The CSDE recently conducted a study to identify the professional development needs of paraprofessionals. Here are the results.

**Paraprofessional Professional Development Survey Results**

**Total number of respondents:** 232

**Breakdown:**

- Administrators (64)
- Paraprofessionals (125)
- Teachers (38)
- Consultants (5)

**Participants were asked to identify their 6 top choices for paraprofessional professional development.**

1. Positive behavior supports and implementation of behavior management plans (185)
2. Knowledge of and skills to assist in reading/reading readiness (146)
3. Knowledge of and skills to assist in mathematics/mathematics readiness (137)
4. Facilitating inclusion in general education (133)
5. Knowledge of and skills to assist in writing/writing readiness (130)
6. Knowledge of specific disabilities (129)
7. Reinforcing Teacher Planned instruction (119)
8. Assistive Technology (75)
9. Collaboration with the teacher (75)
10. Communication skills (oral and written) (70)
11. Confidentiality/Ethics (60)
12. Knowledge of Federal, State, and District Regulations (52)
13. Health and Safety (Communicable Diseases, Bloodborne Pathogens, Ergonomics) (30)
14. Time Management (25)
15. ParaPro Assessment Preparation (24)
16. Other: train teachers on the role of the paraprofessional, DCF mandated reporting, specific interventions on Autism, how to meet the needs of a special education student, Autism, Professionalism, computer skills-power point, technology, participants in meetings related to PPTs, how paraprofessionals can stand up for themselves, mental health knowledge, classes offered to continue education, roles and responsibilities, and classroom management.
What obstacles, if any, have you encountered when trying to provide professional development for your paraprofessionals?

1. Lack of time (61)
2. Money (63)
3. Lack of resources (35)
4. Other: sub coverage, lack of interest, scheduling, administration, lack of discussion about para professional development, contractual obligations (2), collective bargaining, resistance from administration.

With which district RESC is your program/district affiliated?

CREC (98)
ACES (49)
EASTCONN (41)
LEARN (29)
CES (17)
Education Connection (7)

To which Community College is your district/program nearest?

Capital (57)
Gateway (46)
Tunxis (38)
Three Rivers (29)
Quinebag (24)
Manchester (23)
Housatonic (9)
Asnuntuck (3)
Northwestern (1)

Additional comments:

- The state's interest in increasing the training of paraeducators is a welcomed development. To this point in time, training has not been mandatory for districts, which has proven to be a disservice to not only the paras but to the staff and students with whom they work.

- The job titles of paraprofessional and teacher assistant are often used interchangeably. A true paraprofessional (in my opinion) is the individual who follows through on and reinforces the teacher’s initial instruction. These people should have ongoing professional development if they are to be truly effective. The teacher assistant who is more of an extra set of hands and more involved in supervision and "crowd control"
doesn’t require the same level of training. I think a definition of the two roles should be developed.

- Teachers and Paraprofessionals need to attend Professional Development sessions together. Too many teachers do not know how to work with a Para in their classroom. Communication between teacher and Para is always a problem. Attending workshops together would solve many problems.

- Thank you for taking the time to inquire about services needed in this area.

- It would be great to see worthwhile programs for veteran paraprofessionals in the northeast region. It is difficult to send hourly employees to conferences and workshops in Hartford or farther since the timeframe clearly go out of their regular working hours. Also, the needs of small rural towns’ paraprofessionals may be different from the needs of counterparts in the cities and suburban areas.

- We would LOVE to have students from Three Rivers - I'll have to look into that. THANK you for supporting districts in the proper utilization of paraeducators!

- Many times we have the paras that desire to attend various workshops but administration denies the request because of cost or hours away from job. Most of our paras have a second job which makes after school hours difficult especially when the workshop pertains to the first job.

- I am a college professor but have over 25 years in the public school as a speech pathologist. There is a need to train paras on how to facilitate (e.g., scaffold) information so that they neither simply provide the answer for the student nor "babysit" wile the student struggles. It would be excellent if skills such as scaffolding and visualizing could be taught to the paras so that they may use these with their students.

- Having workshops at Eastconn to reduce travel time and expense is important.

- As a trained facilitator, and not having a set budget for training purposes, I have to spend a great deal of my own personal time, getting ideas together and trying to find free or cheap ways to get the information to my districts paras. They do not want to do anything outside of school time as they won't be reimbursed and that sets the tone for a lot of my workshops.

- All of Madison's paraprofessionals are highly qualified--they have degrees, 60 credit hours or have passed ParaPro. They also receive 30 hours of training in their first year and 18 hours of training in subsequent years. Madison is implementing RTI, the
academic and behavior interventions; this explains our need for skilled paraprofessionals.

- Paras should be kept up with new technology and curriculums.

- East Hartford is extremely supportive and provides as many dollars and as much time as possible. However, 2 major problems persist. We lack the logistics and time to provide "collaboration between paras, special ed teachers, and REGULAR ED TEACHERS." Since this is critical for the success of inclusion, we keep pushing for it. The other problem is that many of our paras have been to workshops on the same topics year after year. We need new topics to keep the paras fresh and interested in training. I would like to talk to you about some of the workshops presented by the National Resource Center for Paras last April, as well as new topics presented at the AFT PSRP Conference also in April. I was able to get copies of the PowerPoint presentations of several along with handouts, and am excited about finding a way to share the knowledge with paras here in Connecticut. Please feel free to call me to discuss. On a personal note, Iris, the SDE is fortunate to have you. You are an incredibly effective person and can't imagine anyone better. I am also proud to know one of the SDE's newest recruits, Stefanie Carbone. I've worked with Stef and was thrilled to hear she will be working with the paras. Looking forward to seeing both of you again and helping in any way I can to improve the capacity of Connecticut paraeducators.

- The ongoing training of paraprofessionals is a high priority for our district and we would appreciate any support or resources you can provide. The major challenge we face is finding the time to offer the training. It is not practical to release the paraprofessionals from their assignment during the school day taking them away from their students.

- I would appreciate if you send the brochures to my school, American School for the Deaf to the paraprofessionals whom they really need update with their skills and cues.

- I make it a point to attend the annual para conference in order to keep up with as much as I can but I know there is more out there but I don't have the money to take the courses or the time.

- Paraprofessionals who support students with special needs (Autism, ADHD, and OPP) should have consistent relevant training to meet the needs of their students. This training should include college level courses and workshops with specialists for the specific disability who can help with curriculum modifications. General education teachers are not trained to deal with these students in an inclusive classroom.
• Paraprofessionals would benefit if they had prep time along with classroom teachers. Coordination is key. Also, administrators must stop using paras as substitute teachers! Often paras are pulled from their regular assignments to substitute. The only benefit is that the district saves money. No benefit to the children who are supposed to receive the extra support.

• I have done para in-service training in the summers for one day trainings; it was not enough to help. Also, their role and job descriptions need to be clearly defined by the system.

• It would be great if paras had more "teacher" help with their student...they are the teacher and we are there to "help" not teach per say. If so I would receive a teachers pay check and not a paras.

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• As a new special ed para, I feel it is imperative to have training BEFORE working with this population. It is unfair to both student and teacher to go to work with no training