

Qualifications for School Paraeducators in Other States

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Issue

This report summarizes paraeducator (i.e., paraprofessional) qualifications in 10 states.

Summary

The State Department of Education (SDE) defines a [paraeducator](#) as someone who assists teachers and other certified professional staff with instructing and providing related services to students. A paraeducator, also known as paraprofessional, teaching assistant, or educational technician, works under the direct supervision of a teacher or other school professional (such as a school social worker or psychologist).

Connecticut does not require a certificate or permit to be employed as a paraeducator in public schools, but paraeducators employed in a school that receives Title I funds must meet the federal law requirements that began in 2002 under the [No Child Left Behind \(NCLB\) Act](#) (see Background below). To meet this standard SDE requires such a candidate to have a high school diploma or equivalent and one of the following: (1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education or earned an associate degree (or higher), or (2) achieved at least a score of 457 on the ETS ParaPro Assessment.

This report addresses the general requirements to become a paraeducators in 10 states. It does not address specific specialized areas that might require additional training or education, such as working with special education students or English language learners. All states below require paraeducators to work under the supervision of a teacher or other certified school professional.

Table 1: Paraeducator/Paraprofessional General Qualifications in 10 States

| State | Citation/Source | Description |
|---------------|---|---|
| Colorado | Col. Rev. Stat. § 23-1-121.7 (e) & (f) | <p>For Title I supported schools, must meet one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree (or higher) or completion of at least two years of postsecondary study or • Successfully taking a state or locally chosen assessment that meets state and federal standards and demonstrates knowledge and ability in reading, writing, and math instruction <p>No state-level requirement for non-Title I supported schools</p> |
| Maine | 05-071 Code Me. Rules ch. 115 § I-6 | <p>Three levels of Educational Technician</p> <p>Must be of good moral character and at least age 18 plus the following for specific levels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technician I: High school diploma or GED • Technician II: At least 60 credits of approved study in an educationally related field • Technician III: At least 90 credits of approved study in an educationally related field |
| Massachusetts | Mass. Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education | <p>For Title I supported schools must meet one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree (or higher) or completion of at least two years of postsecondary study that is the equivalent of 48 credit hours from an accredited institution of higher education or • Meets a rigorous standard on a Massachusetts-endorsed assessment (either score of 464 on ParaPro or specified skill levels on Workkeys) |
| New Hampshire | N.H. Code of Admin. R. Ed 504.06 and 504.07 | <p>Two levels of paraeducators</p> <p>Paraeducator I: High school diploma or New Hampshire equivalency (HiSET)</p> <p>Paraeducator II: Must have high school diploma or state equivalent, plus one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree or at least 48 college credit hours • Passing score on a nationally recognized test such as ParaPro • Assessment of a portfolio the applicant submits that demonstrates an ability to assist in reading, writing, and mathematics instruction |
| New York | N.Y. Comp. Codes R. & Regs. Tit. 8, § 80-5.6 | <p>Four levels of teaching assistant certificates</p> <p>Level I (all parts required):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High school diploma or GED |

Table 1 (Continued)

| State | Citation/Source | Description |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| New York (continued) | Workshops or online courses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfactory score on the NYS teaching assistant assessment (ATAS) • Completion of the following workshops or online courses: (1) Child Abuse Identification, (2) School Violence Prevention and Intervention, (3) Training in Harassment, Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Discrimination in Schools: Prevention and Intervention <p>Level II (all required):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parts of Level I • One year of experience at Level I • Nine semester hours of college coursework <p>Level III (all required):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parts of Level I • One year of experience at Level I, Level II, or as a classroom teacher in New York • 18 semester hours of college coursework • Citizen status (either a U.S. citizen, permanent resident, deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) status, or similar relief from deportation) <p>Pre-Professional (all required):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All parts of Level I • One year of experience at Level I, II, or III • 18 semester hours of college coursework • Must be enrolled in an approved teacher preparation program in the state |
| Pennsylvania | 22 Pa. Code § 403.5 & 22 Pa. Code § 14.105 | <p>All Title I funded paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or equivalent, plus one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree or completed at least two years of college or • Meet standard of quality through a state or local assessment <p>Non-Title I supported paraprofessionals must meet the same standard except they do not have to have a high school diploma</p> |

Table 1 (Continued)

| State | Citation/Source | Description |
|--------------|---|---|
| Rhode Island | R.I. Gen. Laws § 16-11.2-2 | <p>Teaching assistant candidates must meet the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good character as verified by employer • High school diploma or equivalent • Complete state-developed training program (training requirement waived for some circumstances such as holding an associate or higher degree and who have completed certain coursework) <p>Instructional assistants also must have one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Associate degree (or higher) or completed at least two years of college or • Meets a quality standard through a formal state or local assessment; local performance assessment may consist of documenting teaching assistant skills |
| Vermont | Code Vt. Rules 22-000-010: Licensing Rules 5220.4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No state licensing requirements • State provides guidance to school districts that any paraprofessionals supported with Title I funds must meet the federal requirement of high school diploma or equivalent, plus one of the following: (1) associate degree (or higher) or completed at least two years of college or (2) meets a standard of quality through a state or local assessment |
| Virginia | § Va. Admin. Code § 20-671-330(B) | <p>Paraeducators must:</p> <p>Be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma or equivalent and have one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two years of work experience with children or completed two years of coursework in a related field, or • upon employment complete within 60 calendar days of hire training specific to the assigned student population and job duties as they relate to the academic and behavioral progress of students |
| Washington | Wash. Admin. Code § 179-03-020 | <p>Paraeducators must:</p> <p>Be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma or equivalent and have one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualifying score on the education testing service paraeducator assessment • Associate degree (or higher) or 48 college semester credits • Complete a Washington state-registered paraeducator apprenticeship program |

Background: Federal Law and Paraeducators

When the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act was enacted in 2002, it required that all paraeducators working in Title I schools must either (1) have completed two years of study at an institution of higher education or earned an associate degree (or higher) or (2) met a rigorous standard of quality through a formal state or local assessment.

Following the enactment of NCLB, some states only address paraeducator qualifications for those working in Title I schools or have two separate levels of qualifications with one for Title I schools. Other states have statewide qualifications that appear to satisfy the federal requirement regardless of the type of school. (To be a [Title I school](#), children from low-income families must make up at least 40% of the enrollment, which qualifies the school to use Title I funds for schoolwide programs.)

NCLB was most recently renewed by the 2015 [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA). The ESSA does not set specific educational qualifications for paraeducators but requires that states maintain professional standards for Title I paraprofessionals, including qualifications that were in place the day before the ESSA was enacted (20 U.S.C. § 6311(g)(2)(M)). Thus, by requiring the existing qualifications be continued, ESSA requires the standard of NCLB be continued.

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