February 2011 Update for District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), established the District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraprofessionals and their supervisors. The focus of this newsletter is to provide resources for more effective teacher and paraprofessional collaboration.

The Speech and Language Pathology Assistant Certificate

Charter Oak State College, in conjunction with the professional staff of Connecticut's Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), has developed this online certificate to train adults as speech and language pathology assistants. You can participate in this certificate program on a stand-alone basis, or you can apply the credits you earn toward an associate or bachelor's degree. Coursework is designed to assist you in mastering the skills required to address the language, communication, social/emotional and creative needs of school children.

Ideal candidates for this certificate program include:

- Paraprofessionals currently employed in the field of Speech and Language Pathology.
- Those in early childhood education who seek greater insight into language development and the support of language differences.
- Those in the fields of general and special education interested in advancing their knowledge of the impact of language and communication on the learning process.
- Anyone interested in transitioning from a current career to this very much in demand field.

For more information, please contact by calling 860-832-3823 or e-mail at: pmorganti@charteroak.edu.

The Paraprofessional Educator Certificate

If your goal is to pursue, achieve and sustain success as an educational paraprofessional, you should consider this supportive Charter Oak State College *online* certificate program developed in conjunction with the professional staff of Connecticut's Capitol region Education Council (CREC). You have the option of participating in the program on a stand-alone certificate basis, or you can apply the credits you earn toward a Charter Oak associate or bachelor's degree.

It is easy and convenient to participate while you remain focused on commitment to your current employment. The skills you acquire in this certificate program will assist you in defining and honing the teaching competencies that will contribute to your success as a paraprofessional and ensure a smooth transition to an in-demand career field poised for new growth.

Paraprofessional Educator certificate Courses
(Each course offers 3 credits)

Introduction to the Paraprofessional: An overview of the roles and responsibilities of the educational paraprofessional. Learning outcomes are based on Levels One and Two of the National Paraprofessional standards and include an understanding of behavior techniques, communication, legal issues and instructional strategies.

Advanced Behavior Techniques: An in-depth study of specific strategies designed to prevent and/or manage challenging student behaviors. Learning outcomes are based on the National Paraprofessional Standards, Levels One through Three.

Autism and Assistive Technology: An examination of specific academic and behavioral strategies employed to assist autistic students in the classroom. The course additional explores the use of assistive technologies that support independent learning. Learning outcomes are based on the National Paraprofessional Standards.

Exceptional Learners Paraprofessional: A study of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) that focuses on the disability categories protected under federal law. The course provides insight into the characteristics of each of the law's disability categories and looks at the academic and behavioral strategies designed to assist students with disabilities. Learning outcomes are based on the national Paraprofessional Standards, Levels One Through Three.

The Paraprofessional Internship: An on-site classroom internship designed to allow you to apply skills learned in the Introduction to the Paraprofessional course. Learning outcomes are based on National Paraprofessional Standards, Levels One through Three. The course presents an opportunity for you to work 120 hours in a real educational setting. The course instructor and on-site supervising teacher will maintain regular contact with you throughout your internship. You will be responsible for selecting the site.

To learn more about Charter Oak's Paraprofessional Educator Certificate program, please contact by phone at 860-832-3823, e-mail at: pmorganti@charteroak.edu or by writing to Charter Oak State College, 55 Paul J. Manafort Drive, New Britain, CT 06053.

A Problem-Solving Exercise: Each month, we provide a case study and discussion questions to facilitate discussion among teachers, paraprofessionals and administrators.

Paraprofessional's Perspective-Julie

I am Julie and I have been working as a paraprofessional in special education for the past 3 months. I really like working with children and have been active in elementary PTA, was a Girl Scout leader, and taught in our local Sunday school.

When I took this job, I was briefed on district policy with regard to salary, fringe benefits, working hours, vacation and so on. In addition, I was told about the chain of command in the schools and the supervisor very briefly described my role as a paraprofessional. I was told that Mr. White would be the classroom teacher I would be working with and that I would meet him when I reported to work. The supervisor said Mr. White would give me information about the specific tasks I would be expected to perform and the methods and strategies he would expect me to use to carry out the activities.

From the day I walked into the classroom, we have never had a formal discussion about what he expects me to do; there is always some reason why we can't sit down and talk. We can never meet during his prep periods because he is always too busy doing lesson plans to talk to me. When I suggested we meet after school, he told me that would be impossible because he either has graduate classes or meetings to attend. Then on one of the days he was "free," I really had to get home to take one of my kids to the doctor.

I never know in advance what he wants me to do or how he wants it to be done. Just before he does something in the class, he will say, "Julie, take this group and follow my plans." I have no real idea about what to do, except to try to do what I see him doing while I sit in the back of the room watching him teach the lessons as he has asked me to do. When I am teaching, he frequently breaks into what I am doing and corrects me right in front of the students. I don't have the guts to tell him how this makes me feel, so I leave it until I get home and then my family bears the brunt of all of my frustrations.

Teacher's Perspective

I am Ken, a high school teacher who has been assigned my first paraprofessional after teaching for 12 years. This was done because several special education students were assigned to my class as part of the district's efforts to place them in what the district calls the "least restrictive" environment. I wish they had asked me whether I wanted someone or not, because I'm really a loner and have very strict rules about how things are done in my classroom. I've never worked with anyone before in my classroom and I'm not really sure what I think, if it would be worth the time to plan for another adult, especially someone who is not trained to be a teacher, much less to work with students with special needs.

At any rate, Julie walked into my classroom three months ago just before school began, and said she was the paraprofessional assigned to me. I asked her if she had been told what her duties were and she informed me that they had been explained to her in a meeting at the district office. I wish they had told me what I could expect her to do because I have no idea what goes on in those "briefing" sessions, nor have I seen a copy of a job description for a paraprofessional. I asked her to sit in the back of the room and watch for a while so she could get the hang of how I work. I told her that we'd get together later when I had some free time to talk to her.

During the first few days, I never had time to talk to her. I had lesson plans to develop. I have four different preparations that really take a lot of time. I'm also taking a second master's and I have to leave three days a week almost immediately after school, so for me, just sitting down to talk is a problem. I wish there was time during the day to do this, but I'm just too busy with the kids and the planning to talk to her.

I finally decided that I'd let her review some of the skills I had already taught the students. So I gave her my plans and told her to follow them religiously. But she never did it exactly the way I wanted it to be done; she apparently thought it didn't make any difference how she did it as long as she felt comfortable, so what was I to do? I told her to do it the way I had written it and not to use her own methods.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Describe the problem from the paraprofessional's point of view? (This may include attitudes, actions, and other factors described in the case study.)**

2. **Describe the problem from the teacher's point of view.**

3. **What behavior(s) does the teacher need to change?**

4. **What behavior(s) does the paraprofessional need to change?**

5. **Discuss and list desired goal(s) for the team.**

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