A. Rationale for Paraprofessional Assessment

What is a paraprofessional?

For the purposes of Title I, Part A, a paraprofessional, is an employee who provides instructional support in a program supported with Title I, Part A funds.

Instructional duties apply to paraprofessionals who assist in instruction of reading, writing, and mathematics, or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness. Instructional duties apply to paraprofessionals who provide: 1) one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher, 2) instructional assistance in a computer laboratory, 3) support in a library or media, or 4) instructional support services under the direct supervision of a teacher.

Individuals who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance, and similar positions are not considered paraprofessionals under Title I.

In a Title I targeted assistance school, it is those paraprofessionals paid by Title I funds.

In a Title I schoolwide program school, it is all paraprofessionals with any instructional duties without regard to whether the position is funded with federal, state, or local funds.

Why does No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have new requirements for paraprofessionals?
Properly trained paraprofessionals can play important roles in Title I schools where they can magnify and reinforce a teacher’s effect in the classroom. Studies (Chambers, et al, 2000) indicate that paraprofessionals are used in many Title I schools for teaching and assisting in teaching when their educational backgrounds do not qualify them for such responsibilities. NCLB includes higher standards that educators must meet in order to ensure that students who need the most help are taught by highly qualified teachers and paraprofessionals.

Requirements for Title I Paraprofessionals

All paraprofessionals including Title I must have a secondary diploma or its recognized equivalent. This includes paraprofessionals who serve as translators or who conduct parental involvement activities. Additionally, Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support and who were hired after January 8, 2002, must have one of the following:

a. completed two years of study at an institution of higher education;

b. obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree;

c. met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness) [section 1119 (c) and (d)].

Paraprofessionals hired on or before January 8, 2002 and working in a program supported with Title I funds must meet these requirements by January 8, 2006.

State Board of Education

At its June 11, 2003 meeting, the State Board of Education (SBE) acted to clarify the state plan for meeting NCLB Paraprofessional requirements. The clarifications preserve local control allowing local education agencies (LEAs) to define “acceptable coursework” for the two years of study option, by allowing local determination of either a professional assessment or a locally developed test or process that meets the rigorous standard of quality required by NCLB.

Specific definitions approved were:
i. Two years of study means 48 standardized statewide semester units (or equivalent quarter units)

ii. Required coursework is coursework acceptable for completion of this requirement, which will be defined by each local education agency

iii. Professional assessment will be determined locally by either the development or selection of an assessment, which meets the requirements of NCLB

iv. Portability of paraprofessional qualifications means that reciprocity with other LEAs will be determined at the discretion of each LEA

B. Siskiyou County Two-Year of Study Requirement for Paraprofessionals to Meet NCLB Mandates

1. Two years of study is 48 standardized statewide semester units (or equivalent quarter units). A minimum passing score of “C” or better is required.

2. Acceptable coursework – See Attachment A

C. Paraprofessional Assessment Information

1. Purpose of the Assessment

The purpose of the academic assessment is to demonstrate that Title I paraprofessionals have the appropriate knowledge and ability to assist in instructing students and are competent in required instructional techniques and academic areas.

2. Two Part Assessment Required for Meeting the Requirements of NCLB “Highly Qualified Paraprofessional”

   a. Passage of a formal state or local assessment demonstrating knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics and;

   b. Ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness)

3. Does assessment mean a “paper and pencil test” only, or could the assessment be a performance assessment evaluating demonstrable skills?
The law does not require a paper and pencil test. However, a local district must have evidence that the assessment is valid and reliable. Also, the assessment results must be documented—i.e. there needs to be a record of the assessment and the individual’s performance on that assessment.

4. **What level of rigor should the paraprofessional assessment have?**

The paraprofessional assessment is expected to evaluate paraprofessional candidates at a level equivalent to the second year of college. Having skills at the level of the second year of college is the intent of the law. [See section 1119 (c) and (d)].

5. **What are the academic content areas in which Title I paraprofessionals must demonstrate the ability to assist in instructing?**

Title I paraprofessionals must demonstrate the ability to assist in instructing in the academic areas of reading/language arts, writing, and mathematics; or in reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.

**D. Siskiyou County Plan to Assist Paraprofessionals to Meet NCLB Assessment Requirements**

1. **Part I – Assessment of Knowledge**

To assist paraprofessionals to meet the requirements of NCLB “Highly Qualified” status, a partnership has been established with the Siskiyou County Office of Education (SCOE), College of the Siskiyous (COS), and Siskiyou County school Districts to use the COS placement assessment, COMPASS, as the recognized formal local assessment for the purpose of determining knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics. In addition to COMPASS, COS will administer a writing assessment to assist in determining knowledge of writing.

   a. Assessment Instrument: COMPASS
      (COMPASS = COMPASS + Writing Assessment)

   b. Agency administering COMPASS: College of the Siskiyous
c. Rationale for COMPASS as a Valid Assessment: COMPASS meets the intent of the law that the assessment will measure skills at the level of the second year of college. It is a valid and reliable assessment.

d. Benchmarks to meet the level equivalent to the second year of college:

   i) Proficiency in Math:
      Mathematics Placement Test: Be eligible for Math 54A or Math 56 (beginning Algebra)

   ii) Proficiency in Reading:
      Reading Placement Test: Score of 90 or higher

   iii) Proficiency in English:
      Writing Placement Test: Score of 65 or higher. Be eligible for English IA.

   iv) Proficiency in Writing:
      Response to prompt: Pass with a minimum score of 3 on a 1-5 scale; 1=A, 2=B, 3=C

e. Options if benchmarks are not met:

   i) Retest with the COMPASS
      • Only retake section(s) for which benchmark was not met
      • May retest after two weeks of initial testing
      • Failure to pass the retake of the COMPASS: It is recommended to take the COS course Guide 70, before retesting
      • If Guide 70 is not taken, a retest can be taken in 4 months

   ii) Coursework that may assist with preparation for the COMPASS
      • Math- Math 81, then Math 56
      • English- English 96, English 52, then English 1A
      • Reading- Reading 10
iii) Math Lab, Writing Lab, Reading Lab
   • Enrollment in any math or English course enables student to get assistance from labs, or
   • Enrollment in English 70, Math 70, or Reading 70 enable student to access specific labs.

f. Schedule for taking COMPASS and Testing Sites Available

i) Can be taken by coming to the Counseling Services Office at the Weed Campus or Yreka Campus between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

ii) Call (530) 938-5308 for more information

iii) Picture ID and Social Security Number must be provided prior to taking the COMPASS

g. Score Reports

Score reports will be generated through the College of the Siskiyous Assessment Office and certified by an authorized testing official. A copy of the report will be sent to the test taker. With permission granted by the employee, a copy of the report will be sent to the district office for a current employee and the Siskiyou County Office of Education Curriculum and Instruction Department.

The COS Assessment Office will maintain a database storing the results of the test takers for paraprofessional competency.

2. Part II- Assessment of Ability

Each district will be responsible for assessing a paraprofessional’s ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness.)

a. Options for meeting this requirement

i) Successful completion of the Siskiyou County “Ability to Assist in Instructing” training.

   Training Format
   • Two days of training required
• A proficiency exam will be given at the end of the second day of training
• Minimum proficiency/passing score = 70%
• One-half day writing instruction and assessment on Day 3 - required for those paraprofessionals who did not meet the proficiency requirement for the COS writing assessment
• Minimum of ten participants required to conduct training
• Trainings offered at the SCOE

Writing Component
• Paraprofessionals should take the COS writing assessment when they take the COMPASS
• Paraprofessionals who meet the proficiency requirement for the COS writing assessment are not required to participate in the one-half day, Day 3 writing instruction portion of the “Ability to Assist in Instructing” training
• Paraprofessionals who do not meet the proficiency requirement for the COS writing assessment must participate in the one-half day, Day 3 writing instruction portion of the “Ability to Assist in Instructing” training and take the writing assessment
• Minimum proficiency/passing score = 3 on the writing assessment rubric
  ii) Successful score on a structured interview conducted by the employing district
  iii) Proficiency demonstrated through structured observations as conducted by the employing district

3. Completion of Assessment

  a. Successful passage of the COMPASS would meet the requirement for demonstrating knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics.
  b. Certification of Completion - The SCOE/Employing District will issue a Certificate of Completion to all paraprofessionals who pass the COMPASS at COS and meet the proficiency requirements for the “Ability to Assist in Instructing” assessment(s), indicating they have “met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal State or local assessment, knowledge of and ability
to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).”

c. Paraprofessionals may be considered for hire after passing the COMPASS, and scoring at a proficient level on one of the options listed above in 2. Part II- Assessment of Ability. To maintain employment, a paraprofessional has passed the COMPASS and scores at a proficient level on one of the options listed in 2. Part II- Assessment of Ability above.

E. Information

Please direct questions regarding the Paraprofessional Assessment to your local school district or to the Siskiyou County Office Education, Mike De Ross, 842-8404.

F. References


2. The Fiscal Report, School Services of California, June 27, 2003

3. EdCAL Education California, Vo. 32, Number 42, June 23, 2003

4. www.cde.ca.gov/board

5. www.cde.ca.gov/pr/nclb
Attachment A