



## Update for District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues

March 2012

The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE), established the District Contacts for Paraprofessional Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraprofessionals and their supervisors. The focus of this newsletter is to provide resources for more effective teacher and paraprofessional collaboration.

### The Important Role of Paraprofessionals in Working with Students with Autism

It is important to highlight that paraprofessionals should be working in concert with the educational team. Clear roles should be defined for all team members. Clear instructional plans and schedules developed by the educator/other professionals and the paraprofessional should outline expectations for all team members. Collaboration will provide everyone the opportunity for success.

#### Providing Instruction

Addressing the goals and objectives in the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) as well as assisting students to participate in the general education curriculum can be one of the responsibilities of the paraprofessional. Written instruction plans for implementation of the IEP objectives should be developed to ensure quality instruction and should be shared with the paraprofessional.

Within a general education setting a student with autism may be expected to participate in the typical instruction of the classroom. In this setting, a paraprofessional should focus on ensuring that the student with autism understands the content and assignment and has the support needed to participate. A paraprofessional may need to provide additional information to a student to ensure comprehension. Students with autism are typically visual learners. Support in the general education setting might include writing a list of steps that need to be completed or using a highlighter to visually emphasize the key points discussed verbally by the teacher. Translating the content relayed verbally to visual information can promote success for an individual with autism.

#### Promoting Peer Interaction

A paraprofessional can also be helpful in encouraging peer interaction and promoting success with peer relationships. Paraprofessionals in the classroom must walk a fine-line between working in proximity to the student for whom they are providing support to ensure success while encouraging the student with autism to interact with their peers and while fading into the background of the school setting.

#### Recommended Reading:

Causton-Theoharis and Malmgren. *Boy In the Bubble: Effects of Paraprofessional Proximity And Other Pedagogical Decisions On The Interactions Of A Student With Behavioral Disorders.* Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 2006.

Council for Exceptional Children. *Parability: The CEC Paraeducator Standards Workbook.* 2004.

*Adapted from Helping Students with Autism: Tips for Educators.*

### Connecticut Common Core of Teaching

The Connecticut Common Core of Teaching (CCT) articulates the knowledge, skills and qualities that Connecticut teachers need in order to prepare students to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The CCT articulates the art and science of teaching as essential knowledge, skills and qualities. These foundational skills and competencies are grouped by six domains. The sixth domain, Professional Responsibilities and Teacher Leadership, emphasizes the need for teachers to maximize the support for student learning by developing and demonstrating professionalism, collaboration with others and leadership. Indicator 6.5 under this domain addresses collaboration with paraprofessionals:

Guiding and coaching paraprofessionals and collaborating with colleagues, administrators, and special services staff to monitor the impact of instructional or behavioral support and interventions.

Additional information regarding the Common Core of Teaching can be found at: <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=320862>.

#### In This Issue

<b>The Important Role of Paraprofessionals in Working with Students with Autism</b>	1
<b>Connecticut Common Core of Teaching</b>	1
<b>A Paraprofessionals Guide to Bilingual and ESL Programs and Services</b>	2



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### **A Paraprofessionals Guide to Bilingual and ESL Programs and Services**

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According to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and state law, school districts must identify and report the dominant language of ALL new K-12 students. The preliminary or initial determination of a student's dominant language is made through a home language survey given to parents/guardians at the point of registration/enrollment in the school district. The preliminary determination is also the first step in a three-step process to identifying English Language Learners.

Observations, interviews, testing, and a review of student records then serve to ascertain a student's dominant language and determine the English language proficiency of a student. It is important to remember that not all students who have a dominant language other than English are English Language Learners. Only those students whose dominant language is one other than English AND whose English language proficiency is limited may be considered for identification as an ELL.

Once a child is identified as an ELL, parents/guardians must be notified and given program/service options available to their child. Parents/guardians have the right to accept, refuse, un-enroll, and reenroll their child in any ESL/Bilingual program/service offered to their child. In cases where parents/guardians refuse programs/services, the child is still identified as an English Language Learner as a matter of law.

In school buildings where there are 20 or more ELLs of the same language group, a bilingual program must be provided by law (CGS, Section 10-17f). Connecticut's legislation on bilingual education has existed since 1977. According to the Bilingual Education Statute, eligible students may receive bilingual education for a maximum of 30 months. Those who receive bilingual education for 30 months without attaining the English mastery criteria must then be offered Language Transition Support Services (LTSS).

All identified English Language Learners remain ELL students until the time that they attain all of the exit criteria, or mastery standards, adopted by the Connecticut State Board of Education. ELL students must achieve both a linguistic and an academic mastery standard. They must achieve an overall level 4 or 5 on the Language Assessment Scales (LAS) Links in order to demonstrate English language proficiency and grade-level performance on the DRA, CMTs, or CAPT (depending on grade level) in order to demonstrate academic mastery.

*Taken from, A Paraprofessionals Guide to Bilingual and ESL Programs and Services, published by the Connecticut State Department of Education and the State Education Resource Center (SERC). Available on SDE's Paraprofessional Information and Resources page, titled "Paraprofessional Brief: Ell": [www.ct.gov/para-cali](http://www.ct.gov/para-cali).*

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