

**New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Title I Program Planning and Accountability**

NCLB Requirements for Title I Paraprofessionals
Frequently Asked Questions

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Paraprofessional Requirements

Question 1: Who is a paraprofessional?

A paraprofessional is a non-certified instructional staff person who does not hold the position of teacher, but assists in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher. Sometimes paraprofessionals are called teacher aides or instructional aides. The duties of paraprofessionals may include the following:

- Providing one-on-one or small-group tutoring for students
- Assisting with classroom management
- Providing instructional assistance in a computer lab
- Conducting parental involvement activities
- Providing instructional support in the library or media center
- Acting as a translator
- Providing instructional support to a student under the direct supervision of a teacher

Question 2: What are the requirements for paraprofessionals under the NCLB legislation?

Paraprofessionals in Title I federal programs will have to meet higher standards. These standards include one of the following:

- Completion of two years of study at an institution of higher learning
- An associate's (or higher) degree
- Meeting a rigorous standard of quality that demonstrates, through a formal assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in reading, writing, and mathematics instruction or reading, writing, and mathematics readiness

All paraprofessionals in schools supported by Title I funds must have a secondary high school diploma or its equivalent, and provide instruction under the direct supervision of a teacher.

Question 3: Are any paraprofessionals exempt from the NCLB requirements?

Yes. Paraprofessionals who perform the following duties on a full-time basis are exempt:

- Conduct parental involvement activities
- Provide personal care services
- Act as a translator
- Serve as a cafeteria or bus aide
- Serve in a clerical capacity

Question 4: If an aide performs instructional duties for part of the day and clerical duties for the other part of the day must that aide meet the NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals?

Yes. If an aide performs instructional duties during any portion of the day for which he/she is paid in whole or in part with Title I funds, he/she must meet the NCLB requirements for paraprofessionals.

Question 5: What do you mean by “paid in whole or in part with Title I funds”?

Title I, Part A funds can be used to pay the full salary of a paraprofessional. If a paraprofessional’s entire salary is paid with Title I, Part A funds, he/she is paid in “whole.” If only a portion of a paraprofessional’s salary is paid with Title I, Part A funds, he/she is paid in “part.” Also, those working in a schoolwide Title I program are considered as being paid in part with Title I funds since all students and staff in these schools are considered as paid in part by Title I.

Question 6: In a Title I schoolwide program, why must all paraprofessionals meet NCLB requirements?

In a schoolwide program, Title I, Part A funds are used to support programs and services for all students, not only designated high-poverty, low-achieving students. In a schoolwide Title I school, any student enrolled in the school is a “Title I student.” This also means that all instructional staff are working with Title I students and must meet NCLB’s requirements for highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals.

Question 7: In a Title I schoolwide program, must paraprofessionals who work in special education meet the NCLB requirements?

Yes. In a schoolwide program, paraprofessionals in special education classes are still working with Title I students since all of the students enrolled in the school are Title I participants.

Question 8: If a paraprofessional has earned some college credits, but is unable to complete the two year requirement by the end of the 2005-2006 school year, can he/she apply for an extension to meet NCLB requirements?

No. Paraprofessionals must meet the requirements on or before the end of the 2005-2006 school year. If they cannot obtain two years of college credits by this date, they should explore the alternate requirement of passing a local, rigorous assessment as a way to meet NCLB requirements.

Question 9: What does the law mean by two years of higher education for paraprofessionals?

“Two years of study” means the equivalent of two years of full-time study, as defined by the institution of higher education (IHE). For some IHEs that may mean 12 credit hours per semester (requiring a total of 48 credit hours), while in others it may mean 15 credit hours a semester (requiring a total of 60 credit hours). In New Jersey the Higher Education Assistance Authority defines a full-time course load as 12 credits. Therefore, two years of higher education would equate to a total of 48 credits, exclusive of any credits earned in remedial or developmental courses. Credits do not have to be earned over a period of two consecutive years.

Question 10: Under NCLB, are all paraprofessionals required to earn an associate's degree by the end of the 2005-2006 school year to meet the NCLB requirements?

No. An associate's degree is one of several options available for paraprofessionals to meet NCLB requirements. They can meet the NCLB paraprofessional requirements through taking a "rigorous" local assessment. This can be an assessment designed for this purpose by a commercial vendor or the Performance/Portfolio Assessment.

Question 11: Where can paraprofessionals earn credits to meet the NCLB requirements?

NCLB, Section 9101(24) incorporates the definition of institution of higher education found in section 101(a) of the Higher Education Act. It defines an "institution of higher education" as an educational institution in any state that meets the following criteria:

- 1) Admits as regular students only persons having a certificate of graduation from a school providing secondary education, or the recognized equivalent of such a certificate.
- 2) Is legally authorized within such state to provide a program of education beyond secondary education.
- 3) Provides an educational program for which the institution awards a bachelor's degree, or provides not less than a two-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward such a degree.
- 4) Is a public or other nonprofit institution.
- 5) Is accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association or, if not so accredited, is an institution that has been granted pre-accreditation by such an agency or association that has been recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDE) for the granting of pre-accreditation status, and the USDE has determined that there is satisfactory assurance that the institution will meet the accreditation standards of such an agency or association within a reasonable time.

Question 12: Can post secondary credits earned at a foreign institution be applied toward the requirement of two years of college credits?

Yes, but these credits must be evaluated for their equivalency to American courses. The World Educational Services (www.wes.org) is one agency that evaluates foreign transcripts. They can be contacted at: World Education Services, Inc., P.O. Box 745, Old Chelsea Station, NY, NY 10011. (212) 966-6311

Question 13: Why does the NCLB legislation mention only the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics when referring to assessments for paraprofessionals?

These are the primary content areas to which Title I services are directed. They are also the primary areas of focus that are currently assessed to determine how well students are performing. Therefore, those instructing or assisting with the instruction of students must focus their attention on the requisite skills to help students meet proficiency levels in these content areas.

Question 14: If a paraprofessional from another state applies for employment in New Jersey is he/she considered a new hire?

Yes. Applicants from other states are considered new hires and must meet NCLB requirements prior to employment.

Question 15: If a paraprofessional has taken and passed the ETS ParaPro Assessment in another state, is that paraprofessional eligible for employment in New Jersey?

Yes, but only if the score on the ETS ParaPro meets or exceeds 456, the minimum acceptable score in New Jersey. If the applicant's score is below 456, he/she must retake the assessment or qualify under another option.

Question 16: Can a district hire only paraprofessionals who have completed two years of college credits rather than those who have passed an assessment to meet NCLB requirements?

Although paraprofessionals can qualify under both options to meet the requirements of the NCLB legislation, a district can set its own policy for employing paraprofessionals.

Question 17: Does the Child Development Associate (CDA) program meet the NCLB requirement for paraprofessionals in early childhood classes?

Yes. Completion of the CDA program meets the NCLB requirements for those paraprofessionals in early childhood programs. However, if a paraprofessional is transferred to an upper grade classroom, the CDA program would not be acceptable for meeting NCLB requirements.

Question 18: Is a CDA certificate in Spanish acceptable?

Yes. If a paraprofessional works in a bilingual early childhood program, he/she may complete the CDA certificate in Spanish or Bilingual Specialization. However, a CDA certificate, in any language, is not transferable to the upper grades.

The Paraprofessional Performance/Portfolio Assessment

Question 19: Can a newly hired paraprofessional participate in the Paraprofessional Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

No. The Paraprofessional Performance/Portfolio Assessment is designed for currently employed paraprofessionals only. Anyone hired after January 2, 2002, must meet the NCLB requirements before being hired as a paraprofessional.

Question 20: If a paraprofessional does not have two years of college credit by January 2006, can he/she participate in the Performance/Portfolio Assessment to meet NCLB requirements by the deadline?

Yes. In fact, a paraprofessional can use college classes and course work as part of the portfolio. If enrolled in a class that focuses on one of the three content areas in the NCLB legislation, reading, writing, and mathematics, time spent attending classes can be documented as content-specific professional development hours for the performance/portfolio assessment. Also, assigned readings for classes can be designated as professional readings for the portfolio.

Question 21: Is the Performance/Portfolio Assessment transferable across districts?

The certificate of completion/documentation issued by a district attests that the paraprofessional has met NCLB requirements. It is transferable and should be honored by administrators across districts. Also, the Paraprofessional Performance/Portfolio Assessment has been endorsed by the

New Jersey Department of Education and the state's professional education organizations. Therefore, districts are encouraged to afford reciprocity in accepting the assessment as meeting NCLB requirements.

Question 22: How long does it take to complete the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

The assessment is designed to be completed in one school year, which is 10 months. Since currently employed paraprofessionals have until January 8, 2006, to meet the new requirements, the deadline for completion may be extended somewhat.

Question 23: Who can serve as a professional mentor for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

Professional mentors can include teachers who work directly with paraprofessionals, other highly qualified paraprofessionals (who have already met NCLB requirements), representatives from institutions of higher education (i.e., professor, academic advisor), or central office supervisors.

Question 24: If a paraprofessional's native language is Spanish and he/she is assigned to a bilingual class, can that paraprofessional complete the Performance/Portfolio Assessment in his/her native language.

Yes. The district may exercise flexibility in allowing paraprofessionals to complete portions or the entire portfolio in his/her native language. If this is done, the district must select a professional mentor who is able to read and speak the language in which the portfolio is completed.

Question 25: What happens when the paraprofessional completes all the requirements for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

On Form F (Process Indicators), a paraprofessional records his/her progress in all the assessment indicators. If all portfolio requirements have been met, the building principal makes the recommendation that the paraprofessional has met the NCLB requirements to be designated as a highly qualified paraprofessional. The district/school then issues a certificate of completion or another form of documentation to the paraprofessional.

Question 26: Who is responsible for keeping a completed portfolio?

The district maintains a record of completed portfolios. Paraprofessionals should also maintain a copy for their records.

Question 27: Once a paraprofessional completes the portfolio does the district have to forward a record to the county office?

No. The portfolio and supporting documentation are kept on file at the district. The principal also must sign an affidavit attesting that the paraprofessional has met NCLB requirements.

Question 28: How many professional readings are required for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

The Performance/Portfolio Assessment requires 30 professional readings, or 10 per content area (reading, writing, mathematics). Each reading is recorded on the appropriate form (A-1: reading, A-2: writing, A-3: mathematics). Also, for every professional reading title entered on Form A, there must be a corresponding Form B (Professional Reading Summary and Analysis).

Question 29: Who decides on the titles for the professional readings?

A paraprofessional, in collaboration with his/her professional mentor, can develop a reading list. Also, if a paraprofessional is enrolled in a college course focusing on teaching one of the three content areas (reading, writing, mathematics), he/she can use assigned readings for the class to fulfill the professional reading requirement for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment. Professional education organizations like NJEA (New Jersey Education Association), NTU (Newark Teachers Union), and NJSBA (New Jersey School Boards Association) have agreed to use their Web sites to post bibliographies and materials that can be used as professional readings for the assessment process. Paraprofessionals may also collaborate with each other to develop a list of appropriate titles to meet the professional reading requirement.

Question 30: Is a magazine article considered a professional reading?

Yes, but it must be published in a professional magazine such as the *NJEA Reporter* or *Education Week*.

Question 31: What is the page length requirement for a professional reading?

An acceptable professional reading should be at least five pages long. If the paraprofessional reads a lengthier piece, e.g., 50-100 pages, he/she can use the piece to satisfy the professional reading requirement for more than one month. For example, each chapter of a textbook on writing strategies can be entered as a separate professional reading in the content area of writing and fulfill the portfolio professional reading requirement for subsequent months.

Question 32: Does an article on a Web site meet the professional reading requirement?

Yes, but it must be an article found on a Web site related to education and paraprofessionals must cite the Web address on their Professional Reading Record (Forms A-1, A-2 and A-3).

Question 33: Who determines which readings to use for the professional reading requirement? Is it the responsibility of a paraprofessional or the district?

This will vary depending upon the district's policies. Some districts may prefer to select the reading materials, while other districts may defer to paraprofessionals to determine the reading materials.

Question 34: How many hours of professional development are required for the assessment?

The final portfolio should reflect a minimum of 20 hours of professional development. Form C is used to document 18 hours of content-specific professional development (reading, writing, mathematics) and 2 hours of noncontent-specific professional development). Also, for every professional development activity recorded on Form C, there must be a corresponding Professional Development & Workshop Participation Summary and Analysis (Form D).

Question 35: Do school-level professional development activities that are conducted by teachers count toward the professional development requirement?

Yes. If a teacher conducts a workshop for paraprofessionals that revolves around the three content areas (reading, writing, and mathematics), workshop participation can be applied toward meeting the professional development requirements in the appropriate content area.

Question 36: Are local professional development activities acceptable for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

Yes. Professional development can be offered at the district, school, grade, or classroom levels and it can include a wide range of delivery methods. For example, if a paraprofessional visits another classroom to observe the instructional assistance techniques of a more experienced paraprofessional, then this is a form of professional development.

Question 37: Can a content-based college-level course such as statistics be used to meet the professional development and professional reading requirement for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

Yes. If the content has practical applications, then the course and its requirements can satisfy the professional development and professional reading requirements. For instance, because a statistics course covers topics such as mode and median, which are also covered in a math class to which a paraprofessional is assigned, the content has a practical application as well.

Question 38: If a district has developed its own forms to document paraprofessionals' participation in professional development, can these forms be used for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

Professional development hours completed prior to participation in the Performance/Portfolio Assessment may be submitted on the district approved form, provided the form incorporates a summary and analysis per Form D of the Performance/Portfolio Assessment. Once a paraprofessional begins the assessment process, all professional development hours must be documented on Forms C and D.

Question 39: Can professional development hours and professional readings completed prior to beginning the assessment process be used to meet requirements for the Performance/Portfolio Assessment?

Yes. If a paraprofessional has completed professional development hours and professional readings prior to beginning the assessment process, he/she must use the appropriate Performance/Portfolio Assessment forms to document, summarize, and analyze the professional development hours and the professional readings.

Question 40: Is there a time limit on past professional development hours and professional readings?

The district may set its own policies on retroactive professional development hours and professional readings.

Question 41: When should a paraprofessional meet with his/her professional mentor?

A paraprofessional and professional mentor meet on a quarterly basis, or four (4) times during the school year.

Question 42: How often must there be an entry in the periodic critical learning log?

This is a district decision. Although the final portfolio must include a minimum of 15 entries per content area, the requirement for frequency of submission may be daily, weekly, or biweekly, but it should be frequent enough to show consistency between the entries. If the time period

between entries is too long, it will be difficult for a paraprofessional to assess his/her professional growth.

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