

PARAEDUCATOR QUESTION/ANSWER DOCUMENT

PART ONE: ROLES, GENERAL SUPERVISION, and PARAEDUCATOR REQUIREMENTS (REVISED)

1. What is the primary role of a paraeducator in the classroom?

The paraeducator's primary role is to work alongside the teacher in the implementation of the teacher-developed/directed lesson plan. The paraeducator is there to assist the teacher in reviewing/practicing material introduced by the teacher through direct and indirect instruction. Depending on the program, the paraeducator may also assist the teacher with administrative duties such as collection of lunch money, field trip fees/permission slips, posting of grades, and grading of objective, curriculum based assessments on a limited basis. For additional information/training on the roles/responsibilities of paraeducators, you may contact Barbara Locker at the Paraeducators of Kentucky Project at the Human Development Institute, University of Kentucky at 859-519-7374 or via email at blocker@uky.edu.

2. Who is a paraeducator?

In Kentucky, a paraeducator often retains the title Instructional Assistant. We also know them as "aides" or "parapros." Other Kentucky specific titles include: Health Services Assistant, Instructional Assistant-Bilingual, Instructional Monitor I & II, Instructional Assistant-High School, Instructional Assistant I & II, Employment Training Assistant, and Employment Training Specialist.

3. What is the role of paraeducators, who have teacher certification, hired to fulfill paraeducator responsibilities?

Regardless of educational background/experience, persons who have been employed to serve in the position of instructional assistant (paraeducator) are to assume the responsibilities of a paraeducator. This means they are not to serve as a teacher even though they may have teacher certification. They are to assist and support the classroom teacher in the implementation of lesson plans and other duties delegated to a paraeducator/instructional assistant. If the person takes on teacher responsibilities, they are no longer a paraeducator or classified staff. This will have implications for compensation and benefits.

4. Who should be assigned as the paraeducator's primary supervisor?

This will vary district by district or school by school. The principal may serve as the primary supervisor, or it may be delegated to a teacher. For example, if the paraeducator is primarily responsible for serving in the special education program, a special education teacher may be delegated the role of primary supervisor. If the paraeducator is primarily responsible for serving in the Title I program, then a general/regular education teacher or Title I teacher may be delegated the role of primary supervisor. In either case, the teacher's contract/job description should reflect this delegated responsibility.

5. Who should conduct the paraeducator's employee evaluation?

Paraeducator performance evaluation should ideally be conducted in two phases. The first phase, formative evaluation, provides feedback on day-to-day performance. This should be conducted by the supervising teacher(s) of the paraeducator. The teacher is in the position to observe the paraeducator's daily performance and to provide feedback based upon observations. The data collected by the teacher during observations, documentation of formative feedback sessions, and documentation of any training and coaching provided to the paraeducator form the basis for a summative evaluation which may be conducted at the same time as other employee evaluations.

Summative evaluations should be based upon facts, standards, first-hand knowledge, and multiple data collection points and provides a process for identifying patterns/trends in performance. Generally, the formative (informal) evaluations conducted by the paraeducator's supervising teacher should be copied and given to the administrator in charge of conducting employee evaluations. This is typically a principal or assistant principal. It then becomes the administrator's responsibility to conduct a summative performance evaluation and review session with the paraeducator. However, in all instances local district policies and procedures for evaluation should be followed.

6. How may all the teachers with whom a paraeducator works contribute to the paraeducator's employee evaluation?

Teachers should conduct periodic performance evaluations of paraeducators under their supervision throughout the school year. These observations should be documented and reviewed with the paraeducator. The feedback to the paraeducator should highlight positive performance, as well as any skills that need to be improved. Documentation of training/coaching sessions conducted should be maintained as well as subsequent performance evaluations. This information of ongoing performance monitoring should be shared with the administrator when the time approaches for employee summative evaluations.

7. Who should assign the paraeducator's primary responsibilities?

The paraeducator's daily responsibilities should be assigned or delegated by the supervising teacher. If the paraeducator works for a team of teachers, one teacher should be designated as the lead teacher who will become responsible for developing a daily schedule and developing a job description incorporating the team's expectations.

Principals generally make staff assignments based upon program needs within a school. It is recommended principals collaborate with teachers on the scheduling of a paraeducator's duties/daily responsibilities/expectations to remain knowledgeable of specific staff assignments.

8. What should be included on a paraeducator's job description?

Currently the Kentucky Department of Education provides a generic job description for Instructional Assistants. These may be downloaded from KDE's website at:

<http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Finance+and+Funding/School+Finance/District+Personnel+Information/Employee+Contracts+and+Classified+Job+Descriptions.htm>

However, it is highly recommended that a specific job description be developed for each paraeducator employed within a school or district. The specific job description should include the duties of the paraeducator within that school. The Paraeducators of Kentucky Project has resources to help develop specific job descriptions.

9. What are the minimum qualifications for a paraeducator in Kentucky?

For schools that operate Title I, Part A **schoolwide** programs the following conditions apply for **all** paraeducators regardless of funding source (special education, general fund, etc):

All paraeducators assigned instructional duties who work in a schoolwide program must meet the NCLB educational requirement through **one** of the following:

- a. Completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; **or**
- b. Obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; **or**
- c. Met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).

For schools that operate Title I, Part A **targeted assistance** programs, the above educational requirement applies to paraeducators who are paid with Title I, Part A funds, but **not** to paraeducators paid with state or local funds. A district may require all paraeducators to meet the requirements in case they move from one school to another or if the school qualifies and chooses to become a schoolwide program.

For schools that do **not** receive Title I, Part A funding, paraeducator qualifications are the following based upon title:

HEALTH SERVICES ASSISTANT

Any combination equivalent to: high school diploma, G.E.D. Certificate or demonstrated progress toward obtaining a G.E.D. as required by Kentucky law and 1 year of clerical or office experience.

Valid First Aid and CPR Certificate issued by an authorized agency.

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT – BILINGUAL

Any combination equivalent to: high school diploma, G.E.D. Certificate or demonstrated progress toward obtaining a G.E.D. as required by Kentucky law and experience working with youth in an organized setting.

Must pass the ABLE test in accordance with State regulations.

INSTRUCTIONAL MONITOR I

Any combination equivalent to: high school diploma, G.E.D. Certificate, or demonstrated progress toward obtaining a G.E.D. as required by Kentucky law and some experience working with children in an organized setting.

INSTRUCTIONAL MONITOR II

Any combination equivalent to: high school diploma, G.E.D. Certificate, or demonstrated progress toward obtaining a G.E.D. as required by Kentucky law and some experience working with children in an organized setting.

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT – HIGH SCHOOL

Any combination equivalent to: two years of college-level training and demonstrated ability to work with pupils who have not been successful in the regular classroom and three years experience in working with students with multi-cultural and multi-ethnic backgrounds.

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT I

Any combination equivalent to: high school diploma, G.E.D. Certificate or demonstrated progress toward obtaining a G.E.D. as required by

Kentucky law and some experience in working with children in an organized setting.

INSTRUCTIONAL ASSISTANT II

Any combination equivalent to: high school diploma, G.E.D. Certificate or demonstrated progress toward obtaining a G.E.D. as required by Kentucky law and one year experience in working with children in an organized setting.

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING ASSISTANT

Any combination equivalent to: bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, personnel administration or closely related field and three years of increasingly responsible experience in job placement, employment development, personnel administration, or a closely related field.

Valid Kentucky driver's license

EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SPECIALIST

Any combination equivalent to: bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, personnel or closely related field and two years increasingly responsible experience in job placement, employment development, personnel administration or related field.

Valid Kentucky driver's license

10. What assessment(s) tools should be used in the employment of paraeducators in our district?

When employing a new paraeducator who does not meet the higher educational requirements stipulated by No Child Left Behind Act, one of the following paraeducator assessments should be successfully completed by the candidate:

- Kentucky Paraeducator Assessment (KPA)
- Equivalent assessment approved by the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE)

11. What are the exceptions to meeting No Child Left Behind (NCLB) educational requirements for Kentucky paraeducators?

The following are guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education regarding individuals **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement:

- a. Paraeducators who are proficient in English and a language other than English and act solely as translators for limited English proficient students are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
- b. Paraeducators who work as interpreters for the deaf and hard of hearing are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
- c. Paraeducators with duties that consist solely of conducting parental involvement activities are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
- d. Paraeducators with instructional duties in a targeted assistance school that are funded through state or local funds are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
- e. Individuals who work solely in non-instructional roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, and non-instructional computer assistance are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
- f. Individuals who provide non-instructional support to special education students are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. This includes individuals who solely provide personal care services or serve as bus or health aides for special education students.
- g. Paraeducators paid with funds under Title I, Part B (Student Reading Skills Improvement Grants), Title I, Part C (Education of Migratory Children) or Title I, Part D (Programs for Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk) are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement unless they work in a schoolwide program school or are paid, in whole or part, with Title I, Part A funds.
- h. Individuals working in early childhood programs (such as Head Start or State funded preschool programs) that are physically located in a Title I, Part A school but are not a part of a schoolwide program and are not funded with Title I, Part A funds are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. However, the educational requirement would apply to paraeducators working in an early childhood program that is jointly funded with Title I, Part A funds and the paraeducator is paid with Title I, Part A funds.
- i. Paraeducators working in schools (or districts) that do not receive Title I, Part A funds are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.
- j. AmeriCorps volunteers and other volunteers are not considered employees of districts and are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement.

However, even though the educational requirement does not apply, the district should make every effort to ensure that AmeriCorps volunteers who provide instructional support in a Title I program have the skills necessary to assist effectively in instructing reading, writing and mathematics.

- k. Individuals working in 21st Century Community Learning Center Programs are **not** required to meet the NCLB educational requirement. However, the requirement would apply to paraeducators paid with Title I, Part A funds in a 21st Century after-school program funded jointly with Title I funds in a targeted assistance school and to paraeducators working in a 21st Century after-school program that is part of a Title I schoolwide program. The educational requirement does not apply to staff of 21st Century programs that are not employees of the district.

12. What are the standards and competencies for paraeducators in Kentucky?

The Paraeducators of Kentucky at the Human Development Institute, University of Kentucky developed a list of eight standards and competencies in 2000 in conjunction with a State Improvement Grant (SIG) awarded to the Kentucky Department of Education. Since the initial development of those standards and competencies, No Child Left Behind was enacted creating the need for amendment of the original standards and competencies. The current list includes competencies in the areas of reading, writing, and math and may be obtained by contacting Barbara Locker, PEK Project Coordinator at blocker@uky.edu.