




**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
**STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**



**TO:** Clerk of the Senate  
Clerk of the House of Representatives

**FROM:** Stefan Pryor  
Commissioner of Education 

**DATE:** September 24, 2014

**SUBJECT:** Annual Report on Paraprofessionals

In accordance with Section 10-155k of the Connecticut General Statutes (C.G.S.), the CT State Department of Education, on behalf of the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council, submits the enclosed Annual Report. Also, please note that by copy of this letter, I am distributing this report in accordance with C.G.S. Section 11-4a.

If you have any questions or require additional copies, please contact Martha Deeds at 860-713-6959. Thank you.

SP:iw  
cc: Education Committee  
Legislative Library  
Office of Legislative Research  
State Library

Enclosure

## School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Report

For the past five years, the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council ("Council") as required by Section 10-155k of the Connecticut General Statutes, has met on a quarterly basis to advise the Commissioner of Education and the General Assembly on the effectiveness of the content and delivery of existing training for paraprofessionals.

### The members of this Council are as follows:

**Tenisha Baker**, 2013 Connecticut Paraeducator of the Year, Sunset Ridge Academy, East Hartford Public Schools

**Regina Birdsell**, Assistant Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Schools (CAS)

**Anthony Brisson**, Consultant, State Education Resource Center (SERC)

**Georgina Cabrera**, 2014 Anne Marie Murphy Paraeducator of the Year, Moses Y. Beach School, Wallingford Public Schools

**Marcia Cattanaach**, Paraeducator, Hartford Public Schools, representing American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Connecticut

**Stacey Cannon Cronk**, Special Education Teacher, Cooperative Educational Services (CES)

**Heather Dawes**, Education Services Specialist, State Education Resource Center (SERC)

**Patricia Fusco**, Teacher, West Haven Public Schools, representing AFT Connecticut

**Geraldine Jackman**, Paraeducator, Newtown Public Schools, representing the International Federation of Technical and Professional Employees (IFTPE)

**Rhonda Kempton**, Consultant, Bureau of Special Education, Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)

**Cindy Knudsen**, Paraeducator, Region 4, representing Municipal Employees United International (MEUI)

**Annie MacDonald**, Field Organizer, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)

**Danielle McMullen**, Staff Rep, Connecticut Employees United International (CEUI)

**Donna Morelli**, Education Specialist, Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)

**Niloufar Rezai**, Interim Director, Child and Family Development Resource Center, Eastern CT State University

**Pat Sampson**, Assistant Director of Collective Bargaining and Organizing, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Council 4

**Janet Scialdone**, Program Coordinator, Technical Assistance and Brokering Services, CREC

**Bill Walkauskas**, Paraeducator, Area Cooperative Educational Services (ACES), representing Connecticut State Employees Association (CSEA)

**Iris White**, Consultant, Turnaround Office, CSDE

The service of paraeducators contributes significantly to the success of individual children and youth, schools, and educational programs. Paraeducators work in a range of educational settings including general education classrooms, special education settings, lunchrooms, playgrounds, school busses, vocational work sites, computer labs, and school media centers. The utilization of paraeducators to support students has risen significantly in the past five years. According to the 2011 report, "*Shifting Trends in Special Education*," by Janie Scull and Amber M. Winkler, teacher-to-student ratio is flattening, if not declining slightly, and para-to-student ratio is

increasing rather dramatically. In the last decade, there has been an increase of 326,000 special education paraeducators to 430,000 special education paraeducators. This significant increase means that many of our neediest and most at risk children are being assisted by less qualified staff, who often receive little or no training, guidance, and/or support.

At the present time, there are no statewide standards for the amount or type of professional development that paraeducators with instructional responsibilities working in local school districts must receive. Currently, training provided to teachers regarding the overall duties and responsibilities of instructional paraprofessionals varies dramatically. With the increasing demands to prepare all students to be college and career ready upon graduation and with districts limited resources, well trained and supervised instructional paraeducators can be a valuable resource to help all students achieve high standards.

A major focus of the Council's work has been to recognize the important role of the paraeducator in supporting positive outcomes for students. As a result of this focus, during the 2012-13 school year, the Council developed, with the approval and support of the CSDE a Connecticut Paraprofessional of the Year Award. Last year, this award was renamed on behalf of Anne Marie Murphy, a paraeducator who was killed in Newtown. Recognizing Governor Malloy's and Commissioner Pryor's commitment to improved teacher and administrator preparation and effectiveness, and the closure of Connecticut's achievement gap, the Council submits the following recommendations.

- 1. Recommendation:** As the Educator Preparation Advisory Committee convenes to develop Connecticut's Definition of "Learner-Ready, Day One", it should consider including specific references to teacher's knowledge and skill in guiding and coaching staff who work in their classrooms.
- 2. Recommendation:** The CSDE established the District Contacts for Paraeducator Issues to disseminate information of importance to paraeducators and their supervisors. This information includes legislative updates, recognition programs, professional development opportunities, and resources for improved teacher and paraeducator collaboration. Each district contact receives a monthly newsletter which they are asked to then forward to education staff in their district. The Council continues to be aware of paraeducators who have not heard of the district contacts program and/or have not received the monthly newsletter. The CSDE should collaborate with different organizations, districts, and unions to create one statewide database in which to e-mail updated information regarding professional development opportunities directly to paraeducators. In addition, the CSDE should collaborate with CREC to develop a web page with links to all professional development providers for paraeducators, such as, SERC and the University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education . This would provide paraeducators with a "one stop shop" for accessing current information.