
**Program Review and Investigations Committee
September 24, 2014
SCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONALS STAFFING STUDY**

Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee:

My name is Anne Kellner and I am proud to say I have been a Para Educator in the Thompson Public Schools for the past 24 years. I am excited, but hurt that we have to be here today.

I am excited because this means you recognize the importance of the Para Educator's role in our student's learning. Over the past 24 years, which I can attest to, the role of the Aide, Para Professional and now Para Educator has dramatically changed. Gone are the days where we were "glorified babysitters." We use to do lunch duties, have students read to us, make up bulletin boards and grade papers for our teachers. Today we are an integral part of the learning process. We actively work with students in specialized reading programs such as the Wilson program. We work one-on-one with students with a variety of learning issues carrying through with teaching new skills to these students. We go with students to camps and downtown activities so the students can experience new skills out of their comfort zones. We are a direct link between our Special Education teachers and Regular Ed teachers making sure our students are getting the services they need according to their IEP's. We work in small groups within the classroom reinforcing and re-teaching skills to those students that are in need of the extra help.

Remember I said I am also hurt? Sadly, the mindsets of many have not kept up with our evolving roles within our school systems. I am hurt that we are assigned to students that need specialized training but all too often there are no funds to send us to Professional Training or allow us to further our education. I am hurt that we are an integral part of carrying out the IEP's but yet we are not allowed access to them or to participate in their development.

I know the offer has been out there to "walk a day in a Para's shoes." I hope that you consider doing just that in the future. You can see our frustration with our dedication to our students and yet many times we don't have the tools provided to use the "best practices" for our students. I am sure you will be pleasantly surprised with the work that we do to help our future generations graduate and become productive members in society. But more importantly you will have an upfront picture of the very diverse aspects of the duties we perform and the range of services we provide to the most demanding and yes, even most difficult students in our school system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and in conclusion I would like to say that if this committee could implement just one change it would be to make sure that our school systems provide us with the "best practices" for each individual student we are assigned to so that we can ensure the best possible education for all our students.

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