



# Lincoln Public Schools

Stephanie Powers  
Administrator for Student Services

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To: School Committee  
From: Stephanie Powers  
Re: Report on Paraprofessional Professional Development  
Date: June 7, 2012

Paraprofessionals (Instructional Assistants, Special Education Tutors, General Education Tutors and Aides) 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).

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. One of the ways a school district may stabilize the work force is by offering professional development to faculty and staff that keeps them engaged and connected to their work.

The Lincoln Public Schools set a district goal to provide professional development to paraprofessionals as an ongoing effort to increase skills, job satisfaction, and ultimately student performance. In the fall sessions were offered in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics, and in the spring sessions were focused on specific student needs such as communication skills, social skills, and behavioral supports.

Through a review of the survey results and in consultation with administrators and faculty, a menu of professional development workshops was developed. The sessions took place during Wednesday afternoons and paraprofessionals were paid their hourly rate to attend. Funding was supported by the local budget and a state grant for Special Education Professional Development. The expenses were:

Contracted Services	\$ 1,610.00
Lincoln Faculty Presenters	\$ 3,799.64
Paraprofessionals	\$ 9,281.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,691.11</b>

This memo reports on paraprofessional professional development and workshop evaluation data for the 2011-2012 school year. The District offered 11 workshops on a variety of topics and the sessions were well attended.

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

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Workshop Title: **Part 1: Conferring with Student Writers (K-5)**  
Presenters: Judy Merra  
Date: October 12  
Time: 1:00 – 4:00

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

Participants: 36

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Workshop Title: **Finding a Focus for Reading Instruction (K-5)**  
Presenters: Judy Merra  
Date: November 9  
Time: 1:00 – 4:00

This session enabled participants to learn skills for conversing with students about reading, teaching phonemic awareness, improving fluency, cueing for decoding, and improving reading comprehension.

Participants: 33

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Workshop Title: **Conferring with Student Writers / Finding a Focus for Reading Instruction**  
Presenters: Judy Merra  
Date: December 19, 2011  
Time: 1:00 – 4:00

This session combined the content covered during the sessions on October 12<sup>th</sup> and November 9<sup>th</sup> as an opportunity to provide the information to those paraprofessionals who were not available on the previous dates..

Participants: 6

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Workshop Title: **Part 1: Supporting Student Thinking in Mathematics (K-5)**  
Presenters: Liz VanCleeef and Elaine Herzog  
Date: October 26  
Time: 1:00 – 4:00

This session enabled participants to learn how to help students solve mathematical problems. Participants were taught to be explicit, use effective tools for developing understanding and asking questions that elicit student thinking.

Participants: 30

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "It was fun" "it was interesting." "I really enjoy this."

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Workshop Title: **Part 2: Supporting Student Thinking in Mathematics (K-5)**  
Presenters: Liz VanCleeef and Elaine Herzog  
Date: December 7  
Time: 1:00 – 4:00

This second session built upon the first session that enabled participants to learn how to help students solve mathematical problems. Participants were taught to be explicit, use effective tools for developing understanding and asking questions that elicit student thinking.

Participants: 28

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "It was fun" "it was interesting." "I really enjoy this."

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Workshop Title: **Working with Students with Challenging Behaviors**  
Presenters: Tammy Barrera and Rob Vecchi, Walker Partnerships  
Date: April 4  
Time: 1:00 – 4:00

This workshop offered paraprofessionals a framework for understanding the challenging behaviors that can arise in the classroom and present strategies for turning negative behavioral situations into opportunities for positive learning. After completing this training and activities, participants were able to: understand the meaning of behavior and explain the reason some children have difficulty managing their behavior; describe the crisis cycle and understand the importance of managing our own thoughts as behavior escalates; and, demonstrate positive, strength-based behavioral interventions, as well as group management strategies.

Participants: 20

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "Very informative. Useful strategies" "One of the better workshops I have attended at the Lincoln School District. Wish it could have been two 2.5 hour days. Enjoyed speaking style and activities. Thank you. Great information." "Wish it was more interactive." "They were good. It was interesting and fun." "The most important thing I took from this workshop was the importance of using a calm, quiet voice to de-escalate a situation."

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Workshop Title: **Using Social Stories with Young Children**  
Presenters: Diane MacKenzie, Maureen Cullen  
Date: May 2  
Time: 1:30 – 3:30

After completing this training and activities, participants were 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").

Participants: 12

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "Best workshop. Interactive and very helpful." "They did a fantastic job. Well worth it." "I did find this workshop helpful." "The hands-n experience with Boardmaker was invaluable." "This workshop provided useful information for writing social stories using Boardmaker." "Very informative program."

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Workshop Title: **Implementing Sensory and Fine Motor Accommodations into the Classroom**  
Presenters: Kate Siegel  
Date: May 16  
Time: 1:30 – 3:30

After completing this training and activities, participants were able to: learn more about the self regulation program used by occupational therapists (ALERT program) and as well as some sensory diet activities that can be implemented in the classroom (or hallway).

Participants: 6

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "Gave very helpful tips that I am now using to support students." "I think all faculty and staff could benefit from knowledge of OT."

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Workshop Title: **Behavior Management Strategies in the School Setting**  
Presenters: Catherine Smits, Colette Kuchel  
Date: May 16  
Time: 1:30 – 3:30

After completing this training and activities, participants were 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.

Participants: 21

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "Energetic instruction that kept us interested." "I found the article given as a homework assignment to be very useful and informative." "The workshop was fantastic. Learned a lot!" "I found this workshop to be very helpful." "This is a topic that is vital to everyone working in a classroom. Material covered was very helpful and the homework reinforced the materials covered in class." "Great workshop. Could use more of these." "Wonderful presentation."

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Workshop Title: **Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders**  
Presenter: Pam Roadman  
Date: May 23  
Time: 1:30 – 3:30

Upon completion of this workshop, participants were 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.

Participants: 14

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "Would have liked a little more information on lower functioning students, not just Aspergers." "I thought this workshop needed more activities. It was too much of a lecture." "Pam's knowledge on this subject is vast. She is an excellent presenter."

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

Presenters: Sharon Reneris, Laurey Mauck and Laurie Berkowitz

Date: May 30

Time: 1:30 - 3:30

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

Participants: 14

Selected Evaluation Feedback: "Informative for speech background but could have used more ideas for activities/materials to help support students." "Good background info about speech issues. Practical strategies." "The workshop was very well organized and presented. Informative. I was especially interested in and learned a lot about what letter sounds a child should be expected to articulate at different ages. They also had wonderful tips about working with children who have difficulty with language skills." "It was great. I'm looking forward to having this workshop again next year." "They were willing to answer any questions and very informative. Good workshop!" "It was interesting to learn about how speech impairments are evaluated and addressed." "I would like to take this training again."