

Item #5

Issues and Options for Title I Paraprofessional Requirements Prepared for State Board of Education, March 12, 2003

Title I Regulations, December 2, 2002, available at
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/cepprogressp.html#reg>

Draft Non-regulatory Guidance, November 15, 2002, is available at
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/paraguidance.pdf>

Summary of main requirements:

Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support and who were hired after January 8, 2002, must have (1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; (2) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or (3) 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) Section 1119(c) and (d).

Paraprofessionals hired on or before January 8, 2002, and working in a program supported with Title I funds must meet these requirements by January 8, 2006.

All Title I paraprofessionals must have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent.

Problematic Issues:

***Recommendations of the AB 312 NCLB Liaison Team are in bold.**

1.0 "Two years of study at an institution of higher education"

The Guidance defines an institution of higher education (B-3) as one that "admits a regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate". Our California Community Colleges admit students of 18 years or older, with or without a high school diploma. Strict adherence to the definition in the Guidance would eliminate the community colleges as a source for meeting the "two years of study at an institution of higher education" (IHE) option.

IHE Option 1: That the Community Colleges be included in the definition of IHE and be accepted and encouraged as a source for meeting the requirement. That the

CDE/SBE clarify that the full definition of an IHE in the Higher Education Act of 1965 would include community colleges.

IHE Option 2: That the State adhere to the definition offered in the Guidance, and accept only two years of study at IHEs who only admit high school graduates.

The Guidance also defines two years of study (B-2) as the equivalent of two years of full-time study, according to the State definition of “full-time study”, citing that in some states that may mean 12 credit hours per semester (for a total of 48), and in others, 15 units a semester (for a total of 60). In California, some districts are requiring 48 units, and others are announcing that 60 units are required.

Credit Hours Option 1: That the number of credit hours required be standardized statewide at 60 units, equivalent to one-half the 120 units needed for a four-year degree.

Credit Hours Option 2: That the number of credit hours required be standardized statewide at 56 semester units, equivalent to standing as a transfer/junior at CSUs .

Credit Hours Option 3: That the number of credit hours required be standardized statewide at 48 semester units, which is the one of the options considered in the USDE Guidance.

Credit Hours Option 4: That the number of credit hours required be left to local judgment.

The Guidance also suggests that the State determine what requirements, if any, it may choose to place on the coursework taken during the two years of study (B-4).

Coursework Option 1: That the State allow local flexibility in the coursework required.

Coursework Option 2: That the coursework to be taken to fulfill the paraprofessional requirements be defined or described by the CDE.

2.0 Paraprofessional Assessment

The Guidance states that the purpose of the assessment option is to demonstrate that the paraprofessional has the appropriate knowledge and ability to assist in instruction and is competent in required instructional techniques and academic content areas. It further explains that the law does not require a paper-pencil test (C-3) but that the assessment must be valid and reliable and the results be documented. The Guidance further explains that the USDE will not be approving assessments, but that it is the responsibility of each LEA, working in tandem with the State to ensure that the assessment meets the requirements. It notes that the assessment must ensure that more than just basic skills are being assessed (C-5).

The Guidance offers guidelines for SEAs in approving assessments and communicating that information as follows:

SEAs and LEAs have flexibility to determine the content and format of the assessment.

The content of the assessment should reflect both the State academic standards and skills expected for a child at a given school level as well as the ability to assist in instruction.

The Guidance further suggests that an SEA may wish to establish and communicate certain policies related to the assessment of paraprofessionals.

Information about the paraprofessional assessment issue is being collected, reviewed and summarized by the CDE to determine what assessments are being used within the state and in other states.

Assessment Selection Option 1: That the SEA not accept the federal suggestion to go on record establishing which assessments it has determined meet the statutory requirements, but that it should instead issue guidelines for the development or selection of LEA assessments.

Assessment Selection Option 2: That the SEA review currently available assessments and accept the federal suggestion to go on record establishing which assessments it has determined meet the statutory requirements.

Assessment Selection Option 3: That the state develop or select one assessment for statewide use.

Assessment Selection Option 4: That the development or selection of an assessment be a decision to be determined locally.

Assessment Selection Option 5: That the CDE explore the use of a structured observation process for determining paraprofessional knowledge and skills.

The Guidance also states (C-6) that the rigor of the assessment should be at a level equivalent to the second year of college (which would, theoretically provide consistency with the other two options—two years of college or an AA degree). This is extremely problematic, since we believe that the assessments currently in use or under development range from 3rd grade level to a maximum of 10th grade level when compared to California standards.

Assessment Rigor Option 1: That the SBE/CDE request more flexibility from the USDE in determining the rigor and grade level of the assessment.

Assessment Rigor Option 2: That the issue of rigor and grade level of the assessment be determined by each LEA.

Assessment Rigor Option 3: That the SBE/CDE review and evaluate the rigor and grade level equivalency of assessments currently in use to determine which, if any, are consistent with grade 14.

3.0 “Portability” of a paraprofessional’s qualifications

The Guidance states that a State may, at its discretion, establish a policy whereby qualified paraprofessionals can have reciprocity in the LEAs within the State (B-17).

Reciprocity Option 1: That the State establish a policy of reciprocity for all LEAs within the State if there is one statewide assessment or if there is a process for determining which assessments meet the statutory requirements.

Reciprocity Option 2: That reciprocity with other LEAs be determined at the discretion of each LEA.

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