

Paraprofessional educator

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A **paraprofessional educator**, alternatively known as a **para-pro**, **paraeducator**, **instructional assistant**, **teacher's aide** or **classroom assistant**, is a teaching-related position within a school generally responsible for specialized or concentrated assistance for students in elementary and secondary schools.^[1]

Not all states have a fixed definition of 'paraprofessional' and may use all of the terms listed above - and many others interchangeably.

Paraprofessionals are widely employed in schools in the U.S. and Canada, and in some countries of Europe. In England and Wales, the term used for education paraprofessionals is Teaching Assistant (TA). In recent years, legislation has been introduced which enables teachers to delegate a range of tasks to their TAs. Teaching Assistants in England and Wales can apply for Higher Level Teaching Assistant (HLTA) status, which requires them to document the ways in which their work meets a set of specified criteria. Those with HLTA status can substitute for teachers and (where appropriate) supervise other TAs. Scotland uses the term 'classroom assistant' rather than 'teaching assistant' as teaching is strictly not part of an assistant's responsibilities there. In Canada, they are widely known as Educational Assistants to emphasise their role in educating special needs students.

Contents

- 1 Duties
- 2 Requirements
 - 2.1 Regulation
 - 2.2 Certification
 - 2.3 Salaries
- 3 Special Education
- 4 See also
- 5 References
- 6 External links

Duties

Paraprofessional educators generally assist teachers in the classroom, supervise students outside of the classroom, or provide administrative support for teaching.^[2] Job duties range from filling teaching positions to supplementing regular classroom curriculum with additional enrichment activities for students. Other positions include classroom aides, special education aides, school library technical assistants, and tutors.

Some paraprofessionals work directly with students, in which case they may listen to students practice reading aloud, help students understand and complete their assignments, or assist students with special needs.^[2]

Many paraprofessionals are assigned to supervise groups of students who are eating, playing outside, or on field trips. They may be assigned to perform clerical work for a teacher, in which case they may grade assignments, type up records for attendance or grades, set up equipment, and help prepare materials for instruction, e.g., by making photocopies of worksheets.^[2]

Many teacher assistants work primarily or exclusively with students who have special educational needs. Their duties vary according to the needs of the student, and may include physical care for students who are unable to care for themselves (such as feeding, lifting, moving, or cleaning), behavioral management, or academic assistance.^[2]

The role of the Paraprofessional Educator is constantly evolving. Today, more than ever, paraprofessionals are teaching lessons, working with small groups for remediation, leading extracurricular clubs/sports and are no longer simply the "Teacher's Aide" of the past.

Requirements

Requirements to become a paraprofessional vary widely, normally ranging from a high school diploma, G.E.D., two years of college education, or an associate degree. Some positions may require experience, particularly as an aide in an instructional role like in special education and in English as a Second Language instruction.

Regulation

In the United States, the No Child Left Behind federal legislation requires that educational paraprofessionals be "highly qualified".^[3] The definition of highly qualified is left to the individual states, as are the means for measuring qualification. The United States Department of Education has issued guidelines regarding paraprofessionals whose positions are funded under Title I of the federal legislation. According to the USDOE, "Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support," include those who

1. Provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher,
2. Assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials,
3. Provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory,
4. Conduct parental involvement activities,
5. Provide instructional support in a library or media center,
6. Act as a translator, or
7. Provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher.^[4]

Certification

Some jurisdictions offer or require certification for some paraprofessionals. Others may require a contracted paraprofessional to pass an examination.

A paraprofessional certificate is typically a certificate that an educator has obtained by passing an exam enabling them to perform a task requiring extensive knowledge, but not requiring a college degree and teaching license. Subject areas could include any areas of education such as a GED Teacher, Alternate School Teacher, ISS Teacher, After School Tutor, Home School Teacher, Credit Recovery Teacher, Continuing Education Teacher, and any Special Education area which could be but is not limited to CML, tutoring, and providing any needs to an individual student.

Salaries

The median salary for paraprofessionals in schools is \$17,502 USD yearly. Paraprofessional pay varies based on duties, qualifications, and certification requirements, if applicable.^[5]

Special Education

Paraprofessional educators are frequently used to help support student/s in special education settings. Paraprofessional educators in these roles work with students with a variety of disabilities including learning disabilities, emotional disturbance, autistic spectrum disorders, ADHD, schizophrenia, developmental disabilities and communication disorders. Paraprofessional educators may work in special classrooms, resource rooms or serve as inclusion assistants who accompany individual students throughout their day. Paraprofessional educators in these roles may require specialized training in behavior management, de-escalation, personal-professional boundaries, and sometimes physical restraint.^[6]

See also

- Student teacher
- Substitute teacher
- College of Education

References

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- ² ^ *a b c d* Teacher Assistants in the Occupational Outlook Handbook (<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos153.htm>) 2010-11 Edition
- ³ ^ Paraprofessional certification. (<http://arkedu.state.ar.us/commemos/static/fy0203/1623.html>) Arkansas State Department of Education.
- ⁴ ^ Title I, Section 1119(g)(2): Paraprofessional Guidance (<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/paraguidance.doc>) , US Department of Education. Retrieved 2/9/08.
- ⁵ ^ Paraprofessional payscale (<http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Paraprofessional/Salary>) . Payscale.com. Retrieved 2/12/2008.
- ⁶ ^ 5. Behavior Support Strategies for Education Paraprofessionals (Henson W. 2008)

External links

- CEC Paraeducator Job Profile (http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Job_Profiles&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=2086)

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