



**To:** Superintendents, Principals, Title I Coordinators, Special Education Directors, MnSCU Colleges, Indian Education Directors, Career & Technical Education Directors and LEP Program Coordinators

**From:** Cheri Pierson Yecke, Ph.D.  
Commissioner

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cheri Pierson Yecke" with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Date:** May 9, 2003

**Re: Subject: Paraprofessional Guidance to School Districts**

This memo is intended to provide information to districts on the Competencies which will form the basis of a certification system for instructional paraprofessionals and establish a new standard for paraprofessionals. It will highlight resources available to help guide your staff development planning for instructional paraprofessionals.

The enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 requires all instructional paraprofessionals working in Title I programs (and all instructional paraprofessionals employed in a building with a schoolwide Title I program) to meet new academic requirements. In order to satisfy the requirements, districts must employ paraprofessionals who have:

- Completed at least two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- Obtained an Associate's (or higher) degree; or
- Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing and mathematics or knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness and mathematics readiness as appropriate. (Public Law 107-110, Title I, Section 1119)

Paraprofessionals hired prior to January 8, 2002 have until January 8, 2006 to meet the new requirements.

Many school districts have indicated that it would be helpful for the state to provide some timely guidance on meeting this new requirement. In response to this input, the Department is releasing the Core Instructional Paraprofessional Competencies as guidance to schools, districts and two-year degree granting programs. The Core Competencies would guide instructional paraprofessionals in Special Education, Title I, Indian Education, Career and Technical Education and Bilingual programs. To be competent in a job, an individual must have knowledge, skills and abilities to do all that is expected and required. The Competencies are statements that indicate the knowledge and skills needed for the instructional paraprofessionals to work successfully in educational settings. The Competencies are attached to this memo.

The Paraprofessional Core competencies are organized into nine competencies and can be viewed at <http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para>:

1. Philosophical, Historical and Legal Foundations of Education
2. Characteristics of Learners
3. Assessment, Diagnosis, and Evaluation
4. Instructional Content and Practice
5. Supporting Teaching and Learning Environment
6. Managing Student Behavior and Social Interactions Skills
7. Communication and Collaborative Partnerships
8. Professional and Ethical Practices
9. Academic Instructional Skills in Math, Reading and Writing

The state is also working toward a voluntary paraprofessional certification process that will likely reflect these Competencies, so schools/districts should keep them in mind during the hiring process and the planning of staff development for paraprofessionals. Additional information on this process will be provided as available.

Recently, the U.S. Department of Education also clarified the minimum requirements for instructional paraprofessionals assigned in a language instructional education program in any district receiving Title III funding. These paraprofessionals must be proficient in English and any other language used for instruction, including written and oral communication skills (Public Law 107-110, Section 3116(c)). Please contact Bounlieng Phommasouvanh at (651) 582-8487 or [Bounlieng.Phommasouvanh@state.mn.us](mailto:Bounlieng.Phommasouvanh@state.mn.us) for additional assistance.

Resources that are available to assist districts in meeting these new requirements are:

### General Resources

- The **Minnesota Paraprofessional Consortium's** web site has many resources at <http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para>.
- For more information about **NCLB** go to: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/asst.html>.
- The **U.S. Department of Education** has issued **draft non-regulatory guidance on the paraprofessional requirements**, which may be found at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SASA/paraguidance.pdf>.

### Assessment Resources

- District and regional personnel have developed a draft template **Portfolio**, aligned to the Competencies. This tool may be used to track a paraprofessional's progress toward meeting the Competencies. Look for it soon on the Paraprofessional Consortium's web site at <http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para>.
- A **Self-Inventory Template** has been developed to align with the Competencies. It may be a useful guide for paraprofessionals to assess their current progress toward meeting the Competencies. Look for updated information on the Paraprofessional web site at <http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para>.

- CFL is in the process of issuing a **RFI** (Request for Information) from current **test publishers** that assess reading, writing and math at levels comparable to the second year of college. Once that information is gathered, the list will be posted on the Paraprofessional web site <http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para>.

### **Web-based Competency Training**

- **Para eLink** is a web-based, on-line training program developed at the University of Minnesota. Para eLink will assist school districts in meeting the requirements by providing a competency-based tool for the training and assessment of current paraprofessionals. Look for updated information on the paraprofessional web site at <http://ici2.coled.umn.edu/para>. Regional training will begin in the fall.

For further assistance contact:

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Enclosure: Minnesota Core Competencies