

Paraeducator Voice + Opportunity

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) gives paraeducators, referred to as “paraprofessionals” in the bill, a voice in key decision making and professional development opportunities at the federal, state, and local levels—a major improvement over No Child Left Behind’s one-size-fits-all approach to educating students.

Key Provisions

- Promotes respect for the profession and acknowledges the critical role it plays in education by introducing the NEA-endorsed term “**paraeducator.**”
- Maintains **paraeducator** standards and qualification requirements in Title I
- Calls for committees of practitioners where **paraeducators**, teachers, parents, and community members can work together to improve their local schools.
- Requires **paraeducator** voices in multiple places, including sections on professional development, needs assessment, and the use of some grant funds.
- Requires consultation with organizations representing educators in multiple places, ensuring that **paraeducators** and their local unions have a say in decision-making.

A New Name

- Title VIII General Provisions introduces the preferable term “**paraeducator**” into federal statute for the first time.

Paraeducator Standards and Qualification Requirements

- Maintains **paraeducator** standards and qualification requirements in Title I that were existing in state law on December 9th, 2015. Title I Part A states that each State plan shall assure that the State has professional standards for paraprofessionals working in Title I programs, including qualifications that were in place on the day before the date of enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act.

Decision Making Voice

- Certain topics, regarding assessments and supplement vs. supplant, under Title I were submitted to the federal negotiated rule making process, which included **paraprofessional representation.**
- State committees of practitioners must now include a **paraprofessional.**
- A state department of education must consult with a number of education stakeholders, including **paraprofessionals (Please note:** Because the bill text uses “**paraprofessionals**” instead of “**paraeducators**” and because the following pages is making direct reference to the bill, we will use “**paraprofessional**”) and other staff when developing the State Plan to receive Title I funds.

- A school district must engage in “timely and meaningful consultation” with education stakeholders that include **paraprofessionals** in the development of a Local Plan to receive Title I funds.
- In Title I, a Local Plan must have a description of how educators, including **paraprofessionals**, working in a targeted assistance school program will identify eligible children most in need of services.
- A Title I School Wide Program Plan must be created with educator consultation, including **paraprofessionals** present in the school.
- The Title II Part A application for formula grants to improve instruction must be drafted with the consultation of stakeholders, including **paraprofessionals** and the organizations representing them.

Professional Development

Inclusion

- Title VIII defines professional development to mean activities that provide educators, **paraprofessionals** specifically included, with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable students to meet academic standards. These activities are further defined as sustained (not stand-alone, 1-day, or short term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused.

Opportunity

- Title I provides professional development (PD) opportunities for **paraprofessionals** in sections pertaining to School Wide Programs. The School Wide Program Plan will describe activities that will improve instruction which may include professional development for educators such as paraprofessionals.
- Title I Targeted Assistance Programs may use funds to improve instruction, including professional development to “... **paraprofessionals**, and, if appropriate, specialized instructional support personnel, and other school personnel who work with eligible children in programs under this section or in the regular education program”.
- Title I Section 1010 Parent and Family Engagement allows for funds to be spent on professional development for family engagement strategies. The list of educators for this section includes **paraprofessionals**.
- In Title II, states may use funds for establishing or improving routes to alternative teacher certification. Emphasis is given on aiding some groups to alternative certification. **Paraprofessionals** are one of the specific groups.
- Additional Title II **paraprofessional** professional development opportunities include:
 - Recognizing and preventing child abuse;
 - Working with children transitioning from early childhood education to elementary school; and
 - English Proficiency Literacy at several grade levels.



- Title III PD opportunities for Language Instruction for English Learners and Immigrant Students: “personnel, including teachers and **paraprofessionals**...”
- Title III provides an opportunity for collaboration with institutions of higher education for ESP professional development. Sec 3131 National Professional Development Project provides grants “(1) for effective preservice or inservice professional development programs that will improve the qualifications and skills of educational personnel involved in the education of English learners, including personnel who are not certified or licensed and educational **paraprofessionals**, and for other activities to increase teacher and school leader effectiveness in meeting the needs of English learners”.
- Title IV 21st Century Schools PD for technology and school safety: **Paraprofessionals**, librarians, and media personnel are listed as those who may be trained in technology usage with these funds. See additional Title IV opportunities below.
- Title VI Indian, Native Hawaiian, and Alaska Native Education offers PD opportunities for **paraprofessionals** working with native populations as well as allowing funds to be spent to develop educators, including **paraprofessionals**, within the Indian populations.
- Title IX Education for the Homeless provides PD for staff identifying and meeting the needs of homeless students.

Special Programs

- Title IV Sec 4103 Formula Grant to States allow for funds to be used for a variety of student programs such as violence and drug prevention, student discipline, mental health awareness, and safety, to name a few. These programs often involve **paraprofessionals**.