

## *The law affects paraprofessionals in two ways:*

### **A. Qualifications**

All Title I paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or the equivalent and prove that they are highly qualified. There are three ways that paraprofessionals may prove they are highly qualified:

1. Complete an associate degree **OR**
2. Complete two years of college **OR**
3. Demonstrate knowledge of reading, writing, and math and the ability to assist in instructing these subjects. This demonstration must be through a state or local academic assessment, which does not necessarily mean a pencil and paper test

Local school districts may use federal funds to help paraprofessionals meet the new requirements of the federal law.

### **B. Duties of Paraprofessionals**

ESEA says that paraprofessionals may perform these duties:

1. Tutoring outside normal class time
2. Assisting with classroom management
3. Assisting in a computer lab, library, or media center
4. Translating
5. Providing instruction under the direct supervision of a teacher
6. Conducting parental involvement activities

Title I paraprofessionals may perform certain functions outside those listed above for the benefit of all students, such as lunchroom, playground or study hall monitoring. However, the portion of the time they spend on these general duties may not exceed that of a non-Title I paraprofessional at the same school.

Local and state regulations may also affect what duties paraprofessionals may perform. Check with your local association to see if these regulations further limit what paraprofessionals may do.

Paraprofessionals who conduct parental involvement activities or translate are exempt from the requirement to be highly qualified.

The new law became official January 8, 2002. Paraprofessionals hired after that date must meet these requirements immediately. Paraprofessionals hired before that date must prove that they are highly qualified (see below) by 2006. New requirements concerning the duties of paraprofessionals went into effect when the act became law.

### *Where can I get more information?*

- [www.nea.org/esea](http://www.nea.org/esea) (website of the National Education Association)
- [owl.org](http://owl.org) (NEA's member portal website)
- Your state and local association websites. You can find links to state web sites on the NEA website.
- Your local association leaders and UniServ staff.
- [www.ed.gov/nclb](http://www.ed.gov/nclb) (website of the U.S. Department of Education)
- [www.learningfirst.org](http://www.learningfirst.org)
- Website of your state department of education.
- [www.ecs.org](http://www.ecs.org) (website of the Education Commission of the States)

# For Teachers

## *Understanding How ESEA Affects Paraprofessionals*

## *ESEA and Paraprofessionals: Steps you can take now*

The National Education Association (NEA) and your state association encourage you to:

- Make sure the paraprofessional(s) working in your classroom is covered by ESEA.
- Determine whether the paraprofessional(s) in your classroom was officially hired before or after January 8, 2002.
- Encourage your paraprofessional(s) to meet ESEA criteria to maximize their employment opportunities.
- Advocate for the school system to assist paraprofessionals in achieving highly qualified status.
- Assist paraprofessionals in finding time and accessing the funding available through ESEA for their professional development.

- Assure that your paraprofessional(s) is performing duties consistent with ESEA.
- Provide paraprofessionals with information about the law.
- Encourage your paraprofessional(s) to collect documentation of their education, including high school diploma or GED certificate and transcripts for any college courses taken.
- Assist your paraprofessional(s) with submitting documentation to the school district, encouraging them to keep copies. Your local may also want to keep copies in case of layoffs or transfers.
- Encourage state and local officials to take a broad view of assessment of paraprofessionals, to include portfolios, evaluation, work experience, etc.
- Organize efforts to elect lawmakers who support positive changes in ESEA and involve members in those efforts.

## *What is my Association doing?*

As the U.S. Congress was considering ESEA, the National Education Association strongly represented its members' interests. Through NEA's advocacy some important changes, including options for paraprofessionals — not just one mandated way — were won to meet the new regulations. The Association is assisting members through bargaining and providing information and workshops. In addition, the Association is working with school and state officials to make sure implementation of ESEA is fair and equitable.



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