



Lincoln Public Schools

Stephanie Powers
Administrator for Student Services

To: School Committee
From: Stephanie Powers
Re: Report on Paraprofessional Demographics, Qualifications, Longevity and Professional Development
Date: March 10, 2011

This memo reports on survey data that was collected this fall from paraprofessionals in the Lincoln Public Schools. Data was collected on paraprofessional demographics, qualifications, experience and longevity. Following an analysis of the professional development needs of this population a plan for professional development was designed and implemented.

The district benefits from hiring, training and retaining qualified staff to provide efficient and effective service to classrooms, teachers and students. The stabilization of the work force is valuable when making accurate budgeting, comprehensive planning, optimal instruction, and effective staffing allocation decisions.

Aides, assistants or tutors who engage in instructional support are considered to be instructional paraprofessionals as defined by the federal law, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). Individuals who work solely in non-instructional roles, such as food service and non-instructional computer assistants are not considered to be instructional paraprofessionals.

Paraprofessionals assist teachers in instructing students and/or providing specially designed instruction. A paraprofessional must be able to demonstrate knowledge of, and the ability to assist in, instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics, or reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness. Special education tutors provide instruction, support and assistance to students with disabilities, most commonly individually or in small groups, according to the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Paraprofessionals who provide instructional support are required by NCLB to work under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher. In this partnership, the teacher prepares the lessons and plans the instructional support activities, and the paraprofessional works with the students to carry out the instruction. The teacher evaluates the achievement of the students with whom the paraprofessional is working, and the paraprofessional works in close and frequent proximity with the teacher. Overall, the teacher mentors paraprofessionals and maintains an instructional dialogue with them, and they phase out paraprofessional support when the students no longer need it.

Federal standards for instructional paraprofessionals were implemented under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). As a result, when the district employs paraprofessionals, one of the following requirements must be met:

1. An associate's or higher degree, or
2. Two years of study at an institution of higher education, or
3. A rigorous state or local assessment of knowledge of and the ability to assist in instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics or reading readiness, writing readiness, or mathematics readiness.

The standards apply to paraprofessionals working in any school supported with Title 1 funds, regardless of whether the funds are used to pay for the paraprofessionals. Beginning in the 2008-

2009 school year, the Lincoln Public Schools receives Title 1 funds and therefore all paraprofessionals are required to meet this standard.

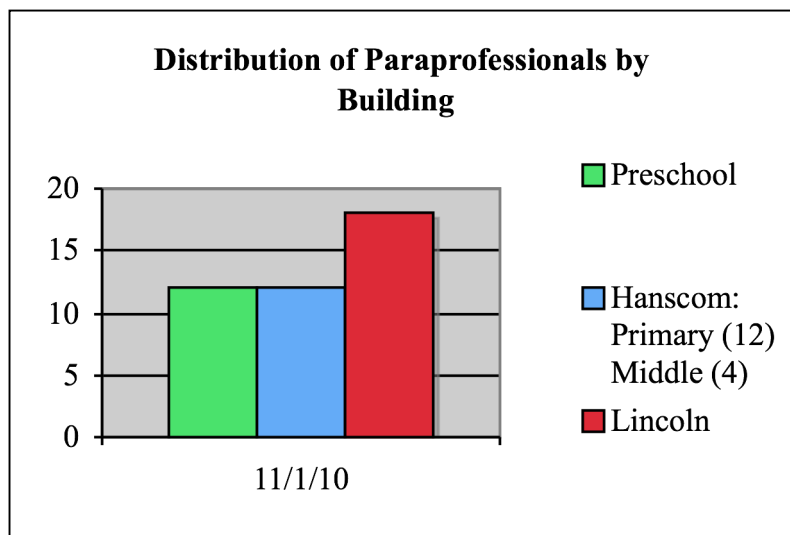
The following analysis conducted as part of a district review and a professional development needs assessment based on survey information collected from 45 paraprofessionals working in the Lincoln Public Schools. The emphasis for this report is general demographics, longevity and qualifications.

Results from the data collection effort showed that paraprofessionals employed by the Lincoln Public Schools that responded to the program review data request were:

- high school graduates (100%) with many completing at least two years of college (95%);
- four-year college graduates (62.8%);
- earned teacher licensure (44%);
- experienced staff having worked as instructional paraprofessionals for at least 5 years (53%);
- invested employees, 66% having worked as instructional paraprofessionals in the Lincoln Public Schools for at least 3 years
- evaluated for performance annually;
- provided with some form of periodic training;
- earning a minimum of \$13.99 per hour to a maximum of \$24.53 per hour; and
- offered some type of health and dental insurance and the opportunity to participate in a retirement plan.

The following chart provides additional information regarding the paraprofessionals currently employed by the Lincoln Public Schools.

Chart 1



Paraprofessional Professional Development Survey

Results from the survey showed that, a majority (more than 50%) of the 45 instructional paraprofessionals employed by the Lincoln Public Schools were highly interested in participating in workshops on the following topics:

- Understanding and responding to challenging behavior in the classroom (70%)
- Strategies for the successful inclusion of students with mild to moderate disabilities (54%)
- Strategies for the successful inclusion of students with social skill / pragmatic deficits (51%)
- Strategies for the successful inclusion of students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (50%)

Other topics that were of interest to the participants were:

- Child development and developmentally appropriate practice in the classroom
- Current issues, topics and challenges of meeting the mental health needs of students
- Meeting the diverse needs of students through differentiation
- Awareness in ways in which technology can assist in teaching and learning
- Supporting writing instruction
- Supporting reading instruction
- Supporting math instruction

Paraprofessional Professional Development Workshops

Through a review of the survey results and in consultation with administrators and faculty, a menu of professional development workshops was developed. The sessions will take place during Wednesday afternoons and paraprofessionals will be paid their hourly rate to attend. Funding was supported by the Federal ARRA grant.

Here is a listing of the workshops and the number of people enrolled:

Workshop Title: **Conducting Writing Conferences with Students (K-5)**
 Presenters: Judy Merra
 Date: March 9th
 Time: 1:15 – 3:30

This session will enable participants to individualize their conferences with student writers. They will develop skill in focusing on the craft (or content) of writing and conventions of writing.

Registrations: 13

Workshop Title: **Providing Basic Health Care to Children**
 Presenters: Maureen Richichi and Eileen Dirrane
 Date: Wednesday, March 16th
 Time: 1:15 - 3:30

After completing this training and activities, participants expect to be able to: Apply basic first aid; Utilize strategies to prevent safety issues on the playground and in the cafeteria; Care for students with disabilities including common health issues, including allergies, asthma and seizures.

Registrations: 4

Workshop Title: **Current Issues, Topics and Challenges of Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Students**
 Presenter: Margaret Hannah
 Date: Wednesday, March 23rd
 Time: 1:15 – 3:30

Presenter Bio: Margaret Hannah is the Executive Director of the [Freedman Center for Child and Family Development](#) at MSPP. She received her master's degree in education with a concentration in community counseling and psychology from the University of Miami. She has worked in schools and agencies for over 25 years, providing teacher and parent education programs and facilitating support groups. She has also taught at the elementary level. She has served as a project director for three federal grants for the delivery of mental health services within schools, and a grant to integrate mental health services between schools and community agencies. She serves on many Massachusetts committees and task forces advocating for mental health services, including the Massachusetts Academy of Pediatrics Mental Health Task Force and the City of Newton City-wide Emergency Response Team (CERT).

Description: Mental health issues are rapidly gaining recognition as one of the most pressing problems in today's classrooms. This workshop will assist paraprofessionals in recognizing signs and symptoms of the most common mental health disorders in children and teens. Strategies for addressing these problems in the classroom will be highlighted. Some of the topics addressed include: overview of mental health problems in children and teens, mood and anxiety disorders in children and teens, and behavioral disorders and how best to handle them in the classroom.

Registrations: 12

Workshop Title: **Occupational Therapy: Understanding equipment and therapeutic treatment**

Presenters: Dori Fishbone, Kate Siegel, Anna Baker

Date: Wednesday, March 30th

Time: 1:15 - 3:30

Description: During this workshop participants will be provided with an overview of the role of occupational therapy in schools, the purpose of the equipment in the therapy room, and participants will have the opportunity to use the equipment as well. Presenters will have time to answer questions.

Registrations: 11

Workshop Title: **How paraprofessionals can support speech and language skills in the classroom**

Presenters: Sharon Reneris, Laurey Mauck, Lisa Falcone and Laurie Berkowitz

Date: Wednesday, April 6th

Time: 1:15 - 3:30

Description: During this workshop paraprofessionals will learn how to define common speech and language terms, be provided with tips for how to support students with speech/language weaknesses in the classroom, and general questions will be answered.

Registrations: 17

Workshop Title: **Data Decisions and Documentation with Dispatch!**

Presenter: Claudia Fox Tree

Date: Wednesday, April 27th
Time: 1:15 – 3:30

Argh! How can I track this easily and quickly in a way that makes sense to others while still doing the rest of my job? Claudia will share charts and techniques she uses to track multiple students, subjects and objectives from multiple sources (oral discussion, tests/quizzes, direct instruction, teachers/tutors, etc.). We will also look at data and examine what it tells us about adjusting instruction and objectives.

Feel free to bring ideas and charts that you are using successfully to share with the group. Be prepared to share areas of struggle. We will spend some time brainstorming and matching charts to different types of data.

Open to all staff who want to learn how to develop and use charts to collect data on learning, achievement, and behavior. We will NOT be making graphs.

Registrations: 7

Workshop Title: **Using Social Stories with Young Children**
Presenters: Diane Mackenzie, Maureen Cullen
Date: Wednesday, April 27th
Time: 1:15 – 3:30

After completing this training and activities, participants will be able to: understand the application of social stories to help teach more appropriate social skills; know how to use social stories as a teaching tool; and know how to use social stories to help children succeed in social and behavioral situations in the school or any other environment (such as "getting in line", "taking turns on the swings", "sitting in the lunch room", "circle time", "taking turns when playing games", "sharing my trucks").

Registrations: 12

Workshop Title: **Understanding ADHD: Diagnosis and Treatment**
Presenter: Christina Dolce
Date: Wednesday, May 4th
Time: 1:15 – 3:30

Description: Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) represent 3-5% of America's school-age population. This workshop has been developed to help educate paraprofessionals about ADHD. Christina Dolce will address diagnosis, interventions, behavior management and instructional strategies.

Registrations: 16

Workshop Title: **Behavior Management Strategies in the School Setting**
Presenters: Catherine Smits, Colette Kuchel
Date: Wednesday, May 18th

Time: 1:15 – 3:30

After completing this training and activities, participants will be able to: explain the purposes and philosophy of behavior management; delineate the paraprofessional's role in implementing the behavior management plan; describe strategies for managing students during group activities; demonstrate skills for increasing positive behavior in students; and demonstrate awareness of the ethical application of behavior management strategies.

Registrations: 13

Workshop Title: **Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders**
Presenter: Pam Roadman
Date: Wednesday, May 18th
Time: 1:15 – 3:30

Upon completion of this workshop, participants should be able to: demonstrate a better understanding of the three diagnostic areas that define ASD; demonstrate a better understanding of the learning styles, communication issues, impairment in social understanding, sensory issues, behavior issues, and lack of repertoire of activities and interests associated with ASD.

Registrations: 12