

Bilingual Paraprofessionals

Bilingual paraprofessionals play a vital role in the ESL program by providing language support services to ELLs in a classroom setting under the direct supervision of an ESL or general education teacher. The bilingual paraprofessional's primary responsibilities are to provide translation of course content, tutor students in course concepts in their home language, and assist in home/school communications.

Qualifications of Paraprofessionals

In order to meet the requirements of NCLB, all paraprofessional must meet the definition of *highly qualified* by June 8th of 2006. The three methods by which the requirement may be met include:

- receiving a passing score on the ParaPro Assessment, Educational Testing Service, Praxis Series
- completing at least two years (48 hours) of course work from a state-approved institution of higher learning.
- completing an associate's degree from a state-approved institution of higher learning

Bilingual paraprofessionals also must demonstrate a high level of language proficiency in both languages. In addition to meeting one of the three above requirements, the ELAD requires all bilingual paraprofessionals to take and pass a test which is administered at Central Office by the ELAD. The test assesses the bilingual paraprofessional's math skills, native language skills and English proficiency skills.

Guidelines for Paraprofessionals

The duties of paraprofessionals are adapted to the needs of ELLs at a school, and the layout of a specific site. Within these parameters, the bilingual paraprofessional assists students, ESL and general education teachers, school staff, and the parents of ELLs by

- Providing bilingual communication support through interpreting and translating data and information that reinforces skills introduced by the teacher.
- Directly communicating with parents and children to convey education and school-related information to ensure full comprehension.

- Monitoring activities and behavior of children during the presence or absence of classroom teachers to insure an environment that is safe and conducive to learning.
- Managing individuals and small groups of ELLs separately from, but under the general guidance, of a general education or ESL teacher.
- Assisting teachers in checking and objectively evaluating students' work.
- Escorting students to and from classrooms as needed.
- Providing input and assistance in the development of classroom activities and learning tools.
- Documenting records of learning activities and/or tutoring sessions.
- Assisting in the preparation of instructional materials and maintenance of ELL records.
- Assisting in the preparation of classroom displays and/or decorations.
- Contacting parents regularly and informing them of their child's progress.

Scheduling of Bilingual Paraprofessionals

In most cases, bilingual paraprofessionals are scheduled into specific grade level classes, i.e., a 4th grade science class on a 9-week basis. Principals, together with the ESL teacher, determine the most effective placements of the paraprofessional based on student needs. The number of ELLs, their grade placements and proficiency levels, and the native languages of the paraprofessionals at the schools are the chief factors governing the schedule of the paraprofessionals. At the end of each marking period, the progress of all ELLs at a given site is reviewed by the ESL teacher(s) and a revision of the paraprofessional schedule is made to assure the most effective use of language support services. At the end of the first week of the new marking period the revised paraprofessional schedule is submitted to the ELAD for review. (See schedule form in *Appendix D*.)

Exceptions to this general design for the scheduling may be required at some sites. The following examples illustrate three conditions under which the paraprofessional role may take an alternative form:

- Designated ESL elementary classes without bilingual teachers may assign a bilingual paraprofessional to the class on a permanent basis.

- When large numbers of ELLs are scheduled into the ESL Center, paraprofessional assistance may be required for effective ESL instruction.
- Paraprofessionals may be used in a tutorial setting when ELLs are not effectively clustered in general education classes. (See *Paraprofessionals in Tutorial Settings*.)

Bilingual paraprofessionals may be assigned up to 30 minutes of duty daily, i.e., monitoring the playground or bus duty provided the duty is not during instruction time when language support services are needed.

Paraprofessional in Tutorial Settings

Paraprofessionals in tutorial settings are required to keep a roster of student attendance and maintain an environment conducive to study. The scheduling of an ELL into tutoring takes into consideration the student's complete academic program; i.e., the student does not miss vital content classes. Whenever feasible, especially in a middle school setting, paraprofessionals escort ELLs to and from the study area. In study sessions, paraprofessionals translate and reinforce concepts presented in content courses or provide remediation of basic skills. They may also help ELLs to complete research or prepare projects. The translation of tests or quizzes is permitted, but paraprofessionals may not provide information that would not be given to a student by a teacher in a regular classroom.

