



June 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.

District Spotlight: West Hartford Public Schools

Classroom teachers, too, need to know that students assisted by paraprofessionals still need the teachers' full attention. "The presence of paraprofessionals does not preclude the use of differentiated instruction," says Glenn McGrath, Director of Pupil Services, West Hartford Public Schools.

With this in mind, West Hartford, which has approximately 135 paraprofessionals in special education, follows certain practices to build on the strengths of the paraprofessional-student relationship and avoid the pitfalls. No district has a one-size-fits-all model for using paraprofessionals, and many districts, including West Hartford continue to enhance their approach.

First, West Hartford paraprofessionals are assigned to work with several students and vice versa. This rescues the student's dependence on one particular paraprofessional and allows paraprofessionals to learn to work with a variety of students.

"We just think that paraprofessionals are assigned to classrooms and programs, not to individuals," McGrath says.

Second, the district encourages good communication between the paraprofessional and the classroom teachers. The paraprofessionals are given time to debrief. Because some of them work with the same students, they can share their experiences.

The paraprofessionals are expected to provide the teachers with relevant information and observations that the teacher might know about. Parents must seek out the teacher, not the paraprofessional to discuss their child. The teacher should still be the go-to-person, even if the parents ask paraprofessionals to attend their child's Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings.

Third, paraprofessionals must have adequate access to professional development. Schools and districts must find a way to fund time that paraprofessionals might spend outside of the classroom for training or attending meetings. Some professional development is held during school hours, such as SERC's annual "Paraprofessionals as Partners" conference in the fall, but SERC also holds training for paraprofessionals before the school year begins and scheduled others after school hours.

Fourth, as suggested in Connecticut's Guidelines for the Training and Support of Paraprofessionals Working with Students Birth to 21 (2008), West Hartford created a handbook that outlines the expectations and roles, and responsibilities of paraprofessionals (referred to in West Hartford as "paraeducators"). It suggests that one way to facilitate student achievement is to support student independence. A paraeducator should allow a student to have enough space to make his/her own decisions, successes, and mistakes and to become responsible for his/her own learning. At the same time, the paraeducator should keep a careful balance of support and intervention. In an ideal situation, the paraprofessional should be viewed by the outsider as an assistant to the teacher and classroom, not the individual student.

This concept is expressed succinctly on a page at the beginning of the handbook: "Your GOAL for the student(s) you work with is to help build confidence and increase independence," it says. "Learn to "fade" when possible." Finally, the district is developing a formal paraprofessional evaluation, based on evaluation guidelines from the CSDE.

Taken from the LRE News Newsletter, SERC, Spring/Summer 2010



Save the Date!

November 16, 2011

SERC's 16th Annual Statewide

Paraprofessionals as

Partners Conference

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If you have any questions regarding this conference, feel free to contact **Stefanie Carbone, Consultant at SERC 860-632-1485 X 306.**

*Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Internet-Based ParaPro Assessment
is being offered by LEARN
at Southwest Computer Lab:*

June 2, 2011

2:15 p.m.-4:45 p.m.

\$25.00 registration fee

\$45.00 test fee

*For more information and to register, please contact
Irma Wilhelm by e-mail at:*

iwilhelm@learn.k12.ct.us

or go online:

http://www.escweb.net/ct_learn/catalog/event.aspx?mode=subject&order=asc&scheduled=1&id=349&eventId=45298&referrer=browse.aspx



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