

REQUIREMENTS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS UNDER ESSA

This circular will remain in effect unless rescinded or superseded by a subsequent version.

The US Department of Education Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires that all instructional paraprofessionals meet specific employment requirements in order to be designated “Highly Qualified”. These requirements apply to all schoolwide programs without regard to whether the positions are funded with federal, state, or local funds. To be considered Highly Qualified, paraprofessionals will need to possess specific skills in reading, writing, math, and instruction (as outlined in Attachment A of this Superintendent’s Circular).

I. ESSA REQUIREMENTS FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS

There are currently two available options for paraprofessionals to be deemed Highly Qualified:

- **Pathway 1: Associate’s Degree or 48 Credit Hours of Coursework**

The paraprofessional obtained an Associate’s (or higher) degree OR completed at least 48 credit hours of coursework at an institution of higher education (IHE). If this pathway was selected the paraprofessional should submit to the Principal/Headmaster all relevant transcripts.

- **Pathway 2: Formal Standardized Assessment**

The paraprofessional passed a formal standardized assessment. The Massachusetts ESE has selected both the ParaPro Assessment and the WorkKeys Certificate of Proficiency for Teacher Assistants as the formal state-endorsed assessments. Either of these assessments will enable instructional paraprofessionals to meet this requirement. If this pathway is selected the paraprofessional should submit to the Principal/Headmaster an official score report confirming a passing score.

II. RESOURCES FOR PATHWAY 2

Information about the ParaPro Assessment, including content overview, and registration can be accessed on-line at <http://www.ets.org/parapro>. The test is generally offered as a paper/pencil test given four times per year at Roxbury Community College. BPS does not currently administer the Internet-based ParaPro test. A scaled score of 464 must be achieved in order to pass and be deemed "Highly Qualified".

Information about the WorkKeys Proficiency Certificate for Teacher Assistants can be accessed on-line at <http://www.act.org/workkeys/>. It consists of a three-part assessment as well as an observation-based tool known as the Instructional Support Inventory (ISI). It is administered by WorkSource Partners, Inc., One Harvard Street, Ste 200, Brookline, MA 02445 (phone: 617-232-0330). To meet the requirements of ESSA, paraprofessionals must achieve at the following skill levels on the three-part assessment:

- Reading for Information: Skill Level 5

- Applied Mathematics: Skill Level 4
- Business Writing: Skill Level 3

III. FEDERAL DEFINITIONS

Definition of Instructional Paraprofessional

An instructional paraprofessional is an individual who provides instruction and support for classroom teachers. Aides, assistants, or tutors who engage in instructional support are considered to be instructional paraprofessionals as defined by ESSA. Individuals who work solely in non-instructional roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, and non-instructional computer assistance are not considered to be instructional paraprofessionals.

Responsibilities of Instructional Paraprofessionals

ESEA specifies that instructional paraprofessionals may engage in the following activities:

- Provide one-on-one tutoring for eligible students, if the tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher.
- Assist with classroom management, such as organizing instructional and other materials.
- Assist in a computer laboratory.
- Provide instructional support in a library or media center.
- Provide instructional services to students under the direct supervision of a teacher.

All instructional paraprofessionals must be supervised directly by teachers. Instructional paraprofessionals cannot be supervised by a peer or group of peers.

The following two categories of paraprofessionals need only possess a high school diploma or equivalent and are not required to meet the additional requirements listed above:

- Paraprofessionals in Title I programs who serve primarily as translators (as long as these paraprofessionals are proficient in English and a language other than English); and
- Paraprofessionals working solely on parental involvement activities.

Visit the [Mass. DESE website](#) for additional details.

For more information about this circular, contact:

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Mary Skipper, Superintendent

ATTACHMENT A

Massachusetts Department of Education Learning Guidelines for Title I Instructional Paraprofessionals

The Department of Education strongly encourages districts and charter schools to use these guidelines as a model for all paraprofessionals who provide instructional support to students.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- Instructional paraprofessionals are respected team members responsible for assisting in the delivery of instruction and other student-related activities. As valued members of the faculty, they are essential partners in the work of Title I programs.
- Given their responsibilities, instructional paraprofessionals must be skilled in reading, writing, and mathematics, and familiar with instructional practices that ensure and support the achievement of all students.
- To enhance the continuity and quality of services for students, paraprofessionals must be encouraged and supported in their efforts to participate in ongoing professional development programs.
- Programs for instructional paraprofessionals are best when they are comprehensive, acknowledge the diverse roles paraprofessionals play in schools and provide pathways to further education and teacher licensure, if desired.

1. LITERACY DOMAIN

01 Language

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups
- Pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions or interviews in order to acquire new knowledge
- Understand new vocabulary and use it correctly in reading and writing
- Analyze and use Standard English grammar
- Describe, analyze, and use appropriately formal and informal English
- Identify and use the correct meaning of words and phrases
- Recognize and use words with multiple meanings
- Use a paragraph or passage as the context for determining the meaning of an unfamiliar or uncommon word or phrase
- Use dictionaries, thesauruses, and other related references

02 Literature

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation
- Identify and paraphrase the main idea of a passage
- Identify supporting evidence

- Identify, organize, and draw conclusions using the relationship(s) among the ideas in written material
- Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the theme, structure and elements of fiction and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding
- Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the purposes, structure, and elements of nonfiction or informational materials and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding
- Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of poetry and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding
- Identify, analyze, and apply knowledge of the themes, structure, and elements of drama and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding
- Identify and analyze how an author's words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding

03 Composition

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail
- Write for different audiences and purposes
- Demonstrate adequate paragraph development and appropriate style, tone, and word choice in their compositions

- Use standard English conventions in their writing, revising, and editing
- Organize ideas in writing in a way that makes sense for their purpose
- Gather information from a variety of sources, analyze, and evaluate the quality of the information they obtain, and use it to answer their own questions
- Outline, summarize, and take notes
- Interpret information presented in graphic form

2. NUMERACY DOMAIN

01 Number Sense

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Understand numbers, ways of representing numbers, relationships among numbers, and number systems
- Understand principles and operations related to integers, fractions, decimals, percents, ratios, and proportions
- Understand and solve problems involving integers, fractions, decimals, percents, ratios, and proportions
- Understand meanings of mathematical operations and how they relate to one another.
- Compute fluently and make reasonable estimates
- Know how to use standard arithmetical algorithms

02 Algebra

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Understand and use patterns to model and solve problems
- Understand how to manipulate and simplify algebraic expressions and translate problems into algebraic notation
- Understand the properties of different types of functions and relations

03 Geometry

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Analyze characteristics and properties of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes
- Specify locations and describe spatial relationships using coordinate geometry and other representational systems
- Understand the principles and properties of coordinate and transformational geometry, apply transformations, and use symmetry to analyze mathematical situations
- Use visualization, spatial reasoning, and geometric modeling to solve problems.

04 Measurement and Data Analysis

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Identify measurable attributes of objects and use the standard units, systems, and processes of measurement
- Formulate questions that can be addressed with data; and collect, organize, and display relevant data to answer them

- Select and use appropriate statistical methods to analyze data
- Develop and evaluate inferences and predictions that are based on data

3. INSTRUCTION DOMAIN

01 Curriculum Planning

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Assist with activities addressing standards that will advance students' level of content knowledge
- Assist with activities appropriate for the full range of students within a classroom and appropriate to the specific discipline, age, and level of proficiency with the English language and Individualized Education Programs (IEP)

02 Effective Instruction

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Communicate lesson objectives clearly
- Build on students' prior knowledge and experience
- Provide support under the guidance of a classroom teacher to address student needs
- Help students use appropriate instructional resources to support learning in reading, writing, and mathematics
- Help students use a variety of approaches to understand what they read
- Help students focus their writing
- Help students relate mathematics to everyday situations

- Employ a variety and range of instructional techniques from direct instruction to cooperative learning groups
- Use instructional technology appropriately
- Provide regular feedback to students on their progress
- Provide formal and informal assessment of student progress

03 Classroom Climate and Equity

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Maintain appropriate standards of behavior, mutual respect, and safety in the classroom
- Promote achievement for all students, including those with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency, and those who are gifted and talented, without exception
- Promote civic and self-responsibility in the classroom, school, and community

04 Professional Responsibilities

A paraprofessional will know how and be able to:

- Carry out their legal and ethical responsibilities.
- Carry out health, safety, and emergency procedures of the learning environment.
- Maintain high standards and expectations for all students.

05 Professional Skills

A paraprofessional will understand how and be able to:

- Accept supervision to reflect critically upon their classroom experience and identify areas for further skill and professional development.
- Work collaboratively with school personnel.
- Confer with supervisor(s) and/or content specialist(s) when assistance is needed in supporting students' learning process.