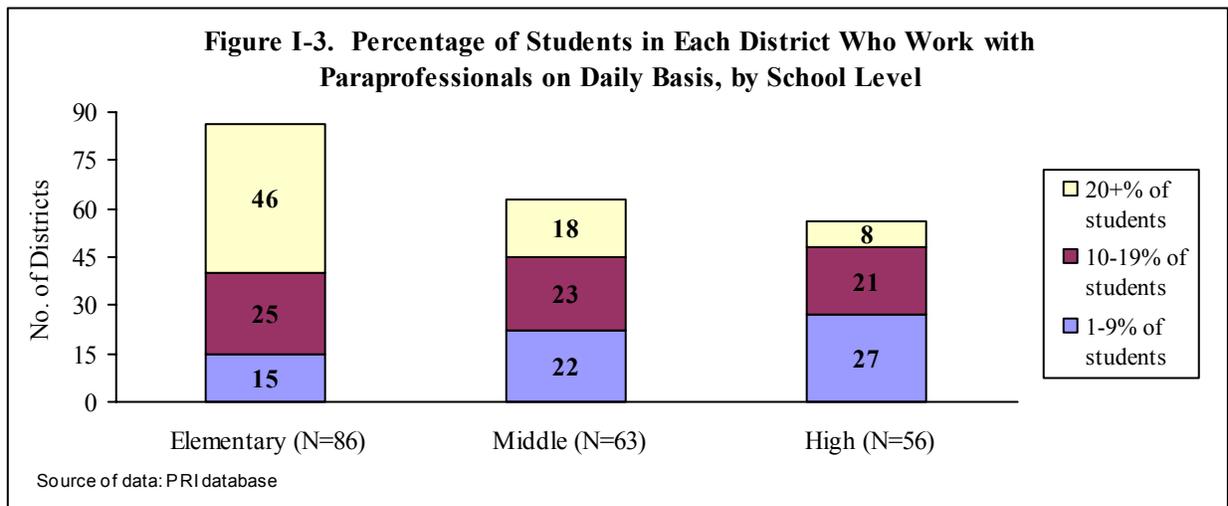
Interaction with Students

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 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.

⁴ The data in Figure I-2 do not account for the 19 districts that either made more than three choices or did not choose any of the listed duties. It is worth noting, however, that all 15 of the districts that selected more than three duties included the top choice shown in Figure I-2 among their selections.

The total number of students who interact with paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities on a daily basis is low in many districts. Only 21 districts in the PRI database indicated a majority of the students at any school level interact daily with paraprofessionals in an instructional capacity, with 10 of those districts indicating all of the students at one or more school levels have that type of daily interaction.

Figure I-3 illustrates by school level the extent of the interaction between students and instructional paraprofessionals 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.)



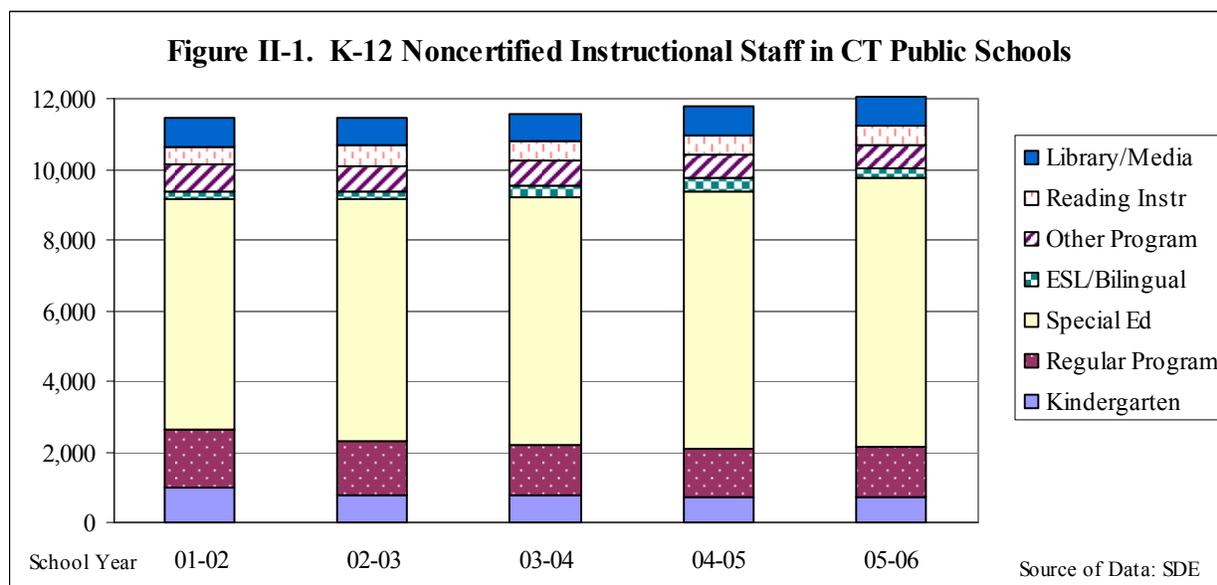
At the elementary level, just over half of the 86 districts indicated 20 percent or more of the students have that amount of interaction. Among the 63 districts operating middle schools that responded, just over one-quarter indicated 20 percent or more of the students receive instruction from paraprofessionals daily, while only 14 percent of the 56 districts operating high schools that responded indicated 20 percent or more of the students at that level had daily contact.

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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 2001-02 through 2005-06. The total count of noncertified “instructional” paraprofessionals increased 5 percent during those five years, rising from 11,440 to 12,046. To put these numbers in context, for school year 2005-06, statewide there were also almost 25,000 noncertified, “noninstructional” staff employed by districts to work in grades K-12. 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]

Summary Profile

The questions on the program review data request sent to the local school districts asked for demographic information about the instructional paraprofessionals employed by those districts as well as the qualifications, training opportunities, and compensation (i.e., wages and benefits) of those employees. Responses to those questions are described in detail below.

In summary, however, the database indicates that a majority of the approximately 8,700 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities employed in October 2005 by the local public school districts that responded to the program review data request were:

- working at the elementary school level;
- female;
- white;
- under the age of 50;
- high school graduates (and 48 percent had at least two years of college);
- working full time during the 10-month school year;
- not new employees, having worked as instructional paraprofessionals in the district for at least two years;
- earning a minimum of \$11.72 per hour (based on SY 2004-05 data);
- offered some type of health and dental insurance and the opportunity to participate in a retirement plan; and
- covered by a collective bargaining agreement.

In terms of the 119 local school districts that provided information to the program review committee, the database indicates that on average (using median numbers) the districts:

- employed 47 instructional paraprofessionals each in October 2005;
- evaluated their performance annually;
- provided some form of periodic training;
- required full-time paraprofessionals to work 32.5 hours per week;
- paid such full-time employees at least \$11.49 an hour (during SY 04-05); and
- retained at least 90 percent of existing paraprofessionals from year to year.

Data In Detail

The local school districts included in the program review database reported employing 8,691 K-12 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in October 2005. The number per district ranged from one to 494.

Figure II-2 shows the distribution of the paraprofessionals in the database by school level. Nearly three-quarters worked in elementary schools.

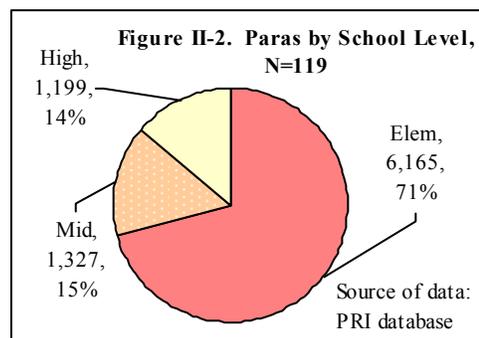
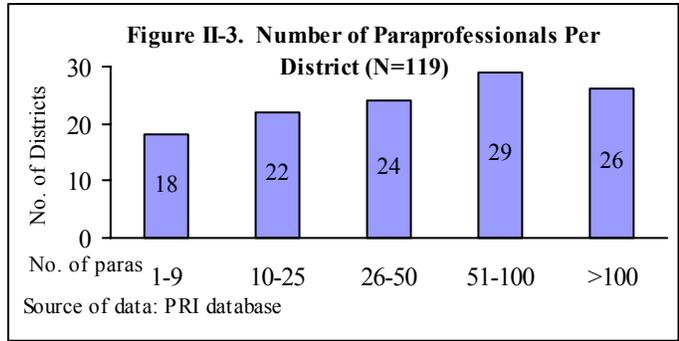


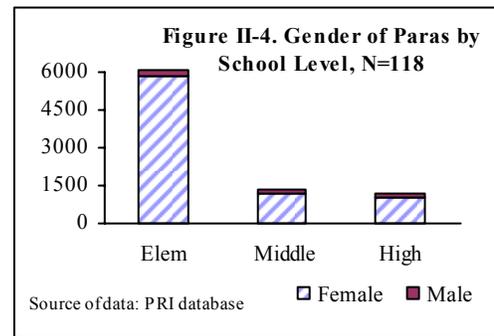
Figure II-3 summarizes the total number of instructional paraprofessionals employed per district. In October 2005, slightly more than half (54 percent) of the districts in the PRI database employed less than 51 such paraprofessionals. The median number employed was 47.



Gender

Figure II-4 displays the distribution of male and female paraprofessionals in the database. Overall, 94 percent were female, and 6 percent were male. Broken down by school level, the percent of males ranged from 4 percent at the elementary level to 8 percent at the middle school level to 17 percent at the high school level.

Nearly half (46 percent) of the reporting districts that operate elementary schools employed no male paraprofessionals in their elementary schools, 47 percent that operate middle schools employed no male paraprofessionals in those schools, and 28 percent of the reporting districts operating high schools employed no male paraprofessionals at that school level.



Race/Ethnicity

Table II-1 presents October 2005 data about the racial/ethnic makeup of the paraprofessionals in the program review database at each school level. Overall, 21 percent (of the 7,845 paraprofessionals for whom districts were able to provide data) were members of a minority group.

<i>School Level</i>	<i>No. White</i>	<i>No. Black</i>	<i>No. Hispanic</i>	<i>No. Asian</i>	<i>No. American Indian</i>	<i>Total</i>
Elementary	4,340	649	596	32	4	5,621
Middle	1,017	86	55	7	0	1,165
High	835	116	101	7	0	1,059
TOTAL	6,192 (79%)	851 (11%)	752 (10%)	46 (1%)	4 (0%)	7,845*

* Information was unavailable for the other 846 paraprofessionals in the database. Percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding.
Source of data: PRI database

The elementary school level had the highest proportion of minority group members -- 23 percent. The middle school level was 13 percent, while the high school level was 21 percent. Nearly half of the districts employed no minority group members as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities.

Age

Table II-2 summarizes information about the age distribution of the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in the PRI database. Not all districts were able to answer this question, although some were able to do so by reporting all school levels together. For the 111 districts that did respond, almost half of the employed paraprofessionals were between 35 and 49 years old.

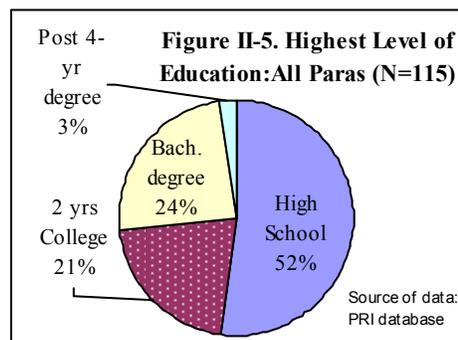
Table II-2. Paraprofessionals by Age, October 1, 2005 (N=111)					
	<i>Number within specified age ranges</i>				
<i>School Level</i>	<i>Under 35</i>	<i>35 - 49</i>	<i>50-59</i>	<i>60 and over</i>	<i>Total</i>
Elementary	692	2,360	1,394	427	4,873
Middle	137	397	306	111	951
High	143	331	294	111	879
Separated levels not available	157	406	304	78	945
TOTAL	1,129 (15%)	3,494 (46%)	2,298 (30%)	727 (10%)	7,648*

* Information was unavailable for the other 1,043 paraprofessionals in the database.
 Percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding.
 Source of data: PRI database

Education

All but four districts in the database were able to provide information about the highest level of education achieved as of June 30, 2006, by at least some of their paraprofessionals. Figure II-5 provides a summary of the data for the 6,012 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities for whom educational information was available. Nearly half (48 percent) had some college, with 27 percent holding at least a bachelor's degree. (Only three people did not have a high school diploma.)

Table II-3 breaks down the information summarized in Figure II-5 according to the District Reference Group (DRG) that the districts (for which data were available) are assigned.⁷ As indicated, there is considerable variation among the responses grouped by DRG. For example, the responses for districts in DRGs A and B indicated three-quarters of the instructional paraprofessionals they employ have at least two years of college, while only one-quarter of the instructional paraprofessionals employed by the responding districts from DRG H have that level of education. The responses from districts in DRGs D and E most closely parallel the overall results.



⁷ District Reference Groups comprise a classification system that measures the characteristics of families with children attending public school. The groups range from very affluent, low-need suburban districts (Group A) to high-need, low socioeconomic status, urban districts (Group I). For a detailed description of the variables used to form DRGs, the characteristics of the individual DRGs, and a list of the towns included in each DRG, see Connecticut State Department of Education, Division of Teaching, Learning and Assessment, Bureau of Research, Evaluation and Student Assessment, *Research Bulletin*, School Year 2005-06 Number 1 (June 2006).

Table II-3. Highest Level of Education Achieved by Instructional Paraprofessionals by District Reference Group, as of June 30, 2006 (N=115 districts)

<i>DRG</i>	<i>Districts in database</i>	<i>No high school/GED diploma</i>	<i>High school or GED diploma</i>	<i>Assoc.'s degree or 2 yrs college</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	<i>Post 4-yr college degree</i>	<i>Total paras</i>
A	6	--	32 (21%)	14 (9%)	100 (67%)	4 (3%)	150
B	12	--	114 (24%)	132 (28%)	211 (45%)	17 (4%)	474
C	22	--	275 (45%)	90 (15%)	210 (35%)	31 (5%)	606
D	15	--	415 (47%)	214 (24%)	227 (26%)	21 (2%)	877
E	26	--	172 (46%)	77 (21%)	113 (30%)	12 (3%)	374
F	13	2 (0.5%)	223 (51%)	122 (28%)	78 (18%)	13 (3%)	438
G	11	--	388 (58%)	104 (15%)	169 (25%)	13 (2%)	674
H	5	--	500 (76%)	53 (8%)	95 (14%)	8 (1%)	656
I	5	1 (0.1%)	1,022 (58%)	445 (25%)	265 (15%)	30 (2%)	1,763
Total	115	3 (0.1%)	3,141 (52%)	1,251(21%)	1,468 (24%)	149 (3%)	6,012*

* Information was unavailable for the other 2,060 paraprofessionals in these districts.

Source of data: PRI database

Work Schedules

Figure II-6 shows the proportion of instructional paraprofessionals in the PRI database who work full time versus part time by school level. More than three-quarters work full time at each school level, with the proportion increasing as the school level increases -- elementary schools (78 percent), middle schools (87 percent), and high schools (91 percent).

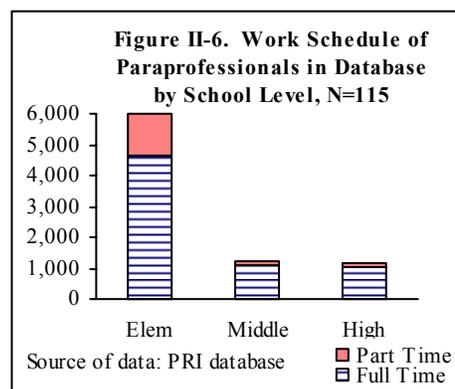


Table II-4 shows the number of hours per week that different school districts consider to be full time versus part time. The hours vary among districts and by school level. Overall among respondents, full-time employees work between 25 and 38.75 hours per week, with a median of 32.5 hours. The number of hours per week that part-time paraprofessionals work ranged from five to 32.5 hours. The median ranged from 19 to 19.5 hours, depending on the school level.

Table II-4. Hours Worked by Paraprofessionals by School Level (N=118)

<i>School Level</i>	<i>Full Time</i>		<i>Part Time</i>	
	<i>Range of Hours</i>	<i>Median Hours</i>	<i>Range of Hours</i>	<i>Median Hours</i>
Elementary	25 - 38.75	32.5	12 - 32.5	19
Middle	27 - 37.5	32.5	5 - 32.5	19.5
High	30 - 37.5	32.5	10 - 32.5	19.5

Source of data: PRI database

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

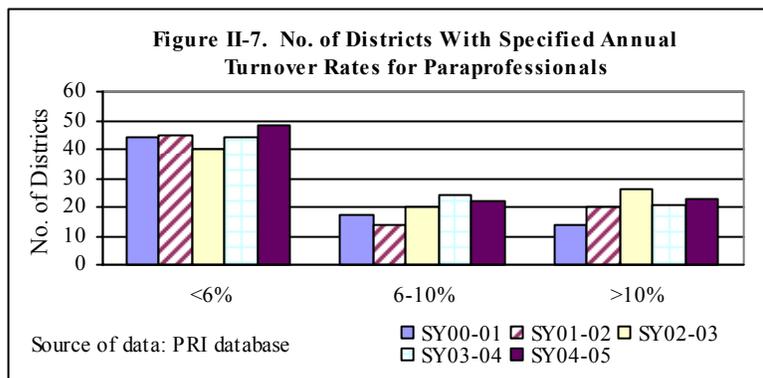
Tenure

In terms of length of employment, Table II-5 shows the paraprofessionals employed by the districts in October 2005 were fairly evenly distributed among the four ranges indicated in the table. Nearly equal proportions worked “five years or less” and “six or more years.”

Table II-5. Paraprofessionals by Length of Service, October 1, 2005 (N=115)					
<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	1,515	1,223	1,405	1,320	5,463
Middle	310	267	281	250	1,108
High	273	217	292	239	1,021
Separated levels not available	199	204	179	261	843
TOTAL	2,297 (27%)	1,911 (23%)	2,157 (26%)	2,070 (25%)	8,435*

* Information was unavailable for the other 256 paraprofessionals in the database.
Percentages may total more than 100% due to rounding.
Source of data: PRI database

The PRI 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 of turnover was less than 10 percent. (Seventy-five districts provided information for SY 2000-01 versus 93 districts for SY 2004-05.) 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-time employees were the same, but some districts paid all part-time paraprofessionals a flat hourly rate. Table II-6 shows the range and median hourly rates paid by the districts in the database.

Table II-6. Hourly Wage Rates Paid to Paraprofessionals, 2004-05 School Year (N=109)				
	<i>Range of Minimum</i>	<i>Minimum median</i>	<i>Range of Maximum</i>	<i>Maximum Median</i>
Full Time	\$7.50 - \$17.13	\$11.49	\$9.29 - \$23.96	\$14.98
Part Time	\$7.89 - \$17.13	\$10.76	\$8.68 - \$23.96	\$14.36

Note: If a district provided an annual rate, the hourly rate was calculated based on the number of hours per day and estimated days per year that the paraprofessionals in that district work.
Source of data: PRI database

Wages by subgroup. In an effort to better understand the variation in compensation provided by local school districts included in the PRI database, the data were examined in several additional ways, focusing on minimum, full-time hourly wages. All responses were grouped by: (1) District Reference Groups, (2) the overall top 10 and bottom 10 payers, and (3) whether or not any paraprofessionals in the district had to meet local or federal education and experience standards.

Table II-7 lists the range of starting salaries for full-time instructional paraprofessionals and the median, minimum, full-time, hourly wage rate paid by the districts in the database during the 2004-2005 school year, based on the DRG they are assigned by SDE. The spread between the median, minimum full-time hourly rate paid by the highest and lowest groups was \$2.56. The highest median rate was in DRG A (\$13.22); the lowest was in DRG E (\$10.66).

Table II-7. Minimum, Full-Time Hourly Wage Rates by District Reference Group, School Year 2004-05 (N=109)				
DRG	No. of Districts in Database	No. of Paras Employed by Those Districts	Range of Minimum Full-time Hourly Wage Among Those Districts	Median Minimum Full-time Hourly Wage for Districts in DRG
A	6	472	\$11.69 - \$16.80	\$13.22
B	12	1,004	\$9.74 - \$14.89	\$12.15
C	21	715	\$8.87 - \$17.13	\$11.35
D	12	1,165	\$9.18 - \$16.83	\$11.48
E	23	381	\$8.00 - \$13.59	\$10.66
F	13	642	\$9.21 - \$13.70	\$11.23
G	10	901	\$9.17 - \$13.76	\$10.88
H	6	941	\$10.12 - \$13.58	\$11.46
I	6	1,992	\$7.50 - 16.36	\$12.63
Total	109	8,213	\$7.50 - \$17.13	\$11.49

Source of data: PRI database

Table II-8 summarizes the salary ranges for the 10 districts in the database paying the highest and the 10 paying the lowest minimum full-time hourly rates. The differential among the top paying districts was \$3.15, while the spread among the bottom districts was \$1.70.

Table II-8. Top and Bottom 10, Minimum Full-Time Hourly Wages Paid, SY 04-05			
Districts	Range of Minimum Full-time Wage	Median Minimum Full-time Wage	DRGs Represented (# of districts)
Top 10	\$13.98 - \$17.13	\$15.40	A(3), B(2), C(1), D(2), and I(2)
Bottom 10	\$7.50 - \$9.20	\$8.89	C(2), D(1), E(5), G(1), and I(1)

Note: The minimum wage in Connecticut in the fall of 2004 was \$7.10. It increased to \$7.40 on January 1, 2006; it will become \$7.65 on January 1, 2007.

Source of data: PRI database

The data were then segmented to look at the differences between districts in the PRI database with and without education and/or experience requirements. The median minimum rate paid in the 60 districts with their own standards (and for which wage data were available) was

\$11.23 per hour. The median rate in the 55 districts without specified standards of their own (and for which wage data were available) was \$11.78 per hour. A total of 71 districts in the database, including some from each of the two categories just described, indicated one or more of the instructional paraprofessionals they employ must meet NCLB standards and provided wage data. The median, minimum, full-time hourly wage paid to paraprofessionals in those districts was \$11.32 per hour.⁸

Annual salary. In order to convert any of these hourly wage rates into larger blocks of time, information about the hours per week and the number of days per year that full-time paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities work must be taken into consideration. The number of hours per week reported by the districts in the database varied somewhat by school level, but the median was the same.

The median number of hours that full-time paraprofessionals at all school levels worked was 32.5 hours per week. Based on that number and the overall median, minimum salary of \$11.49 per hour, the full-time minimum weekly salary paid by the districts in the database would be \$373.43.

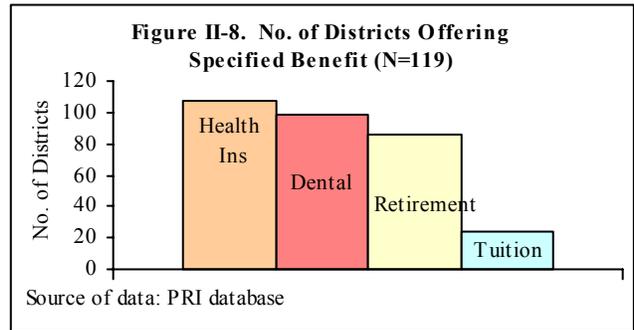
On a 52-week basis, that would equal \$19,418 per year. In actuality, the annual wage paid to the paraprofessionals in the database would be lower because nearly all only work during the school year. Furthermore, the exact number of days they are paid within those 10 months varies. The number of school days per district may differ, and some districts pay paraprofessionals for professional development and sick days, while others do not. To calculate the approximate number of days paraprofessionals work annually, the eight major holidays between September and June were added to 182 school days for an estimated work year of 190 days (or 38 weeks). Based on that number, the median, minimum amount paid during SY 04-05 to paraprofessionals in the PRI database would have been \$14,190.

Wages earned. The median, minimum hourly wage earned by the paraprofessionals in the database is different than the median wage paid, which was shown in Table II-6. To determine the median minimum earned, the number of people actually receiving each wage rate has to be taken into consideration. Depending on whether more people work in the districts paying higher or lower wages, the median earned wage will be higher or lower than the median wage paid.

Committee staff multiplied the number of full-time instructional paraprofessionals in each district by the minimum hourly rate for that district. The total of those calculations was divided by the total number of paraprofessionals for whom data were available. Based on the hourly wage information in the database available for 6,590 of the approximately 6,800 paraprofessionals working full time, the median, minimum hourly wage earned during the 2004-2005 school year was \$11.72. (This is only 23 cents higher than the median, minimum paid.)

⁸ It should be noted that these numbers are based on median, minimum hourly wages paid. Some districts pay more, and some pay less than these amounts. Furthermore, in terms of actual compensation paid, three-quarters of the paraprofessionals in the PRI database have been working for their districts for more than two years. Given that most districts have multiple steps in their pay plans, those individuals are paid more per hour than the minimum hourly wage used for their respective districts in these calculations.

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 (72 percent), but there are variations in the scope of the individual benefit programs. Only a fifth of the districts offer any type of tuition reimbursement or education assistance.



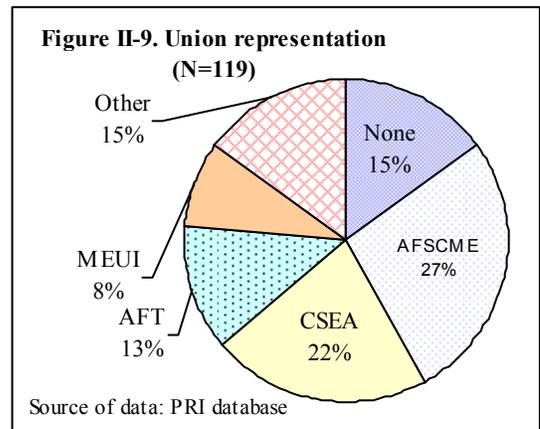
The opportunity to receive benefits differs between full-time and part-time workers. In most districts in the database, an employee must work a minimum number of hours per week to qualify for benefits. The specific number of hours ranged from 12 to 37.5 hours.

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.

With regard to the total package of compensation that instructional paraprofessionals receive, an examination of the data indicates nearly all districts at the top and bottom provide some combination of the benefits. One notable exception was the district paying the top salary; it did not provide any of the major types of fringe benefits.

Union Representation

Individuals who work as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities are unionized in 85 percent of the 119 school districts in the PRI database. Figure II-9 shows the distribution of the unions.



Three unions combined -- 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 paraprofessionals in 62 percent of the districts in the database.

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Chapter Three

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. This chapter describes previous efforts to establish standards in Connecticut as well as existing federal and local provisions.

Previous State-Level Efforts

In Connecticut, the question of minimum standards for paraprofessionals is not new. Multiple state-level groups have examined the role of paraprofessionals, and several reports have specifically discussed the idea of establishing minimum qualifications.

In 1974, the Connecticut Commission for Higher Education issued a statutorily mandated report regarding the development of programs for paraprofessionals that would allow them to fulfill state teacher certification requirements. The report recommended establishment of a higher education assistance program for paraprofessionals and funding for at least one career development pilot project. The commission also noted that paraprofessionals had many other concerns not within the scope of its report, including the effectiveness of the selection, training, assessment, and utilization of paraprofessionals by schools. The commission recommended the periodic collection and publication of information about the training and use of paraprofessionals and their opportunities for employment.⁹

In 1990, a committee convened by the state commissioner of education issued a report on the role of school paraprofessionals that included a proposed definition, recommended minimum qualifications (i.e., a high school diploma plus specific skills and attributes), and discussed career ladders including the possibility of certification as a teacher. The committee indicated that it was not recommending a credentialing system for paraprofessionals at that time because there were no national models available and potential resources within the state were focused on implementation of new teacher certification requirements. The group proposed a demonstration grant program to enable paraprofessionals to become more effective in their delivery of services to students. The committee also encouraged SDE to continue gathering data on programs in other states and to reconsider credentialing in the future.¹⁰

⁹ Connecticut Commission for Higher Education, *Paraprofessionals in Educational Fields and Teacher Certification Requirements: A Report on Public Act 73-324* (February 1974).

¹⁰ SDE, *Report of the Committee to Study the Role of Paraprofessionals to Commissioner Gerald N. Tirozzi* (1990).

In 1996, the state Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) Task Force on Paraprofessionals expressed support for establishing a statutory minimum entry level requirement (i.e., a high school diploma) for paraprofessionals and, if possible, an ongoing training requirement. However, the group concluded the timing was not right for such a proposal. Instead, it encouraged the exploration of other methods for developing paraprofessional standards and providing training.¹¹

In 2001, at the request of the commissioner of education, the CSPD Council (which is described more fully in Chapter Four) convened a task force to develop standards for paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities. In May 2004, the group issued *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21: Working Draft*. The report sought to clarify instructional and support roles and responsibilities, as well as identify methods and resources for the training, supervision, and evaluation of paraprofessionals. The task force indicated it also considered whether to propose standards for paraprofessionals, but decided to postpone such discussions pending response to the guidelines and possible federal legislative changes.¹²

SDE provided resources to the task force and worked on the guidelines from the standpoint of special education, but never formally endorsed or adopted the guidelines. The department is presently using the document as a base to develop a broader training tool for paraprofessionals dealing with more than just special education.

Federal Requirements

Interest in standards for paraprofessionals in Connecticut was heightened by the imposition of federal requirements for some paraprofessionals in 2002. As part of the No Child Left Behind Act, minimum education standards were established for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in certain programs or schools that receive federal Title I funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. A key finding of a federal education department study that led to the development of the federal standards indicated that paraprofessionals were being used in many Title I schools around the country for teaching and helping teach students, although their educational backgrounds did not qualify many of them for such responsibilities.¹³

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.

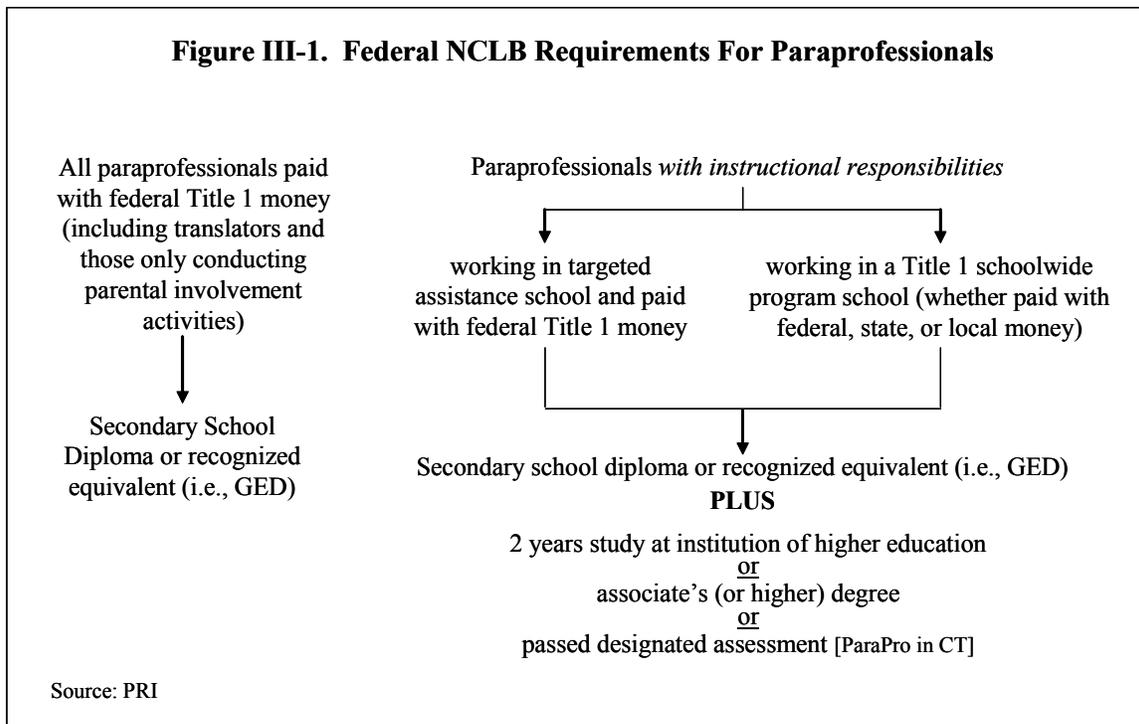
¹¹ Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Task Force on Paraprofessionals, *Summary* (Spring 1996).

¹² Connecticut State Advisory Council on Special Education, *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21: "Working Draft"* (May 2004).

¹³ U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, *Study of Education Resources and Federal Funding: Final Report*, by Jay Chambers, Joanne Lieberman, Tom Parrish, Daniel Kaleba, James Van Campen, and Stephanie Stullich, Washington, D.C. (2000).

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, but as of September 2006 has been fully in effect for everyone.

During SY 2005-06, about half of the public schools in Connecticut received Title I funding. A total of 341 schools in 131 districts and 12 charter schools 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 145 schools in 13 districts and two charter schools 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.¹⁴

Connecticut is one of 38 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.

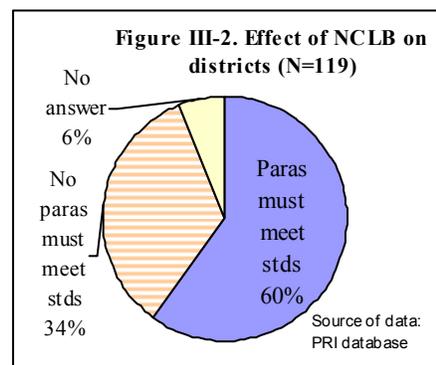
The test is only available in English, but there are two formats. A paper and pencil version is offered six times a year at multiple locations, and results are available about four weeks later. An internet version is available continuously, but it can only be accessed through participating local school districts. Unofficial results of the internet version are available immediately upon completion of the test; official results are mailed about two weeks later. Either test costs \$40, each time it is taken.¹⁵

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 467.¹⁶

Compliance. Local school districts in Connecticut are responsible for verifying that the school personnel required to meet the No Child Left Behind 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.

As shown in Figure III-2, 60 percent of the 119 school districts returning the program review data form



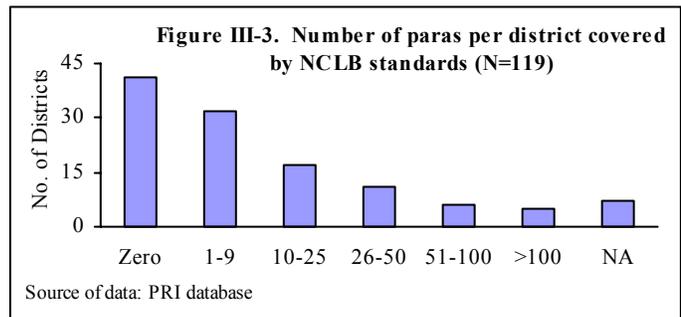
¹⁴ U.S. Department of Education, *Title I Paraprofessionals, Non-Regulatory Guidance* (March 1, 2004), p.10.

¹⁵ Educational Testing Services website [www.ets.org (Tests; ParaPro)]

¹⁶ Passing scores in the other New England states that use the ParaPro assessment are: Maine (459), Massachusetts (464), Rhode Island (461), and Vermont (458).

reported employing one or more paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who had to meet the NCLB requirements. (Forty-one districts indicated no paraprofessionals had to meet the standards, while seven districts did not answer the question.)

In October 2005, a total of 2,967 employees in the database had to meet the NCLB standards. Nearly half of the 71 districts with such employees had nine or fewer people required to meet the federal requirements; only 11 districts had more than 50 employees who had to



meet the requirements. Figure III-3 summarizes the number of instructional paraprofessionals per district whose compliance with the federal standards had to be confirmed.

In terms of the educational backgrounds of the instructional paraprofessionals required to meet NCLB standards, Figure III-4 summarizes the data for the 2,899 individuals in the database for whom information was available as of June 30, 2006. Half were high school graduates, and half had at least two years of college.

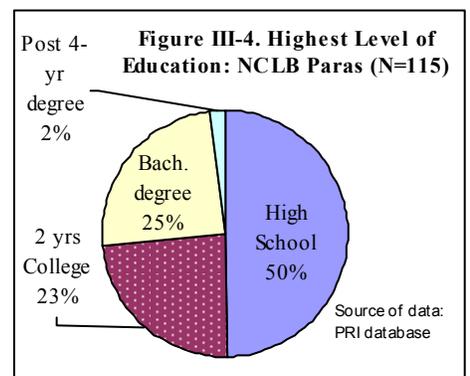


Table III-1 provides more detail about the information in Figure III-4 using the DRGs that the districts (for which data were available) are assigned.

Like the overall group of paraprofessionals in the database (previously described in Table II-3 in Chapter Two), there is considerable variation among the responses when they are grouped by DRG. However, there are some key differences for this subset of paraprofessionals in the database versus all of the paraprofessionals in the database.

Table III-1. Highest Level of Education Achieved by Instructional Paraprofessionals Required to Meet NCLB Standards by DRG, as of June 30, 2006 (N=115 districts)							
<i>DRG</i>	<i>Districts in database</i>	<i>No high school/GED diploma</i>	<i>High school or GED diploma</i>	<i>Assoc.'s degree or 2 yrs college</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree</i>	<i>Post 4-yr college degree</i>	<i>Total paras</i>
A	6	--	28 (27%)	4 (4%)	69 (68%)	1 (1%)	102
B	12	--	38 (28%)	28 (21%)	62 (46%)	8 (6%)	136
C	22	--	59 (49%)	15 (13%)	44 (37%)	2 (2%)	120
D	15	--	203 (50%)	98 (24%)	105 (26%)	3 (1%)	409
E	26	--	36 (27%)	41 (30%)	54 (40%)	4 (3%)	135
F	13	--	40 (30%)	68 (52%)	23 (17%)	1 (1%)	132
G	11	--	124 (48%)	26 (10%)	103 (39%)	8 (3%)	261
H	5	--	20 (26%)	18 (24%)	34 (45%)	4 (5%)	76
I	5	1	895 (59%)	381 (25%)	224 (15%)	27 (2%)	1,528
Total	115	1 (<0.1%)	1,443 (50%)	679 (23%)	718 (25%)	58 (2%)	2,899*

* Information was unavailable for the other 148 people in the database required to meet NCLB standards.
Source of data: PRI database

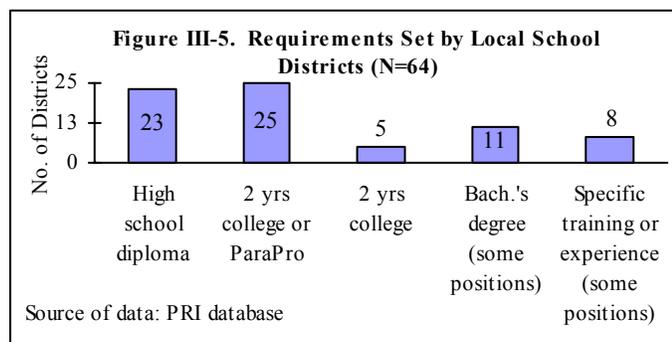
For example, the percentage of instructional paraprofessionals covered by NCLB standards in DRG H who had at least two years of college rose to 74 percent (from 24 percent when all paraprofessionals were included). Also, the percentage of paraprofessionals covered by the standards whose highest level of education was high school in the districts in the database that are part of DRGs E and F decreased from about half of those paraprofessionals to less than one-third.

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. The actual status of compliance with the federal law is unclear. Thirteen districts in the PRI database indicated that as of June 30, 2006, some of the staff with high school diplomas who needed to pass the ParaPro exam had not done so. However, the test was being offered again during the summer, and the State Department of Education was following up with districts in December 2006 regarding compliance.

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.

Sixty of the districts in the PRI database have established their own education or experience requirements for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, while another four districts have “preferences.” 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. Figure III-5 summarizes the minimum standards reported by those 64 districts.



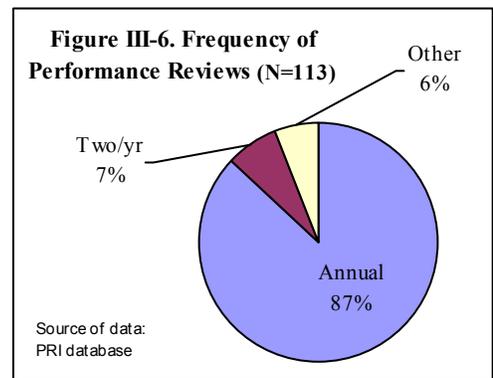
In some districts, there are multiple requirements. Alternatively, in other cases, local school districts impose requirements only for certain positions, such as a bachelor’s degree for tutors.

The two requirements most frequently listed by respondents were a high school diploma or two years of college, with successfully passing the ParaPro test an acceptable alternative in most of those districts.

Performance evaluations. Nearly all (95 percent) of the districts that responded to the PRI data request have a system in place to regularly evaluate the performance of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities. Figure III-6 summarizes the frequency of

those reviews, which in most schools occur annually. Some districts also conduct an initial review within 90 days of a person being hired.

In 66 percent of the districts, the person conducting the evaluation is the school principal, either alone or with other staff. In 22 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.¹⁷ The issues raised about the use of “value-added models” to evaluate teachers would seem equally applicable to paraprofessionals.

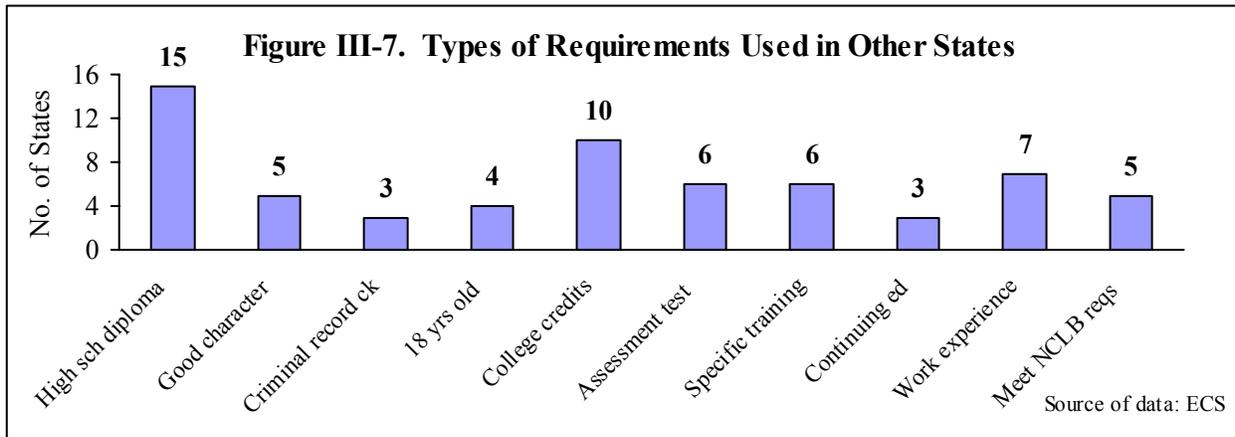
On the program review data collection form, districts were asked whether they have established any academic benchmarks or other measures to assess the performance of students who work with paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities on a daily basis. Twenty-two districts answered yes, with one-third focusing their measurements on 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 measurements mentioned were Connecticut Mastery Test/CAPT results and reading and math assessments in general.

Other States

Around the country, *17 states now have established statutory standards for individuals who are instructional paraprofessionals* as defined by program review. (Several of the states refer to these workers as paraeducators, while others use the terms educational assistant, educational aide, or teaching assistant.) The provisions vary from state to state, and in a few instances are optional. The laws may include specific types and amounts of education and experience, as well as standards related to age, moral character, criminal history, and letters of

¹⁷ 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.

recommendation.¹⁸ Figure III-7 summarizes the types of requirements specified in those 17 states, while Table III-2 contains a brief summary of the regulatory provisions in each state.



¹⁸ 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-2. 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.

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Chapter Four

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 most conditions of employment for paraprofessionals in Connecticut are at the discretion of local school districts.

State 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 Chapter One.

The department's oversight and regulation of paraprofessionals 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.¹⁹ 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 eight 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 used this funding to award 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 sliver grants decreased, OSEP began offering funding through the “State Improvement Grant.” The grant for Connecticut began in July 2000, and the money was used for discretionary purposes, including professional development for paraprofessionals.

Funding from OSEP has since evolved into the “State Personnel Development Grant.” In its application for this grant, Connecticut proposed a program to assist paraprofessionals in targeted areas to become certified special education teachers. According to the state education department, it had discretion in its grant proposal and could have focused on other initiatives, but the department chose to make the paraprofessional-to-teacher program a prominent part of its proposal. The state received its grant in October 2005.

¹⁹ 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 began in the Fall of 2006, with students scheduled to begin 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.

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. SERC 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. SERC expects to expand the study group process during the 2006-07 school year.

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development

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. Until 2004, the law required 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).²⁰ Connecticut continues to function as it has in the past to support its Comprehensive System for Personnel Development activities through the state’s CSPD Council.

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 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 in Connecticut. 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.

Paraprofessional Task Force. In November 2000, the State Advisory Council on Special Education (SAC)²¹ requested the State Department of Education examine the issue of

²⁰ 20 U.S.C. 1412 and 20 U.S.C. 1433.

²¹ The State Advisory Council for Special Education is a mandated requirement of the Individual with Disabilities Education Act. Under C.G.S. Sec. 10-76i, the council consists of a diverse membership and advises the legislature, state education board, and state education commissioner on matters regarding educating children with disabilities.

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.

As noted in Chapter Three, the education commissioner gave the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Council the responsibility of reviewing the request and examining the pertinent issues. In September 2001, the CSPDC convened the Paraprofessional Task Force, which included representatives from CSPDC, SAC, the educational community, employee unions, and parents. The task force examined several components of the paraprofessional profession, including roles and responsibilities, credentials, training, and 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.”²² They are intended to help school districts (as well as the state’s Birth to 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.²³

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 Education Service Centers

The state’s six Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs)²⁴ 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.

²² *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21*, May 2004, p. 5.

²³ Two earlier Connecticut reports that examined this issue were prepared by the Committee to Study the Role of Paraprofessionals (1990) and the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development Task Force on Paraprofessionals (1996).

²⁴ Regional Education 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.

Recommendations

The general K-12 classroom in a local public school today is vastly different from the classroom several decades ago when schools started using the services of paraprofessionals. The volume of information to be taught is larger, and teaching methods have changed to incorporate greater use of technology and more small group activities. The skill levels of the students are more diverse, including a greater number of students with special needs who are being educated in the least restrictive environment possible. At the same time, there are added requirements for more rigorous academic standards, which must be measured through periodic, standardized testing. In that context, the ability of paraprofessionals to assist teachers help students learn takes on added importance.

The changes evident in the modern-day classroom have brought increased attention to the issue of the quality of the personnel assigned to help students learn. As the learning environment becomes more complex, more attention has been directed toward ensuring that school personnel assigned to work with students are able to handle the basic and technologically advanced tools students will be using. As a result, more detailed standards for teachers are increasing. Given the close connection between the work of teachers and that of paraprofessionals, it is appropriate to consider to what extent similar types of standards should be applied to school paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities.

The program review committee recommendations with respect to paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities are intended to reflect the evolution of education in the Connecticut public schools of the 21st century. The specific proposals are guided by three primary themes -- increasing the professionalism of paraprofessionals, preserving local autonomy as it relates to education issues, and balancing state resources. The details of the recommendations and the rationale for each are presented below.

Credential Recommendation

The national trend in recent years has been toward the establishment of education and/or experience standards for at least some individuals working as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities. To date, however, considerable variation remains within the components of the systems established to oversee paraprofessionals and the extent to which standards are mandatory.

Meanwhile, one-third of the school districts in Connecticut have established some form of minimum employment standards for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in their districts. However, the district requirements differ, based on decisions each district made about the needs of the students in its school system and the priorities of its local community.

During the program review committee study, a number of the Connecticut paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who spoke with committee staff, as well as

testimony submitted at the committee's public hearing, mentioned the desire of paraprofessionals around the state to attain more respect for the work they do and greater recognition of the important role they play in schools today. They believed one way to achieve those goals might be the creation of a statewide credentialing system.

Before deciding whether a statewide credential is warranted, the impact of paraprofessionals on student performance should be considered. Nationally, evidence regarding the relationship between credentials and student performance is emerging. Most research has focused on teachers, but some studies of paraprofessionals have been conducted. *There is evidence that minimum standards, including professional development requirements for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, may enhance the educational outcomes of students. The results are not conclusive, however,* as highlighted below.

A Tennessee Department of Education study, published in 1990 and subsequently cited in other reports about school paraprofessionals, found that aides (i.e., paraprofessionals) who performed mostly instructional tasks did not enhance student performance any more than those who only performed clerical tasks. The study also reported that students in some regular classrooms with full-time aides had higher achievement scores, but the differences were small and not statistically significant, and they decreased as grade levels increased.²⁵

As a follow-up to that study, however, a 1999 policy paper published by Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory noted that the paraprofessionals in the Tennessee study had not received instructions about their duties, and it was unclear whether they possessed the necessary skills and knowledge to help students learn. The policy paper went on to describe other research that found effective use of paraeducators increases student achievement, but the paraprofessionals must be appropriately prepared and effectively integrated within the school, working with teachers as a team.²⁶

A 1997 report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education also noted that paraprofessionals can make substantial contributions to help students meet academic standards, but a key indicator of effectiveness is the extent to which schools offer programs that challenge the students to work hard through high academic standards. The report noted that overall program quality influences the work of all school staff members, including paraprofessionals.²⁷

The program review committee believes the recurring themes identified in past studies of paraprofessionals in Connecticut, the sentiments expressed by existing paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities regarding their place in the education system, and the recent creation of federal standards for paraprofessionals working in Title I schools justify the creation of a set of state standards.

²⁵ Tennessee State Department of Education, *The State of Tennessee's Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio Project: Final Summary Report*, 1985-1990, p. 19.

²⁶ Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, *Designing State and Local Policies for the Professional Development of Instructional Paraeducators* (November 1999), pp. 4-5.

²⁷ Policy Studies Associates, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, *Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools: An Idea Book* (1997).

Therefore, the program review committee recommends that the State Department of Education develop a state-issued credential for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in Connecticut's K-12 public schools and submit a plan to implement the credential by January 1, 2008, to the legislative committee of cognizance over education. The State Department of Education shall require that any applicant seeking the credential be a citizen of the United States or an alien legally resident in the United States.

During the process of developing the credential for instructional paraprofessionals, SDE is encouraged to consider the model paraeducator credential described in Chapter Six as an example of the type of credential that could be established. The model, as currently structured, is based on a voluntary credentialing system, but similar elements could be used for a mandatory system.

Professional Development

In discussions with paraprofessionals, school principals, and special education supervisors, *there was general consensus that professional development and training for paraprofessionals needs to be strengthened.* Concerns were also raised by some that: there is not enough relevant training for paraprofessionals; some districts do not pay the cost of the training for paraprofessionals; and paraprofessionals have to attend training on their own time outside of regular school hours without pay.

Some aspects of these issues are part of the collective bargaining process between local school districts and those paraprofessionals belonging to unions, and thus beyond the scope of this study. A specific amount of professional development is part of the model paraeducator credential process described in Chapter Six, but the issue of training for paraprofessionals extends beyond the credential requirements. The committee believes adequate and appropriate training should be available to paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, regardless of whether it is part of the paraeducator credential process. Consistent with the main themes outlined earlier, however, any state requirements in this area should be balanced with the needs of paraprofessionals and the autonomy of local school districts.

Current requirements. There are no state-level standards in Connecticut regarding the type or amount of professional development for instructional paraprofessionals. Local school districts are responsible for setting their own professional development guidelines for paraprofessionals.

As a way of gauging the current level of professional development for instructional paraprofessionals at the local level, school districts were asked as part of the committee data request about training efforts for paraprofessionals. Districts were provided a list of five actions and asked to choose which of the actions they take regarding professional development. Districts could choose more than one answer, if applicable. Table V-1 shows the results.

Table V-1. Paraprofessional Professional Development Options of Local School Districts	
<i>Option</i>	<i>Percent of Districts Offering Specified Option (N=116)</i>
Require attendance at periodic training	77%
Offer voluntary programs specifically for paraprofessionals	72%
Allow attendance at programs for teachers	77%
Encourage paraprofessionals to continue their education	78%
None of the above	0%
Source of data: PRI database.	

As the table shows, 77 percent of the 116 districts responding to the question require their instructional paraprofessionals to attend periodic training. Seven in 10 districts offer voluntary training programs specifically for paraprofessionals, and three-quarters allow their paraprofessionals to attend training offered to teachers. Just under 80 percent of the districts encourage paraprofessionals to continue their education.

Based on this information, a high percentage of school districts responding to the program review data request are cognizant of professional development for paraprofessionals and are addressing the issue. What is not indicated by the results, however, is the specific nature of the training, the overall quality of the training, whether the training helps instructional paraprofessionals become more effective in their profession, or the paraprofessionals' satisfaction level with the training they receive.

The issue of “overall satisfaction with professional development” came up in discussions with paraprofessionals who are members of the three largest unions representing paraprofessionals in Connecticut. While not a scientifically selected group, the general sense of the paraprofessionals interviewed was that their training was not adequate. There was also frustration among some paraprofessionals that the training in their districts was not geared toward their work as paraprofessionals, while others commented that the training offered was not conducive to their schedules.

Similar to other states, a key source of training for paraprofessionals is the community college system. Until recently, at least one community college in Connecticut offered certificate programs for paraprofessionals – one certificate was for “Educational Paraprofessional” and one was for “Bilingual Educational Paraprofessional.” Those programs were discontinued because of low demand and, at present, there are no programs offered by the state’s community colleges strictly for paraprofessionals. Granted, community colleges aim to design their programs in the most effective way possible and to meet a given need or demand in a particular area. If that need is not present, then presumably the programs are not offered. The committee believes, however, the potential exists for community colleges to be a beneficial resource for paraprofessionals in the future, particularly within any paraeducator credentialing system. If there is a demonstrated increase in the need for professional development programs statewide to satisfy the requirements of a paraeducator credential, then the community college system should play a key role in providing such training.

As such, the program review committee recommends the Department of Higher Education begin working with institutions of higher education in Connecticut to establish a network of programs within the community-technical college and state university systems that will provide instructional paraprofessionals with career development opportunities through relevant, accessible, and affordable programs.

The committee believes the community college system in Connecticut could serve as an important part of the overall professional development structure for instructional paraprofessionals. Community colleges are generally viewed as being able to offer students accessible, affordable, quality courses and programs in diverse areas of study. Along with other public and private higher education institutions in the state, community colleges have the potential to help paraprofessionals receive appropriate and adequate training.

SDE role. The committee understands that since no state standards exist regarding professional development for paraprofessionals, it is up to local districts to set their own policies. At the same time, state government needs to have an understanding of the issues regarding training for paraprofessionals and be involved in the overall coordination of such training as a way of achieving its goals of high expectations and standards for student achievement and teaching referenced earlier. While the state education department should not be the sole provider of professional development services for paraprofessionals, the department should maintain an overall coordinating role for such training.

SDE currently works with various groups to ensure that professional development for paraprofessionals is offered. For example, SDE assists the State Education Resource Center in coordinating several types of professional development programs under SERC's Paraprofessionals as Partners Initiative. Under SDE's contract with SERC, the department both funds and assists with SERC's annual conference for paraprofessionals. (In fact, such conferences are typically attended by 250 paraprofessionals from across the state.) The conference offers information on various topics applicable to paraprofessionals. The department is also helping SERC coordinate a statewide conference on the supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals. The conference, planned for Spring 2007, is designed for school personnel responsible for supervising and evaluating paraprofessionals.

The department, however, does not currently assess the overall professional development needs of paraprofessionals from a statewide perspective. Although the department works in conjunction with SERC on training for paraprofessionals, additional emphasis is needed at the state level to identify and coordinate the training needs of paraprofessionals.

Therefore, the program review committee recommends the State Department of Education periodically contact a sample of paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators -- through unions, school districts, the State Education Resource Center, and Regional Education Service Centers -- to identify the professional development needs of instructional paraprofessionals and any problem areas that may exist. Following such an assessment, the department should begin coordinating, from a statewide perspective, professional development offerings that meet the needs of instructional paraprofessionals. As part of that effort, SDE should report the results of the assessment to the Department of Higher Education.

Teachers. Another key area brought to the committee's attention during this study was the fact that *there is variability in training provided to teachers regarding the overall duties and responsibilities of instructional paraprofessionals*. Some school districts (or individual schools within a district) have programs in place to inform teachers about the role paraprofessionals play in their district or school. Similar to other aspects of the paraprofessional field in Connecticut, such programs are not standardized as to their content or their use.

Despite the lack of standardization, the committee believes teachers, particularly new hires, should be made aware of the purpose of instructional paraprofessionals and how to interact with paraprofessionals, especially within the classroom setting. Such training can be an important component in developing overall relationships and team building between paraprofessionals and teachers, with the ultimate goal of providing more effective and better coordinated instruction to students.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education encourage all local public school districts to provide training to teachers, particularly new teachers at the beginning of each school year, on the role and effective use of instructional paraprofessionals. The department should also encourage school districts to develop intradistrict methods and strategies whereby paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators periodically discuss issues or concerns involving the use of paraprofessionals in providing effective student instruction.

Supervision

Connecticut Regulations Section 10-145d-401 requires anyone employed by a local public school district who is not directly supervised in the delivery of instructional services to have appropriate state certification. Program review committee staff heard of instances where *paraprofessionals may be put in situations that could be considered "teaching" without the presence or guidance of a certified employee*. For example, paraprofessionals may be directed to take over the classroom for a teacher who is absent for periods of time. In some cases, a substitute teacher is present, but the paraprofessional takes on more of an instructional role. Alternatively, a paraprofessional may work in a lab or media center that is only visited by a certified staff person once or twice a week. When these assignments are questioned, the paraprofessionals are told either that they should rely on instructional guidance previously provided by the teachers they work with or that on-site administrative staff is supplying the required supervision.

While the information shared with committee staff was anecdotal, and there is no way of knowing how widespread an issue this is, the committee believes it is important that local school administrators make certain that noncertified staff are not placed in situations that violate the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. Likewise, the State Department of Education should take steps to ensure that restrictions on the use of noncertified personnel are adhered to.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education periodically remind local school districts that existing regulations prohibit the use of noncertified personnel in an initial teaching role. Further, the department should develop a mechanism to periodically monitor local school compliance with this requirement.

Guidelines

In May 2004, the “working draft” of *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21* was released. Work on the document began in 2001 when the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Council convened a task force with representatives of the education community (e.g., administrators, regular and special education teachers, and paraprofessionals) as well as parents. *The task force report (i.e., “the working draft”) was intended to provide guidance for instructional paraprofessionals whose primary responsibility is working with children with disabilities, but it was suggested that the document might be helpful to a broader audience.*

SDE provided resources to the task force, but neither the department nor the State Board of Education ever formally endorsed or adopted the guidelines. The guidelines were subsequently distributed through SERC to each local school district in the state. During 2006, SDE and SERC staff have been working to adapt the contents of the working draft in order to develop a broader tool that can be used by those working as or employing paraprofessionals outside of the special education area. Their target completion date is the spring of 2007.

Now that the guidelines are being modified to incorporate all paraprofessionals, the committee believes it is appropriate for state education authorities to indicate an official position on the preferred roles, responsibilities, and training of school paraprofessionals working in Connecticut. The availability of a written guide, in conjunction with the other program review recommendations in this report, should help local school districts better identify and define the overall role of paraprofessionals.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education finalize those portions of the May 2004 *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21: Working Draft* concerning roles, responsibilities, and training that it believes would be helpful to all paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut and submit that document to the State Board of Education by September 2007 for its approval.

Data Collection

Until school year 2006-2007, the State Department of Education collected limited information about paraprofessionals employed by local school districts. For October 1 of each school year, districts had to and still do report the number of full-time equivalent, noncertified staff positions. The information is separated into eight categories, only three of which cover noncertified “instructional” staff, the employees included in the program review study. The three noncertified instructional categories are instructional assistant, reading instructional assistant, and library/media support staff. The instructional assistant category is broken down further into six subgroups -- pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, regular program, special education, ESL/bilingual, and other program.

Starting this school year, in addition to the information described above, *local school districts have to report how many Title I paraprofessionals are employed by the district, as well as how many of them are “qualified” (i.e., meet NCLB standards).* Those numbers must be

actual counts of all full-time and part-time employees covered by the law, not FTE conversions. This year's reports were due on November 30, 2006.

SDE expected to review the forms in December. Following that review, the department planned to contact the superintendents who reported that some of their district paraprofessionals who are required to meet NCLB requirements had not done so. The superintendents would be informed that they must terminate the employees or, if non-Title I positions are available, move them to those positions. Subsequently, SDE planned to conduct audits to determine whether the local districts complied.

The program review committee recommends the State Department of Education summarize the information about Title I paraprofessionals that it will collect annually and post the information on the agency's website. At a minimum, the posted data should include the number of paraprofessionals covered by No Child Left Behind requirements, the number who have not met the NCLB requirements, the number of districts with paraprofessionals out of compliance, and the types of actions taken by those districts to comply (i.e., terminated staff, transferred staff, or did nothing).

Optional Model Credential

This chapter describes an optional model credential system for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in grades K-12. The model seeks to balance the autonomy of local school districts, the resources of the State Department of Education, and the goals of instructional paraprofessionals. The proposed system would create a voluntary state-issued paraeducator credential, but it could be used for a mandatory credential. The main elements of the model are summarized in the box on the next page. The details of each element are described in more detail in the text below. Information about the possible cost of the model is also included at the end of the chapter.

Type of Credential

The requirements in the model credential are based on the NCLB requirements already established by the federal government for Title I programs, but there would also be an opportunity for paraprofessionals in Connecticut to demonstrate competence acquired through education and experience.²⁸ Specifically, individuals who have been employed as instructional paraprofessionals for many years would be able to receive credit for that work experience.

The model recognizes the value a state-level credential can provide to practitioners and the public as an acknowledgement of the professionalism within an occupation. Proposing that the state of Connecticut offer paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities an opportunity to meet specific qualifications through a voluntary mechanism was based on multiple factors.

A voluntary credential allows local school districts to maintain their autonomy with respect to local education and retain flexibility with regard to the qualifications of the noncertified personnel they employ in their schools. Equally important, it avoids creating an unfunded state mandate. Such a system would also allow districts to keep existing employees (not covered by Title I requirements) who perform well, even if they do not meet the new state-level standards. Alternatively, districts could choose to require employees to obtain the state-issued credential.

Likewise, in the short run, a voluntary system would impose less of a burden on people currently working as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities. Individuals would not be required to apply for the credential, but if they wanted to do so, under the model they could provide proof of past employment working as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities in lieu of college courses or passing a written assessment. Obtaining the paraeducator credential could improve a person's ability to get or change paraprofessional jobs because possession of the voluntary state-issued credential would indicate to local school districts that the person had taken the initiative to achieve an increased level of education, experience, or both.

²⁸ It should be pointed out that the creation of a state credential system would not have any effect on federal NCLB requirements or any local provisions that mirror the federal law. Paraprofessionals in Connecticut who are covered by the federal law (or a specific local requirement) would still have to meet those standards.

Summary of a Model for a Voluntary State-Issued Paraeducator Credential

Type of Credential: Voluntary

Position Title: Paraeducator

Definition of Paraeducator: 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.

Categories: Paraeducator; Paraeducator with Additional Skills (e.g., special education, bilingual, state registered interpreter, etc.)

Duration: Five years (initial and renewal)

Minimum Requirements:

Paraeducator - must have high school diploma or GED PLUS two years of study at an institution of higher education OR an associate's (or higher) degree OR passing score on designated assessment test (e.g., ParaPro) with at least the minimum score required by Connecticut for NCLB purposes OR five years of paid employment as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities (based on definition of paraeducator) *and* 3.0 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) (30 hours) in courses pertaining to the application of skills and knowledge to classroom instruction PLUS fingerprinting and criminal record check.

Paraeducator with Additional Skills - must meet all of the requirements of the *Paraeducator* credential PLUS 9 semester hours of college coursework or 13.5 CEUs (135 hours) on topics related to the selected skill area OR two years paid employment as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities in the selected skill area OR successful completion of any state-recognized requirements in the selected skill area. (Employment, college coursework, or CEUs used to meet the basic requirements of the credential can also be used to demonstrate the additional skill, if the employment, coursework, or CEUs was in the additional skill area for which recognition is sought.)

Both credentials shall include a designation indicating whether the person met the NCLB criteria at the time the person applied for the credential.

Renewal: Every five years, if person completes 3 semester hours of college coursework or 4.5 CEUs (45 hours) of professional development on education-related topics; for paraeducator with additional skills, all 3 semester hours or 2.0 CEUs (20 hours) of the 4.5 CEUs must be in the selected skill area

System Administrator: State Department of Education (To facilitate development of the system, SDE shall be allowed to implement relevant policies and procedures as long as notice of intent to adopt regulations is published in the Connecticut Law Tribune within 20 days of implementation of the policies and procedures, with the proposed policies/procedures valid until final regulations are effective.)

Fee: \$75 initial; \$50 renewal

In the long run, it is possible that choosing not to obtain the credential would reduce a person's opportunities to work as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities. Should a number of local school districts establish the paraeducator credential as their minimum standard, then individuals who want those jobs would have to obtain the credential.

Ultimately, specifying a target set of standards for instructional paraprofessionals, even though the standards are voluntary, could increase the overall qualifications of the instructional paraprofessionals in Connecticut. The model credential might also reduce the disparity that currently exists among such employees, when some have to meet specific standards, while others do not (even within the same district). Offering a voluntary state credential would provide a framework of qualifications to guide people, which in turn might encourage greater professionalism and increase the level of respect accorded instructional paraprofessionals.

With regard to the effects on the State Department of Education, a voluntary credential valid for multiple years would consume fewer resources than a mandatory regulatory system. At the same time, establishing voluntary target qualifications for school employees who assist with the instruction of students would support the department's goals of high expectations and standards for student achievement and teaching.

Terminology. As part of the process of defining the model voluntary paraeducator credential, various terminology to describe the credential were considered. The term "certification" is often used by government to describe a regulatory system under which individuals who (voluntarily) choose to demonstrate they meet specific requirements receive the right to use a particular occupational title in the performance of their occupational duties. Other people are allowed to perform the same duties, but they cannot use that particular occupational title. Such a description is comparable to the idea behind the paraeducator credential.

In Connecticut, however, certain public school employees, including teachers, cannot work unless they possess a statutorily specified certificate issued by the State Board of Education. Although such employees are referred to as certified staff, they actually are covered by a licensing system, since they cannot work in local schools unless they meet all of the requirements for the state certificate. To avoid confusion with state certification provisions for teachers, the model does not refer to the voluntary regulatory system for instructional paraprofessionals as certification. Instead, the designation is simply called a state-issued credential.

Position Title

As part of the model voluntary credential, there was a belief that a unifying job title was needed to describe noncertified employees who provide student instruction in local public schools. National literature uses multiple job titles and terms when referring to noncertified school employees who assist students with instruction. As a result, there is no consensus in the literature about which title to use, and frequently terms are used interchangeably.

This fact holds true in Connecticut, as borne out during the course of this study. *Although the term "paraprofessionals" has been used in this study to describe those noncertified school employees who assist with student instruction as part of their overall duties, a multitude*

of titles are used by districts across the state for such employees. For example, information from the 119 school districts responding to the PRI data request revealed:

- 51 different job titles are used to describe noncertified school staff who have instructional responsibilities;
- the most common titles used by school districts are paraprofessional, paraeducator, teacher assistant, instructional assistant, instructional aide, and special education instructional aide; and
- individual school districts may use multiple job titles within their own district to describe noncertified school staff who have instructional responsibilities.

The fact that so many job titles exist in the state’s local school districts for noncertified employees who instruct students indicates a lack of standardization in this area. There is recognition, however, that school districts in Connecticut generally make their own decisions when it comes to local education issues, including what job titles to use for their employees. Some districts have also developed different job titles based on the overall duties and responsibilities of their paraprofessionals, such as paraprofessionals working with general education students or those working with special education students, resulting in multiple titles. Regardless, a unifying job title is desirable under the proposed credential.

The model uses the title “paraeducator” because it most aptly describes the type of school employee who would be eligible for the model state credential. The term “para” means similar or near. When combined with the term “educator,” the resulting title best represents those school employees who are “similar to” teachers in that they provide student instruction based on teachers’ lesson plans, yet they are not state certified as teachers who provide direct instruction. (This term is comparable to “paralegals,” who work along side of licensed attorneys, and “paramedics,” who provide medical attention but are not licensed medical doctors.)

Given that noncertified staff with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut’s local public schools are required to work under the supervision of a state certified professional such as a teacher, the job title “paraeducator” better describes this type of staff person than broader titles such as “paraprofessional” or “aide.” Incorporating the word “educator” also makes the title more explicit that the credential holder works in the education field, not another unspecified field. Although several districts in Connecticut currently use the term paraeducator as their job title for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, use of this term to describe someone who has obtained the model state credential, as opposed to another more general job title, would help differentiate employees who meet the voluntary minimum standards set by the state and hold the paraeducator credential from those who do not.

Definition

The proposed definition for the paraeducator credential, as included in the model, incorporates the primary components of the job of the school employees focused on during this study. The definition requires that such individuals are:

- not certified by the state as teachers;
- working in a local public school in grades K-12;

- assisting students with instruction; and
- working under the direct supervision of a state-certified teacher or other professional educator.

The definition, which is the same one used for data collection purposes during the study, is based on several sources. It includes the duties and responsibilities of paraprofessionals as defined in the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, and is a variation on the definitions developed by the State Department of Education and several state task forces studying the topic of paraprofessionals in Connecticut over the years. The key source of the definition is the 1990 task force report to the SDE commissioner referenced earlier, which examined the preparation, qualifications, role, function, and ongoing development of paraprofessionals in Connecticut.

As discussed below, full implementation of the model credentialing system for noncertified school staff who provide student instruction would require the administering agency to develop regulations. Within the regulation development process, the agency would have the ability, if necessary, to refine the description of the types of school staff eligible for the credential.

Duration

The model recommends the paraeducator credential be valid for an initial five-year period with five-year renewals thereafter. This time period is consistent with those used by several other states that have credentialing for paraprofessionals, including Delaware, Georgia, Iowa, and Maine.

Although it is difficult to know the overall number of people who would apply for the model credential or when they would apply, the five-year cycle does not seem overly burdensome to SDE in terms of its recurring role in administering the credential process. Approximately 12,000 FTE, noncertified, instructional staff were employed in local public school districts during the 2005-06 school year. It is pragmatic to expect: 1) because the process is voluntary, not all eligible paraprofessionals would seek the state credential; and 2) of those who do seek the credential, not all would apply at the same time. Providing these two factors hold true, the overall initial impact on SDE's administration of the credentialing system would be lessened. In all likelihood, the department would experience its heaviest caseload during the first year or two following initial implementation of the credential.

Credential Types and Requirements

Providing paraprofessionals with the opportunity to voluntarily attain a state-issued credential based on specific standards would be a significant step toward enhancing the overall professionalism of paraprofessionals in Connecticut, while at the same time balancing the needs of local school districts. Acquiring the credential would show that a paraprofessional has taken the initiative to strengthen his or her overall skill set and gone beyond the basic requirements for being a paraprofessional. At the same time, school districts would maintain local autonomy in that the model credential system is voluntary on the part of the paraprofessionals and not state mandated.

Table VI-1 highlights the proposed credential categories of the model and their corresponding requirements. Candidates would be able to apply for a “paraeducator” credential or the more specialized “paraeducator with additional skills” credential.

Table VI-1. Minimum Requirements for Model Voluntary Paraeducator Credential	
<u>Paraeducator</u>	<u>Paraeducator with Additional Skills</u>
High School Diploma or recognized equivalent (i.e., GED)	High School Diploma or recognized equivalent (i.e., GED)
PLUS 2 years study at institution of higher education <i>or</i> Associate’s (or higher) degree <i>or</i> Pass state-designated assessment (e.g., the ParaPro exam, with a passing score at least meeting what is currently required by the state under No Child Left Behind) <i>or</i> 5 years of paid employment as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities (based on the definition for the paraeducator credential) and 3.0 CEUs (30 hours) earned in courses pertaining to the application of skills and knowledge to classroom instruction	PLUS 2 years study at institution of higher education <i>or</i> Associate’s (or higher) degree <i>or</i> Pass state-designated assessment (e.g., the ParaPro exam, with a passing score at least meeting what is currently required by the state under No Child Left Behind) <i>or</i> 5 years of paid employment as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities (based on the definition for the paraeducator credential) and 3.0 CEUs (30 hours) earned in courses pertaining to the application of skills and knowledge to classroom instruction
	PLUS 9 semester hours of college level coursework or 13.5 CEUs (135 hours) on topics related to selected skill area* <i>or</i> 2 years of paid employment as a paraeducator working in selected skill area* <i>or</i> Successful completion of any state recognized requirements in selected skill area
PLUS Fingerprinting and criminal background check (as currently required by state law for school personnel)	PLUS Fingerprinting and criminal background check (as currently required by state law for school personnel)
* Applicants would be able to use a portion of the college coursework, five years of paid employment, and/or 30 hours of continuing education used for either the paraeducator or paraeducator with additional skills credential toward the additional education or work experience requirements of the latter credential, if that employment or education was in the selected skill area.	

The paraeducator credential is intended to be general in nature with wide availability to instructional paraprofessionals who meet the requirements, whether they work in a general education classroom, with special needs students, or in a media center or lab. Similar to the current NCLB requirements, applicants for the model paraeducator credential would have to have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent (i.e., GED). Candidates also would have to have completed two years of college, or have at least an associate's degree, or have passed a state-designated assessment (e.g., the ParaPro exam).

However, a key addition to the model credential process is the opportunity for candidates to substitute five years of paid employment as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities plus 3.0 CEUs (30 hours) in courses on how to apply skills and knowledge to classroom instruction, for either the college education requirement or passing the designated assessment. This is an important and valid alternative for candidates who want the credential and who have achieved a certain level of professional work experience and training as a paraprofessional, yet have barriers to either attending or completing college-level coursework or passing the assessment exam. As the final requirement for the paraeducator credential, applicants would also have to be in compliance with the state's current law for school personnel requiring fingerprinting and a criminal background check.

The second credential category -- paraeducator with additional skills -- acknowledges that some paraprofessionals have additional knowledge, skills, or abilities in specialized areas that distinguish them in their field of work. For example, some paraprofessionals may have additional education or extended work experience in areas such as special education or behavior management. At the same time, other paraprofessionals may be bilingual and have worked with children who speak languages other than English. As a result of their additional knowledge, skills, or abilities, such paraprofessionals can be expected to have an expanded understanding of a specialized area, which is beneficial when working with particular students. The model seeks to recognize such additional experience with a separate credential.

Table VI-1 also shows the requirements for the "paraeducator with additional skills" credential. Candidates applying for this credential would have to meet the same minimum requirements outlined under the broader "paraeducator" credential. Beyond those requirements, applicants would have to possess additional knowledge, skills, or abilities within a specialized area, such as special education. Completion of any state recognized requirements in a specific skill area (e.g., state registered hearing impaired interpreter²⁹) could also be used to satisfy the additional requirements of this credential. Further, candidates could apply paid employment, college coursework, or CEUs used for the basic requirements of the credential toward the additional education or work experience requirements under this credential, if that employment or education was in the selected skill area.

The minimum standards for both of the proposed paraeducator credentials would not meet the requirements for paraprofessionals working in Title I schoolwide schools or targeted assistance programs if the option to obtain credit for previous work experience and CEUs is used. The proposal includes a provision that an identifier be included on the credential

²⁹ C.G.S. Sec. 46a-33a requires all hearing impaired interpreters working in an educational setting to be registered with the State Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired and hold the appropriate credentials developed by the National Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and the National Association of the Deaf.

indicating the paraeducator has met the Title I requirements, if such requirements have been met. This would provide school districts with quick verification that anyone with the state paraeducator credential has or has not met the Title I requirements, which could save the district both time and money by not needing to make such a verification on its own.³⁰

Renewals

The model credential process would require paraeducators to renew their credential every five years, provided they have successfully completed a specified amount of professional development. The main reason for placing the recommended conditions on credential renewal is to ensure paraeducators receive adequate training to enhance their skills over an appropriate period of time.

The five-year time period is consistent with programs in other states. Five years provide an adequate time frame for SDE to operate the program and for paraeducators to fulfill the recommended professional development requirements necessary for renewing their credential. Extending or decreasing the renewal cycle from the recommended five-year period would diminish the purpose of having a renewable credential with specified professional development requirements.

More frequent renewals would place a greater burden on paraeducators to complete the professional development requirements within less time, unless the requirements were reduced, which seems counterproductive. A greater burden would also be placed on the department if it had to administer the paraeducator credential caseload within more compressed time frames, which would not be an effective use of the department's resources.

The types and frequency of the professional development that instructional paraprofessionals receive are important factors in working with students. Professional development, as a way for paraprofessionals to stay current on education-related topics, takes on increased importance as the modern classroom continues to evolve, the needs of students change, and the level of technology used for instructing students expands.

The model requires paraeducators to complete a specific amount of professional development through formal training or college-level coursework as a condition of renewing their state-issued credential. Table VI-2 outlines the recommended levels and types of professional development. The levels are based on the professional development requirements for paraprofessionals in other states, within the context of current professional development requirements for teachers in Connecticut.

³⁰ Under the model, a person who obtains a paraeducator credential based on the work experience option and subsequently completes the Title I education requirements or passes the ParaPro exam prior to renewal, would have to wait until renewal of his or her certificate to receive the Title I designation.

Table VI-2. Minimum Requirements for Renewal of Model Voluntary Paraeducator Credential	
<i>Paraeducator</i>	<i>Paraeducator with Additional Skills</i>
3 semester hours of college level coursework or 4.5 CEUs (45 hours) on education-related topics	3 semester hours of college level coursework in selected skill area or 4.5 CEUs (45 hours) on education-related topics, of which 2.0 CEUs (20 hours) must be in selected skill area

The table shows the credential renewal requirements vary depending on the credential category. Renewal of the “paraeducator” credential would require the person to satisfactorily complete three semester hours of college-level coursework or 4.5 continuing education units (45 hours). The requirements for the “paraeducator with additional skills” credential include satisfactory completion of three semester hours of college-level coursework in the selected skill area or 4.5 continuing education units, of which 2.0 CEUs (20 hours) must be in the paraeducator’s selected skill area. Requiring periodic training over a specified time frame provides paraprofessionals with the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to stay current on education-related topics involving students.³¹

As a way to ensure paraeducators meet the professional development requirements, SDE, as the oversight agency, would follow the model it currently uses for teacher certification renewals. Prior to the credential renewal, paraeducators would be required to submit limited information to the State Department of Education regarding the training or education completed, with a notarized statement that the work was completed. SDE would then issue the credential renewal. As a way of monitoring the integrity of the professional development submissions, SDE would use a random audit process. Individuals holding paraeducator credentials would be required to retain records of their professional development work, which would be used as part of the audit.

System Administration

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. *Currently, SDE’s oversight and regulation of paraprofessionals is minimal because paraprofessionals are not required to obtain any type of state credential prior to or as an ongoing condition of employment.*

SDE is responsible for implementing the state’s certificate program for teachers (and other school employees). As such, it has staff and systems in place to receive, review, process, and distribute credentials to all such individuals working in local public schools. In fact, the department is currently part way through a multi-year effort to establish a web-based system of

³¹ In other states with professional development requirements, paraprofessionals have to complete between 15 and 100 hours of continuing education over varying periods of time. Teachers in Connecticut currently have to complete 90 hours of continuing education every five years.

certification, including on-line fee payments, for the teacher and school administrator certification system.

Given those existing responsibilities, the model is based on a belief that it makes sense to assign SDE responsibility for the voluntary credential for paraprofessionals. Development of the system to process the paraeducator credential could be consolidated within the department's current certification project.

Specific tasks that SDE would need to perform to implement the new paraeducator credential include:

- drafting regulations to implement the program (including an appeals process);
- creating application and renewal forms;
- preparing informational materials about the application process;
- writing computer programs to process the credential;
- receiving applications submitted;
- processing fees;
- reviewing individual applications and verifying compliance with credential requirements;
- issuing credentials to eligible recipients;
- notifying individuals denied the credential; and
- processing appeals.

Recognizing that one of the tasks that can delay implementation of a new program is the adoption of regulations, the model proposes that SDE be allowed to implement relevant policies and procedures needed to operate the paraeducator credentialing system as long as notice of intent to adopt regulations is published within 20 days of implementation of the relevant policies and procedures. The proposed policies and procedures would remain valid until final regulations take effect.³²

Fees

The proposed fees for the model credential are \$75 for an initial credential (valid for five years) and \$50 to renew the credential (for five years).

SDE charges applicants for educator certificates a minimum of \$50 to cover the cost of the initial review of the application and supporting materials. If a person is turned down, they do not receive a refund. If a person is granted a certificate, the \$50 is applied toward the total fee for the specific certificate, which range from \$100 to \$300. Currently, there is no charge for renewals, although SDE incurs expenses to review and process them. The proposed fees for the paraeducator credential are intended to cover a major portion of the cost of issuing the credential.

³² This language mirrors language already in the statutes for several programs under the jurisdiction of the Department of Social Services, such as C.G.S. Sec. 17b-239b.

Estimated Costs

Regarding the issue of costs, regulatory systems clearly carry a price tag. The model voluntary paraeducator credential would affect those working as paraprofessionals, those employing paraprofessionals, and those overseeing compliance with the new system to some degree. However, the costs would undoubtedly be lower than those associated with a mandatory system. As described below, the greatest short-term expense would be to the state.

Employees. Individuals wishing to work as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who do not already meet the requirements for the model paraeducator credential, as well as everyone required to complete professional development provisions for renewal of the credential, would need to expend time and money to obtain those credentials.

For individuals seeking an initial credential, the cost would vary considerably, depending on the background of the person. Those with sufficient college courses or an associate's degree or higher would already meet the minimum requirements. Their only expense for an initial credential would be the state fee of \$75.

Those individuals without any or enough college courses and little or no work experience would have several options. They could take the ParaPro exam for \$40, and if they do not pass, retake it for another \$40 per test, until they do. They could enroll in college courses, which cost approximately \$150 per credit on the community college level, \$350 per credit within the state university system, \$500 per credit at the University of Connecticut, and \$550 (or more) at private colleges. (Additional costs related to taking college courses would include transportation, books, and child care expenses.)

Their final alternative would be to obtain 3.0 CEUs in courses pertaining to the application of skills and knowledge to classroom instruction to combine with at least five years of paid employment as a paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities. The cost for CEUs would vary, but would likely be in the range of \$75 to \$150 per unit.

The cost of completing professional development requirements for renewal of the credential should be similar for all applicants. All credential holders seeking renewal would need to complete the same amount of professional development. The expense to meet that goal would depend on the mechanism used (e.g., college courses, continuing education units, and employer-sponsored programs).

Employers. Unlike some other states, the model voluntary paraeducator credential does not place any immediate financial burdens on local school districts to administer a credentialing program established by the state government. In fact, if districts choose to require their employees to obtain the paraeducator credential, some of the cost of verifying compliance with minimum standards would be eliminated because the state would be handling the paperwork for the credential and would have verified the person's education and work experience prior to issuing the credential. As a result, local school districts would only need to verify that an applicant or employee has the credential.

With regard to the level of compensation paid to instructional paraprofessionals who obtain the paraeducator credential, it is possible local school districts would have to increase salaries in the future. However, the date and size of such increases are difficult to predict, and would be subject to the collective bargaining process for most school districts.

Theoretically, salaries for credential holders and paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in general should be affected by the supply of and demand for paraprofessionals at any given time. If there are more districts recruiting paraprofessionals (with specified education or experience) than there are available workers, then hourly wages should rise in order to attract enough qualified people for the jobs that need to be filled. When there are more people seeking employment as paraprofessionals than there are jobs, then wages should stabilize. Alternatively, employers could require higher qualifications for the same salary previously paid to those with lower qualifications.

In practice, based on information from the local school districts in the PRI database, during SY 2004-05, the existence of standards in Connecticut did not always result in higher wage rates. The median, minimum, full-time hourly wage paid instructional paraprofessionals working full time, based on all of the districts in the database, was \$11.49. The median minimum for districts employing one or more paraprofessionals required to meet NCLB standards was \$11.32, while the median minimum in districts with their own standards was \$11.23. Districts without standards of their own had a median starting salary of \$11.78. Within each of those groupings, however, the range of salaries was wide, with the largest spread among the districts without their own standards.³³

In the next few years, if some districts were to adopt the model paraeducator credential as their minimum standard and they increase compensation in recognition of that fact (either as a management decision or as a result of collective bargaining), it is possible other districts might be forced to follow suit to remain competitive. However, because the model paraeducator credential is voluntary, and the job of a paraprofessional is generally an entry level position within the local education system, it is likely districts would continue to find new people to work in those jobs. Likewise, there will always be some people who want to remain in their immediate geographic area and be on the same schedule (i.e., school-day hours and vacations) as their children, regardless of the pay scale.

In the long-run, if the creation of the model paraeducator credential led to a higher skill level for the pool of people willing to work as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities, then a corresponding increase in salaries and benefits could be expected. If the purpose of the work of instructional paraprofessionals is to help educate students, then having a higher quality workforce available for those positions should be worth the higher cost, and be reflected by an increase in school district demand for those paraprofessionals.

³³ These numbers are based on median, minimum hourly wages paid. Some districts pay more, and some pay less than these amounts. Furthermore, three-quarters of the paraprofessionals in the PRI database have been working for their districts for more than two years and are paid more per hour than the minimum hourly wage used for their respective districts in these calculations.

Regulators. Additional work and expenses are anticipated for the State Department of Education to implement the model voluntary paraeducator credential. Some of the activities required would be one-time efforts, some would require periodic activity, and others would be ongoing.

It is expected that the department's experience overseeing teacher certification requirements would provide it with knowledge and expertise that would expedite the creation of the model paraeducator credentialing system (and possibly mitigate the cost of creating the system). However, during the first few months of authority for the program, likely expenses would include staff time for the development of regulations, forms, and computer programming. The cost of those activities would likely have to be borne by the department out of its existing appropriation.

On a permanent basis, implementation of the model paraeducator credential would add to the overall workload of the Bureau of Certification and Professional Development, which currently has 13 certification analysts to handle about 30,000 applications a year from individuals covered by mandatory certification requirements. SDE staff indicated the bureau could not absorb a new program without additional resources. Therefore, when the department actually starts reviewing paraeducator applications and issuing credentials, it is likely an additional person would be needed within the bureau to implement the program. Given the bureau's other regulatory responsibilities, however, it is expected that the new person would not be employed solely to operate the paraeducator credential program. Instead, as in other states, the person would become involved in processing multiple types of credentials, and others in the bureau would be available to provide advice and assistance regarding the new program.

If the bureau added one certification analyst in a mid-level position,³⁴ the starting salary for that job in 2008 would be approximately \$68,000. The estimated cost of fringe benefits would be approximately \$39,000 (based on a state rate of 58 percent), for a total annual cost of about \$107,000.

In terms of workload and fees, it is difficult to know the exact number of individuals who would apply for the model paraeducator credential because it is voluntary. Indeed, over time, it can be expected that SDE would need to adjust the resources assigned to the paraeducator program, depending on demand for the credential.

For example, if one-fifth of the individuals currently working as paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities applied annually during the early years of the program, there would be about 2,400 applicants per year. (This is based on SDE's count of approximately 12,000 FTE instructional paraprofessionals in SY 04-05.) At a fee of \$75 per person for an initial credential, this would raise approximately \$180,000 in revenue, two-thirds more than the estimated cost of the new classification analyst position.

If that estimate turns out to be too high, and only 10 percent of the existing paraprofessionals apply annually, then there would be about 1,200 applications a year. That

³⁴ SDE refers to all of the staff in the bureau who process the various components of existing certification processes as certification analysts. The actual job title of the position used to develop the estimated costs in this section is an Education Service Specialist.

level of activity would generate approximately \$90,000 in revenue, about 85 percent of the cost of the new position. Alternatively, if half of the existing paraprofessionals applied during the first year, then SDE would have to process 6,000 applications. That volume would produce revenue of \$450,000, an amount adequate to pay for several additional staff, if necessary.

APPENDICES

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 (EHC) 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.¹

Among the purposes of IDEA are:²

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.

¹ Public Law 108-446 (Part B Sec. 611); U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Data Analysis System

² 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 in Chapter One, 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.³ 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, reaches about 12.5 million students enrolled in public and private schools. Approximately 50,000 public schools nationwide receive Title I funds.⁴

³ U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html#sec1002>

⁴ U.S. Department of Education: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html>

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 to 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. States must make "adequate yearly progress" toward those indicators; 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.⁵ 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 a 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:

1. completed at least two years of postsecondary study;
2. obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or

⁵ U.S. Department of Education: Title I Paraprofessionals, *Non-Regulatory Guidance*, p. 1, March 1, 2004.

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.

Local School District Database

In mid-July 2006, the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee sent a data request to the superintendents of all local school districts in Connecticut that operate one or more public elementary, middle, or high schools.¹ The four-page form asked for information about the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities who were employed by each district to work in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The term “paraprofessional with instructional responsibilities” was defined as:

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.

Districts were asked to answer the questions on the form for all employees who met the definition, even if the districts used different job titles for the employees. By October 2006, after several follow-up letters and telephone calls to districts that had not responded by earlier specified dates, the committee had received forms from 119 of the 169 local school districts contacted, for a response rate of 70 percent.

The questions on the form asked districts about:

- the demographic composition (i.e., gender, race, and age) of the paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities they employed;
- their length of employment with the district and their hours of work;
- the primary functions they perform;
- district policies regarding their qualifications, supervision, and professional development;
- educational levels achieved; and
- wages and benefits.

For the most part, the information requested was for School Year 2005-2006. Data requiring specific employee counts were primarily from October 1, 2005, an annual reporting date used by the State Department of Education for many of its reports. Wage data were for SY 2004-2005.

Although the information in the program review database reflects self-reported information from less than the entire pool of school districts, the respondents appear to be proportionally representative of all of the districts sent the form, based on the characteristics

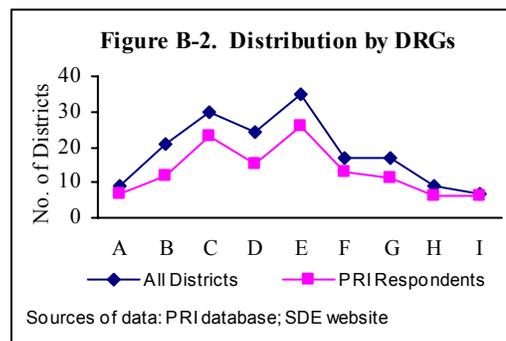
¹ The data collection form was sent to the 166 local public school districts in the state plus the three endowed academies that serve as regional high schools for local school districts in their respective areas, making a total of 169 districts. (The form was not sent to any charter or magnet schools nor the state’s technical high school system.)

listed in Table B-1. In terms of the total number of paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in Connecticut, the districts that responded employed 72 percent of the 12,046 full-time equivalent, noncertified instructional personnel reported to SDE as working in the state in October 2005.

Table B-1. Characteristics of PRI Data Collection Form Recipients and Respondents		
<i>Number of:</i>	<i>Sent Data Form</i>	<i>Returned Data Form (% of all sent form)</i>
Districts in total	169	119 (70%)
Districts that operate elementary schools	158	113 (72%)
Districts that operate middle schools	121	85 (70%)
Districts that operate high schools	124	82 (66%)
K-12 students in public schools	~550,000	~403,000 (73%)
K-12 paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities	~12,000	~8,700 (73%)
Regional school districts	17	14 (82%)
Districts where paraprofessionals are represented by unions	145	101 (70%)
Sources of data: State Department of Education, U.S. Bureau of Census, and PRI database		

Another characteristic used to compare the respondents and the total pool of local public school districts was the classification system developed by SDE to group students with similar socioeconomic status and need. Now known as District Reference Groups (DRGs), up until 2005 the categories were known as Educational Reference Groups. The respondents in the PRI database were distributed proportionately using both measures. Figure B-2 shows the distribution based on DRG classifications.

A copy of the data request form sent to the districts is provided on the next four pages. It is followed by a list of the districts that responded by October 2, 2006.



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.

	Number with specified length of employment, as of October 1, 2005			
School Level	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

Andover	Montville	Tolland
Ashford	New Britain	Torrington
Avon	New Canaan	Trumbull
Barkhamsted	New Hartford	Vernon
Bethany	New Haven	Voluntown
Bloomfield	New London	Wallingford
Bozrah	New Milford	Waterbury
Bridgeport	Newtown	Waterford
Bristol	Norfolk	Westbrook
Brookfield	North Canaan	West Haven
Canaan	North Haven	Weston
Canton	North Stonington	Westport
Chaplin	Norwalk	Wethersfield
Chester	Orange	Willington
Clinton	Oxford	Winchester
Colebrook	Plainfield	Windsor
Columbia	Plainville	Windsor Locks
Cornwall	Plymouth	Wolcott
Coventry	Preston	Woodbridge
Cromwell	Putnam	Woodstock
Deep River	Redding	Woodstock Academy
Derby	Regional School District #1	
East Granby	Regional School District #4	
East Haddam	Regional School District #5	
East Hampton	Regional School District #7	
East Hartford	Regional School District #8	
East Haven	Regional School District #9	
East Lyme	Regional School District #10	
Eastford	Regional School District #12	
Easton	Regional School District #13	
Enfield	Regional School District #15	
Essex	Regional School District #16	
Fairfield	Regional School District #17	
Farmington	Regional School District #18	
Gilbert School	Ridgefield	
Granby	Rocky Hill	
Griswold	Salem	
Groton	Salisbury	
Guilford	Scotland	
Hampton	Sharon	
Hartford	Sherman	
Hartland	Somers	
Hebron	Southington	
Kent	Sprague	
Ledyard	Stafford	
Manchester	Stamford	
Marlborough	Stonington	
Meriden	Stratford	
Middletown	Thomaston	
Milford	Thompson	

Note: The number of towns listed is greater than 119 because one response was on behalf of more than one district.

APPENDIX C

Agency Response



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



January 31, 2007

Ms. Carrie E. Vibert, Director
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee
State Office Building
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591

Dear Director Vibert:

The attached represents the State Department of Education's response to your committee's report on School Paraprofessionals. Our comments and concerns about specific recommendations are indicated on the attached pages.

If you have further questions, please contact Nancy Pugliese at (860) 713-6708 or nancy.pugliese@ct.gov, or George Dowaliby at (860) 807-2004 or george.dowaliby@ct.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Coleman".

George A. Coleman, Interim Commissioner
Department of Education

GAC/gpd/c
Attachment

Connecticut State Department of Education

**Response to the Report on School Paraprofessionals Completed by the
Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee**

The program review committee recommends that the State Department of Education develop a state-issued credential for paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities working in Connecticut's K-12 public schools and submit a plan to implement the credential by January 1, 2008, to the legislative committee of cognizance over education. The State Department of Education shall require that any applicant seeking the credential be a citizen of the United States or an alien legally resident in the United States.

Creating a voluntary three-tiered credential option for paraprofessionals is one that the State Department of Education (SDE) will need to study more in depth. In developing standards for the credential, the SDE would seek to involve districts, union representatives and paraprofessionals. Developing a three-tiered credential requires in-depth review and analysis of individuals' credentials and requires a large number of person hours to implement. It is important to recognize that the Department would not only be credentialing individuals currently working in paraprofessional positions, but also other individuals applying to districts to fill paraprofessional positions; therefore, it is hard to quantify the number of credentials that the SDE would be awarding.

The SDE is concerned with the resources and costs associated with implementing a voluntary proposal and is also concerned about providing a three-tiered credential (e.g. paraprofessional credential without meeting NCLB requirements, paraprofessional credential meeting NCLB requirements, and paraprofessional credential with additional skills). Implementation of these recommendations would require development of a new data system as well as significant costs and staff resources.

The Program Review Committee recommends that State Department of Education periodically contact a sample of paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators -- through unions, school districts, the State Education Resource Center (SERC), and Regional Education Service Centers (RESA) -- to identify the professional development needs of instructional paraprofessionals and any problem areas that may exist. Following such an assessment, the department should begin coordinating, from a statewide perspective, professional development offerings that meet the needs of instructional paraprofessionals. As part of that effort, SDE should report the results of the assessment to the Department of Higher Education.

The SDE, through its work with the State Educational Resource Center (SERC), has conducted a needs assessment to identify professional development needs as part of a paraprofessional conference. The SDE will insure that a needs assessment is conducted at least annually and the results can be shared with the Department of Higher Education.

In addition, as a result of needs assessments, some statewide training and professional development are provided by SERC. Since delivery of training and professional development is most effectively done at the local level, the SDE can summarize the needs and provide them to Regional Education Service Centers (RESCs) and local districts and encourage those entities to provide appropriate professional development and training.

The Program Review Committee recommends the State Department of Education encourage all local public school districts to provide training to teachers, particularly new teachers at the beginning of each school year, on the role and effective use of instructional paraprofessionals. The Department should also encourage school districts to develop intra-district methods and strategies whereby paraprofessionals, teachers, and administrators periodically discuss issues or concerns involving the use of paraprofessionals in providing effective student instruction.

The SDE can encourage districts to address the issues above. It is anticipated that the effective use of paraprofessionals will be included in the *Guidelines* that are currently being developed.

The Program Review Committee recommends that the State Department of Education periodically remind local school districts that existing regulations prohibit the use of noncertified personnel in an initial teaching role. Further, the department should develop a mechanism to periodically monitor local school compliance with this requirement.

The SDE annually implements a compliance check of every district and every individual working within a district to determine if the teaching placement is compliant with the individual's teaching endorsement(s). In early January each year, the report is sent to every superintendent of schools throughout the state. Each district must report how they intend to rectify the noncompliant placement and rectify the placement as soon as possible.

Additionally, the Bureau of Educator Preparation, Certification, Support and Assessment electronically delivers a biennial newsletter to every superintendent, human resource director and other interested parties. Newsletter articles consistently address specific positions and the required endorsement for holding such a teaching position.

The Program Review Committee recommends the State Department of Education finalize those portions of the May 2004 *Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21: Working Draft* concerning roles, responsibilities, and training that it believes would be helpful to all paraprofessionals with instructional responsibilities in Connecticut and submit that document to the State Board of Education by September 2007 for its approval.

The SDE is currently working to extend the draft of the guidelines to include all paraprofessionals and to address the roles, responsibilities and training for all paraprofessionals, not just those working with students with disabilities. The document is expected to be completed consistent with the timeline recommended above and presented to the State Board of Education for adoption.

The Program Review Committee recommends the State Department of Education summarize the information about Title I paraprofessionals that it will collect annually and post the information on the agency's website. At a minimum, the posted data should include the number of paraprofessionals covered by No Child Left Behind requirements, the number who have not met the NCLB requirements, the number of districts with paraprofessionals out of compliance, and the types of actions taken by those districts to comply (i.e., terminated staff, transferred staff, or did nothing).

Currently, the State Department of Education collects district-reported data on non-certified staff once per year. The SDE does not currently summarize or publicly report this information. The SDE will develop a system to post the suggested information on its website. It is the SDE's requirement and expectation that all Title I districts are NCLB compliant with this requirement as of August 2006. The SDE will follow up directly with any district that is not in compliance.