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PSEA Invited To Give Input on Staff Development for Paraprofessionals

PSEA participated in a focus group sponsored by PDE and PaTTAN in November to discuss future directions for staff development, with a focus on paraprofessionals who work with special education students.

PDE estimates that there are more than 21,440 paraprofessionals in Pennsylvania. PDE has issued credentials to 11,000 paraprofessionals across the state since the inception of the Credential program in 2003. Certificates of participation for online courses were given to 10,917 paraprofessionals who have taken a total of 60,985 courses since 2003. The current list of course offerings can be found at www.pattan.net.

Current resources for paraprofessionals include the following:

- Videoconferencing sessions held after school at download sites across the state. Upcoming sessions include:
 - March 8, 2011- Strategies for Diffusing Potential Behavior Problems
 - April 6, 2011- Teaching Students with Autism to Participate in Meaningful and Effective Ways.
- Videoconferences can be requested on DVDs and mailed to interested parties. Locals can work with employers to get approval to participate via pre-recorded programs, to screen them at more convenient times, and have the hours count toward the required 20 hours.
- A new resource is video streaming. Currently, PaTTAN has three presentations available. Information is available on its website.
- Two webinars are planned for early 2011:
 - January 25 on Supporting Students Who Have Tourette's Syndrome

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Many current updates and other helpful information on Special Education can be found on the PSEA website.

Go to www.psea.org
Teaching and Learning > Special & Gifted Education



- February 8 on an Overview of Seizure Disorders
- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (www.nrcpara.org) hold its national conference in Pennsylvania from May 12-14, 2011, at the Sheraton Harrisburg Hershey Hotel. The conference is taking early bird registrations which are discounted. Find information on the organization's website.

Focus group discussions centered on topics for future trainings, approaches to provide flexibility to avail trainings to more paraprofessionals, challenges for paraprofessionals where employers do not provide access to opportunities, and post-secondary educational options at Community Colleges. The facilitators collected the recommendations from the PaTTAN participants at the King of Prussia, Harrisburg, and Pittsburgh sites for review and consideration. The group assembled felt the meeting was productive and gave valuable information to PDE and PaTTAN for planning purposes.



Special Education Students, More Than In Any Other Time In The History of Pennsylvania, Are Included In General Education

PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education) reported at the PA Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP) meeting that since 2005, there has been a tremendous shift of identified special education students into general education. Almost 42 (41.7) percent of students with disabilities were spending 80% or more of their time in general education in 2005. The number grew to 58 percent in 2010. This means that 40,000 students moved from spending 20 to 79 percent of their time in general education to more than 80 percent of their time. Another 20,000 special education students moved to less restrictive environments within the 20-79 percent range. (Example - a student spending time in one general education class now spends time in three general education classes. This increase in general education classes is not enough of a shift to move the student to spending more than 80 percent of his/her time in general education. It is a significant shift for the individual student.)



SE Region Leadership
Conference

Happy Anniversary to IDEA

November marked the 35th anniversary of legislation that dramatically increased educational opportunities for children with disabilities. The law was originally called the Education for All Handicapped Children Act/94-142.

We have traveled a very interesting path over the course of 35 years. The law made it clear that all students had a right to a public education. No longer could students be excluded from public schools due to their disabilities. The law called for a parent contract for the first time, to promise a program for their child and detailed what services that student would receive. This contract was called the IEP. It was a total of one page in length which included the goals, related services and specially designed instruction.

The path of special education has moved through various phases, dealing with access, compliance, outcomes, least restrictive environment, aligning to general education curriculum, and best practices. We have seen an increase of responsibilities with this evolution in special education. The most obvious example is the IEP, which has ballooned to huge documents. Data collection in reading, math, and with behaviors is at an all-time high. Students are included in so many general education classes that many case managers need roller blades to keep track of their charges. Paraprofessional support for individual students has increased as more students are educated in their neighborhood schools. Educational options have multiplied with such options as community-based experiences, travel training, independent living skills in apartment settings, work experience, assessment of work skills, and post secondary transition programs.

We must have discussions about how life has changed for those working with our special needs populations at the school building and district levels. General education teachers need common team planning time to coordinate efforts and be able to provide the best differentiated instruction. The special education teacher/case manager keeps the district in compliance and out of corrective action and due process. This should be recognized by building a responsible schedule to allow these individuals to maintain the quality of their work. This means evaluating if IEP paperwork, re-evaluations and IEP meetings can count as a "duty" period in place of bus duty or study hall. It means giving technology to staff, time to be trained in the software, and providing technology that is user friendly. It means administration resisting the temptation of dumping more responsibility on educators to alleviate their own workload.



If you would like to subscribe to PSEA's *Current News in Special Education*, please go to <http://www.psea.org/currentnews> Click on *Current News in Special Education* and follow the directions for the *Stay Connected Section*.



If you use Twitter, you can receive updates on special education when new information becomes available. Information will be sent as it is received rather than on a daily or weekly schedule. You can sign on to follow at www.twitter.com/berniemiller

House of Delegates Special Education Forum

Held on December 4

Susan Black, Chairperson of the PSEA Special Education Board, held the semiannual Special Education Forum meeting at the December House of Delegates. This gives delegates an opportunity to get updates on special education issues and share concerns. This meeting was no exception. We asked the 40 people assembled for issues from their regions and here is the generated list. See if you can relate to the topics. They are in no specific order.

Co-teaching model	Inclusion	Restraints
60-day timeline	ACCESS documentation	No I.D. of students
Federal Indicators	Due Process	Teacher Evaluation
Contracted supervision	Use of 2 certifications	Funding Special Education
Accountability	Rosa's Law	Reduce paraprofessional support
Highly Qualified	Paperwork	



Update on Federal Restraint and Seclusion Legislation

The U.S. Senate failed to take up the U.S. House of Representatives' legislation on restraint and seclusion relating to all students in both general and special education. Some senators felt that students with IEPs should have restraint and seclusion listed in their IEPs as part of the education plan in cases where restraint or seclusion was considered necessary. The House Bill strictly prohibited placing these actions in the IEP. Restraint and seclusion can only be listed in school district policies.

We have reached the end of the current legislative session, so the legislation will have to be reintroduced for consideration next year.

Back to the Basics

Attached you will find the CSPGs for Special Education Teachers and Paraprofessionals. The CSPGs have not changed recently but there seems to be a steady number of requests for guidance on what staff is allowed to do.



Delaware County Intermediate
Unit ESP Paraprofessional
Training
Fall 2010



Comments or questions about
the items in this newsletter may
be directed to this mailbox:
currentnews@psea.org



UTILIZATION OF PARAPROFESSIONAL STAFF



1. A paraprofessional aid is an individual who is non-certified in the area in which they are assisting (even though he/she may be licensed or certified in another profession or a technical field) who assists a certified professional in a team approach to the performance of the certified professional's assigned program responsibilities. The paraprofessional provides services that are related to and support instruction and services to children, youth and families.
2. A paraprofessional or aid supplements an appropriately certified teacher in the teacher's performance of their instructional duties. The identification and diagnosis of learning activities, the assessment of learner achievement and progress, the prescription of personalized learning activities, and the direction and conduct of instructional activity (other than drill) rest only with the certified staff and cannot be delegated to a person employed as a paraprofessional or aide. In addition, any instructional programs that are part of the curriculum and are open to all students must be staffed with certified professional personnel.
3. Paraprofessionals may perform non-instructional duties, directed by a certified professional or other supervisor. For example: assignment to monitor cafeteria, study halls, playgrounds, homeroom or other non-academic, non-instructional areas.
4. Paraprofessional service does NOT qualify as service as a substitute, temporary professional employee or professional employee for purposes of tenure, professional status or permanent certification.
5. Nothing prevents the subsequent employment assignment of a correctly certified person, initially employed as a paraprofessional.
6. Federal law requirements for paraprofessionals employed in a Title I school-wide building or whom are paid through Title I funds in a Title I program, employed to aid in student remedial reading, writing and mathematics assistance and/or instructional aid must be highly qualified through the possession of: An associate degree or at least 48 postsecondary education credits or the successful completion of a state or locally developed assessment of: reading, writing and mathematics and the capacity to assist the instructor in these areas.
7. Paraprofessionals serving as health room aides or other non-professional school district employees shall not be directed to engage in health-related activities reserved exclusively for licensed professionals and controlled by the Nurse Practice Act or other medically related laws.

**Certification Staffing Assignment
SPECIAL EDUCATION – COGNITIVE, BEHAVIOR AND
PHYSICAL/HEALTH DISABILITIES
(CB/PHD)
(Nursery-12)**

General Information

This CSPG is intended to assist the chief school officer in ensuring that all staff involved in instruction are appropriately certified and qualified for the courses they are teaching. It is the responsibility of the chief school officer to exercise discretion in the selection and assignment of staff according to the particular curriculum needs of the students that staff serves.

Certification Assignment

A person holding a certificate endorsed in this special education area is qualified to teach students with disabilities how to understand, overcome, compensate for and/or adjust to their disability through the use of adaptive instructional strategies, instructional accommodations, individualized learning activities and specially designed services. In addition, these persons are qualified to instruct in specific subject areas if the curriculum they teach is adjusted to the needs and abilities of identified students with disabilities and is different in learning objectives, content and instructional times, instructional methods and materials, expected levels of achievement or procedures for evaluation from those planned courses used to instruct regular education students of comparable chronological age.

Staffing Special Education Classes

When a student's IEP prescribes regular education planned instruction designed to satisfy the secondary education curriculum requirements as prescribed in Chapter 4, a person teaching that course must be appropriately certified in that subject area. Special education certification is not appropriate in this instance. Conversely, when a student's IEP prescribes special education modified instruction, designed to satisfy the special education needs of the student, then the person teaching the course must be appropriately certified in the special education area.

Local Education Agency Responsibilities

The determination as to whether a regular education or special education planned course is appropriate rests with the school entity's officials. However, the IEP should clearly state the specific curriculum needs of the students. Without the IEP documentation and planned course differentiation, the state cannot support the local entity's choice of staffing in the event there are questions regarding the propriety of staffing. Therefore, it is critical that local school officials in staffing their regular education or special education programs, ensure that clearly defined and categorized planned courses are in place and that student's IEP's clearly prescribe curriculum needs.

Grade Level - Scope of Certificate

A person holding a valid PA certificate for Special Education-CB/PHD is qualified to provide all special education requirements in grades Nursery



through 12.

The special education teacher can also assist students with disabilities by using special strategies including adaptation of curricula and materials, developing accommodations and specific interventions to meet student needs and the use of effective instruction, methods, learning activities and specially designed services.

An educator holding the Special Education – CB-PHD certificate is qualified to render diagnostic and prescriptive services in instructional programs, which are designed within an IEP to serve students having one or more disabilities. In addition, Special Education-CBP/HD teachers are qualified to offer pre-vocational diagnostic and assessment activities, as well as career awareness activities such as job shadowing, to identify the interests and abilities of students; provide basic occupational or career information; provide diverse occupational training and community transition or sheltered workshop experiences for students whose IEP requires such activities, and to co-teach in a regular education classroom and assist in curriculum modification.

In addition, CB/PHD certified teachers may conduct student activities including paid/unpaid work experiences in a community-based operation; involve the business enterprise of the employer in paid or unpaid settings; involve the coordination of job training agreements; or the appropriate placement of students in a work or community transition setting related to their career objectives.

Special Considerations

Other certification titles that are also applicable in this are: Mentally and Physically Handicapped, and Mentally Retarded. An educator certified in this field may provide school staff development services and other professional development activities consistent with federal and state laws and regulations, landmark litigation and local district policies and procedures.

An educator certified in this field may serve in the role of mentor or advisor, and may assist students in understanding the “reading” content area materials related to subject areas.

References:

Program Specific Guidelines for Certification.

22 PA Code: Chapter 4: § 4.21

§ 4.22

§ 4.23

Chapter 49 §49.11

§49.81

Chapter 14

PA Public School Code: §1202

§1212

§1604

THIS REVISION SUPERSEDES ALL EARLIER CSPG'S CARRYING THIS NUMBER AND/OR ADDRESSING THIS SUBJECT. PREVIOUS PRINTING DATES ON THIS SUBJECT: 1973, 3/75, 3/78, 2/82, 1/87, 7/1/04

