# School District Practice and Needs in

# Deploying and Developing Special Education Paraprofessionals

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## Executive Summary with Fact Sheet

In early 2015 the Ohio Partnership for Excellence in Paraprofessional Preparation (OPEPP), hosted at the University of Dayton College of Education and Health Sciences' Grant Center, surveyed two groups about traditional local public-school districts' experience with special education paraprofessionals (SPED parapros): (1) district superintendents and (2) relevant staff of Educational Service Centers (ESCs) and State Support Teams (SSTs).

Paraprofessionals are low-paid irregular members of the school workforce—often called "teachers' aides"—who reinforce lessons and otherwise assist students and teachers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2015). The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the nation employs about 1.2 million paraprofessionals, of which about one-third are SPED parapros. Ohio employs about 15,000 parapros, and if the national proportions apply to Ohio, then the state would employ about 5,000 SPED parapros.

SPED parapros, of course, function within the context of special, rather than general, education, though they not infrequently assist special education students in general education classrooms. General education classrooms (sometimes called "regular classrooms" as opposed to special education classrooms) are widely understood to be the best placement for everyone. Movement out of general education is authorized only after careful study and attempted modifications suggest that another placement offers substantial benefits.

OPEPP determined to conduct this study because, though paraprofessionals deal with the most challenging students in schools, qualifications for the role are minimal. SPED parapros need only a high school diploma and, optionally (if "ESEA qualification" is desired) a passing grade on a test to ensure employers they possess minimal academic skills (the "ParaPro Assessment," designed by the

Educational Testing Service). Whereas other parapros work in Kindergartens or pre-Kindergarten classrooms, or in schools in impoverished communities, SPED parapros work everywhere they are needed to provide supplemental support for students with disabilities.

Students with disabilities figure as a "disaggregated" performance category scrutinized when test scores are analyzed to determine state accountability rankings. In other words, Ohio takes the academic performance of students with disabilities seriously; so do local districts. In this policy circumstance it seems logical that part of the assistance provided by SPED parapros might, or should, frequently include academic assistance.

One can see the challenge for everyone involved.

So part of the study's purpose was forward-looking: to suggest ways to upgrade the SPED parapro role and functionality so that it can better provide academic assistance to students with disabilities. No study like this had been conducted in Ohio. The Fact Sheet that appears at the end of this Executive Summary provides selected findings of fact from the study. The full study narrative discusses everything about study design, methods, administration, findings, and limitations; and the many appendices provide extensive detail.

The study offers ten conclusions and seven recommendations. The conclusions provide the most succinct account of what the study found:

1. Well-informed definition of the SPED parapro role is *uncommon* across Ohio districts. Indeed, some districts report consulting *no* sources at all when defining the role.
2. The day-to-day supervision of SPED parapros is dubious in Ohio (as it is nationally), and yet such supervision is essential to the subsidiary status of the role.
3. Compared to applicable standards and considerations in the professional literature, expectations for using SPED parapros in an instructional role are meager in Ohio.
4. SPED parapros seldom function as members of instructional teams in Ohio.

5. Ohio districts assign and reassign SPED parapros to a wide range of contexts; support for students with low-incidence disabilities is clearly valued.
6. Concern about the discretion and professional demeanor of SPED parapros is common in Ohio.
7. Training for SPED parapros in Ohio is a largely local, and perhaps *ad hoc*, endeavor.
8. Access to high quality PD for SPED parapros is spotty at best in Ohio.
9. Ohio districts want more and better training opportunities for their SPED parapros.
10. Greater engagement of SPED parapros in instructional teams is a *major* aspiration across Ohio districts.

An even shorter summary: SPED parapros in Ohio mostly (not in every case nor in every district, but in many) buffer the system itself from difficult students, a functionality well-documented in the research literature on SPED parapros. This is an important function, just as important as the baby-sitting function that schools everywhere provide to working parents. But one expects more, and indeed the State holds schools and districts accountable for much more.

Who is to blame? It's the wrong question. The system is to blame and the system is no one. SPED parapros are a convenient, cheap labor force. They need and want the work and do it: apparently with much less help than applicable regulations and standards require (to judge from the data gathered in this survey, as well findings presented in peer-reviewed reports in national research journals). So the system itself is responsible, and those in charge of the system need to take appropriate action. Lack of capacity is not an excuse.

Because improvement is a systemic issue, systemic thinking is required when framing recommendations. The recommendations that the study proposes simplify the system into three levels: state, regional, and local. The simplification is convenient because the system is formally structured this way: Ohio Department of Education, ESCs and SSTs, and local districts. It is, of course, an over-

simplification. But one has to start someplace, and the following recommendations seem to the research team to serve the purpose:

**State-Level Systemic Recommendations**

1. The first recommendation embeds high standards and expectations: staffing appropriate to a functionality that allow all children to prosper: *Ohio should review its own SPED parapro "job description" (the 2008 standards) to refashion the role as that of junior co-teacher (with a living, not minimum, wage).* Future revisions to this "job description" should attend to recommendations from the entity described in the next recommendation.
2. Ohio should support the development of a centralized state-level structure (e.g., clearinghouse or center) to improve the consistency and quality of services provided by paraprofessional across the entire state, giving particular attention to SPED parapros (as serving the system's most challenged students). Such a structure should develop a portfolio of strategies adequate to the task, in view of the relevant professional literature and the counsel of local- and regional-level stakeholders. It should formally consult with national leaders (e.g., Michael Giangreco).

**Regional Systemic-Level Recommendations**

3. Ohio ESCs and SSTs should *jointly* contribute to the development and use of resources to be created though the centralized SPED paraprofessional structure (mentioned in recommendation #2), providing well-informed stakeholder counsel.
4. Ohio ESCs and SSTS must also coordinate and exploit more fully all existing SPED parapro training efforts, but focusing most attention on un-served or little-served local districts.
5. ESCs and SSTs *individually* should develop and deploy tactics for facilitating more frequent inclusion of SPED parapros on instructionally relevant teams (e.g., informal, formal, IEP, TBTs).

**Local-District-Level Systemic Recommendations**

6. Local districts should establish or refresh working groups to consider the professional literature on the role and functionality of SPED parapros and to re-assess local deployment of SPED parapros. Local job descriptions depend on this reassessment, of course. The density of special education staffing locally is relevant (Giangreco et al., 2013).
7. Local districts should begin incremental changes to the SPED parapro role: in expectations, instructional assignments, supervision, teaming, and training. Assessing the local situation and becoming much more conversant with the professional literature will help. For one local and incremental approach, see Cobb (2007).

The first recommendation captures the spirit behind both the study and what one could hope for from schooling at large: staffing appropriate to a functionality that allows all children to prosper. If this is the standard, it seems clear from this study and from the national literature that school systems nationwide—and the Ohio school system—have a long way to go with respect to the SPED parapro role.

## Ohio SPED Parapro Fact Sheet

- When defining the SPED parapro role locally, most reporting districts* (58%) consult just one source; 15% consult *no* source at all; and 10% are *unaware* of such sources. Fewer than 1% of responding districts consulted as many as four sources.

- Nearly all reporting districts (95%) pay SPED parapros *no more* $23,000 annually wage. Most responding districts (56%) do not link credentials and SPED parapro pay.

- Only 4% of reporting districts claimed their SPED parapros almost always met with informal teams (e.g., teachers with whom they work).

- About half (49%) of reporting districts seldom assign SPED parapros to general education classrooms; only 1% do so very frequently (i.e., more than 80% of the time).

- Most reporting districts (69%) regard an academic support function for SPED parapros as important, but only 6% report that an instructional role is common.

- Students' learned helplessness and parents' insistence on SPED parapro services are the main concerns of reporting districts (about 55%) planning to fade (*to incrementally withdraw*) SPED parapro services from students receiving such services.

- Reporting districts were most concerned (more than 50%) about SPED parapros' engagement with the special education process (confidentiality, demeanor, understanding of relevant law).

- A large majority of reporting districts (70%) judged general education teachers infrequently able to supervise SPED parapros.

- Most professional development (PD) training for SPED parapros is very local: 42% of reporting districts provide it themselves and 52% receive training from ESCs (39%) or SSTs (14%). In comments, reporting districts favored a range of training alternatives (which very few seem to have available to them).

- Consistent local access to high-quality PD is claimed by 28% of reporting districts, but 10% report no access at all.

- The highest priority needs† identified by reporting districts concerned teaming (participation on four sorts of teams) and role definition (including awareness of standards, pay, and job description).

* We assume that respondents speak authoritatively for the districts they work in or with.

† The study defined "need" as the gap between how things are now and how respondents would prefer them in the future. Strength of need was assessed statistically with the criterion that effect size be at least half a standard deviation.

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# School District Practice and Needs in

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## Introduction

Special education paraprofessionals now work with exceptional students[1] nationwide as part of implementing students' Individualized Education Program (IEPs). The role of paraprofessional has existed since at least the 1960s (see, e.g., Pickett, 1999), however, and the role was widely adopted across many human services fields after passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Gartner & Riessman, 1974). Only after the 1975 passage of Public Law 94-142—establishing access to school as a federal right of exceptional children and youth—did special education paraprofessional educators ("SPED parapros" hereafter) become the quite familiar figures they now are in public schools (Nelson, 1999).

Lack of clarity—and perhaps confusion—prevails about the meaning of the term *paraprofessional*, not as a term of art,[2] but as a common word in English, accessible to everyone and useful for everyone. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Murray, 2015, online version), the first worldwide occurrence of the word *paraprofessional* (in print) appeared in the field of education in 1960: in an issue of the *National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin*. So far as the OED can determine, then, the first printed use in English was in the United States, and, moreover, it occurred in the professional education literature. It seems remarkable, given how common paraprofessionals now are in law, medicine, dentistry, and engineering operations. Only in education does the distinction between professional and paraprofessional seem so problematic.

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1 "Exceptional students" is the term officially used to indicate special education students. The term encompasses students with a wide variety of special (i.e., exceptional) needs—needs substantially out of the ordinary. More particularly, it indicates students aged 3-21 for whom special education services are required by PL 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990.

2 That is, as minutely specified, for instance, in special education regulations or standards; see Appendix G for excerpts from Ohio's 2014 Special Education Operating Standards relevant to SPED paraprofessionals in specific and Appendix H for Ohio's 2008 Educational Paraprofessional Associate Standards relevant to paraprofessionals in general.

The common word, of course, lies a very short distance from the term of art, and the authoritative OED definition is worth noting in view of the tendency among all education commentators and researchers to overlook the common meaning almost completely:

> Designating a person to whom a particular aspect of a professional task is delegated, but who is not licensed to practice as a fully qualified professional; of or relating to such a person. (Murray, 2015, “paraprofessional,” para.1)

In other words, a SPED paraprofessional educator actually *carries out* (by delegation) professional tasks without *being* a professional: without the lengthy preparation and the formal qualifications—and without the pedagogical skills and knowledge arrogated by such preparation and qualification to professional educators. This irregularity (being delegated professional tasks without being a professional) tells one a great deal about status differentials.

Nonetheless, the educational system as a nationwide whole delegates difficult professional tasks to these school workers: not usually for a salary, but for an hourly, often minimum, wage; they often do not receive health insurance via their employment; and their employment is often part-time (Tillery, Werts, Roark, & Harris, 2003). Despite such circumstances SPED parapros are numerous—reportedly comprising about 300,000 individuals nationwide (see e.g., Carlson, Brauen, Klein, Schroll, & Willig, 2000; Pickett, Litkins, & Wallace, 2003). SPED parapros are, however, a minority among the over one million parapros employed in schools nationwide (BLS, 2015).

In general, SPED parapros work with students whose conditions require *closer* monitoring or *more attentive* intervention than is typical with students who exhibit mild-to-moderate conditions. Many SPED parapros interact with multiple students, and assignment to a single student is seemingly more rare than it might once have been (Carlson et al., 2000). SPED parapros' training and qualifications are on average much more meager than those of SPED teachers, but so is their status (Giangreco, Suter, & Doyle, 2010), and as a result their contributions to the educational process are

often regarded as dubious (Giangreco et al., 2010).[3] Indeed, the difficulties of working with exceptional students produce substantial burnout among SPED *professionals* (Brunsting, Sreckovic, & Lane, 2014), as they do among other teachers (see, e.g., Fore, Martin, & Bender, 2002). And yet, confronting such work and such responsibilities alongside and with professional teachers, these non-professional workers predictably experience nearly the same stressors (Giangreco et al., 2010). They have a difficult job, and the relevant stressors are reported by parapros as reasons to seek other work (Carlson et al., 2000).

## Study Background

The Ohio Partnership for Excellence in Paraprofessional Preparation[4] (OPEPP) is an effort that supports SPED parapros and those who prepare and develop them. The partnership organizes higher education, regional providers, and districts in Ohio as a system for collective improvement in the use and development of SPED parapros, and it informs state policy conversation about the related issues.

On the basis of national evidence, OPEPP concludes that better provisions to support Ohio's SPED parapros might be developed and that reliable knowledge about Ohio districts' experience with and aspirations for their SPED parapros could deepen the policy conversation. The conversation is important because it bears on the wellbeing of children and youth who confront the most serious challenges in school: particularly improvement in their successful participation in general education (see, e.g., Giangreco et al., 2010; Pickett et al., 2003). The goal of special education is not isolation, after all, but full inclusion in general education: even to the point of accessing and progressing through grade-level content.

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3 Many professional educators still refer to parapros as “aides” or “teachers' aides,” and the federal government (National Center for Education Statiscs) still counts “aides” and not “paraprofessionals” in its annual census of schools and districts, the *Common Core of Data* (NCES, 2015). SPED parapros are perhaps the most numerous of parapros, but Title I and early childhood education parapros are also present in many schools (see, e.g., Giangreco et al., 2010).

4 Located at the University of Dayton School of Education and Health Sciences Grant Center (see http://ohioparapro.org/), OPEPP is funded by a four-year cooperative agreement (H325N110007) from the Research to Practice Division, Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education.

At the invitation of and in collaboration with the OPEPP leadership, WordFarmers Associates designed and conducted the first statewide study of Ohio's regular school districts' experience of the SPED parapro role (scope of position) and functionality (typical deployment to tasks within the scope).[5] The study reported here describes current practice, but also assesses respondents' hoped-for changes in role and function. “Function” in this context concerns what SPED parapros *do*, whereas “role” concerns the critical distinction between professional teachers and SPED parapros. The researchers kept the dynamic of role and function clearly in mind throughout the effort; please see the Methods discussion for further details. Two research questions guided the study:

1. What district practices and experiences shape the role and function of special education paraprofessionals?
2. What district practices and experiences shape the training needs of special education paraprofessionals?

No study of this sort had yet been conducted in Ohio, according to the review of the professional literature. Of course, the research team suspected that the issues highlighted in the national literature (see, e.g., Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, & Doyle, 2001; Giangreco et al., 2010; Pickett et al., 2003) would also be relevant in Ohio—that is, to those employing, deploying, and developing the capacities of SPED parapros. A review of that relevant literature follows.

5 What this analysis calls “function” is called “responsibility” in some reports. This study, however, is more interested in what SPED parapros actually do than in what they are supposed to do (the usual meaning of "responsibility"): How are they assigned? To whom? With what tasks? To address what they are supposed—or desired—to be doing, however, the study asked respondents to reveal what they would *prefer* SPED parapros to be doing *in the future*. The study uses the term “functionality” to describe the ensemble of functions to which SPED parapros are deployed.

## Relevant Literature

As the OED definition suggests, paraprofessionals have been part of the American educational system for at least two generations (see also Carlson et al., 2000). Pickett and colleagues (2003), however, locate the historic origin of the role in provisions for schooling necessitated in the 1950s by the post-World War II baby-boom. The shortage of teachers, they claimed, required extra hands, which were supplied by “teachers' aides”—a term that remains in use for federal reporting (Giangreco et al., 2010).[6] Specific to exceptional children, parents in the 1950s occasionally arranged for paraprofessionals to assist their children in community placements outside of school (Pickett et al., 2003): at the time about 80% of exceptional children were excluded from school (USDOE, 2010). Given the circumstances, SPED parapros, surprisingly, were the focus of an early evaluation related to pioneering in-school special education programming (Cruickshank & Herring, 1957).

Thus the role of a paid teacher's helper is actually an institution in American schooling. A precise census of SPED paraprofessionals cannot be found and the estimates reported in the literature are dated (Giangreco et al., 2010)—about 10 years old at this writing. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2015), however, reports the total number of "teacher assistant jobs" in 2012 to be a remarkable 1,223,440 (see http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/teacher-assistants.htm). The reported average salary ($23,640) and average entry-level education (some college, no degree) cited by the BLS are consistent with such information previously reported in national estimates specifically for SPED parapros (e.g., Carlson et al., 2000). SPED parapros probably resemble all parapros in many ways.[7]

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6 Federal reporting, as the study learned in adding federal information to the data set, does not distinguish between “teacher aides” assigned to special and general education.

7 Observers who assert, as does French (2003), that SPED parapros account for the majority of education parapros seem to be in error, with only about one-third to one-fourth of those enumerated by BLS employed in special education (see Carlson et al., 2000, for the latest figures the research team could find).

**Evolution of the Paraprofessional Role**

From the historical beginning of the role, then, one is obliged to observe that "teachers' aides" were destined, and perhaps intended, to serve as *irregular* teachers ("irregular" is indeed the meaning of the prefix *para*). Discussions of the role, however, usually overlook the implications of this meaning, taking instead the seemingly logical position that the role of parapro is subject to intentional design and redesign (e.g., as a term of art). Nonetheless, the underlying *reality* of the parapro role (i.e., an irregular among regulars) poses *for some reason* a persistent and difficult issue (Giangreco et al., 2010; Pickett, 1999; Pickett et al., 2003).

One sociologist offers an insight to help unpack the difficulty. Robert Bickel (2013) refers to the period from about 1945 to 1980 as the "era of the social contract"—characterized by popular concern for social equity: civil rights and gender equality. Towards the *end* of that era, and, relevant to the history of the SPED parapro role and work, extension of the right of public schooling to exceptional children became federal law in 1975.[8] Because the era of the social contract prized the common good, a major purpose of having parapros in schools (1960-1980) included *breaching* the status differentials bestowed by professionalism (Gartner & Riessman, 1974). The paraprofessional experience was meant to strengthen linkages with local communities *and* to give local representatives in impoverished communities (parapros) access to experience that would lead to eventual professional qualification—via a route different from the norms of that era. This history has seemingly (to judge from the professional literature) been forgotten.

At the beginning of the era it was, after all, much more rare for Americans to attend school for professional training while *also* working full-time: but just such a then-uncommon arrangement was imagined for paraprofessionals—including those working in schools (Gartner & Riessman, 1974). A

8 Public Law 94-142 (1975) and its successor PL 101-576 (IDEA) are the only legislation ever to mandate "individualized educational programs" for any specified group students in public schools nationwide, planning that must moreover ordinarily consult with and be agreed to by parents. The law was a momentous change for American schooling—perhaps more influential even than the 1954 *Brown* decision (see, e.g., Orfield, 2001; USDOE, 2010).

social equity agenda was widely in play, both for exceptional children and for the SPED parapros beginning to work with them (see Cruickshank & Herring, 1957, for one of the earliest such efforts).

The gulf separating current conceptualizations of the parapro role and those that once prevailed is suggested by this passage from Gartner and Riessman (1974):

> One of the most important objectives [of the parapro movement] is to change the professionals and the professions in human fields—health, education, welfare, mental health, corrections, and so on.... The concept suggests that new people prepared in ways different from the traditional professional model will become "new professionals." (p. 254)

Those authors suggested—scandalously to contemporary ears—that irregularity is an *affordance*: a distinctive virtue and an asset. Today, this irregularity is rarely mentioned, perhaps because such mention is so disturbing. The parapro remains a conundrum, one that supplies an important functionality cheaply.

In essence, the context for the SPED parapro role and functionality changed dramatically with the advent of a completely new outlook and reality: the change in local schools everywhere was momentous (USDOE, 2010) once the law became effective. If at a local school's IEP meeting for an individual student, educators and parents jointly determined that a student needed a "teacher's aide" to ensure the "least restrictive environment," that determination was (usually) sufficient to authorize employment of a SPED parapro. American schooling had, in fact, seen nothing of the sort previously nor anything of the sort since. The IEP henceforth became the key vehicle for expanding the numbers of SPED parapros in schooling (see, e.g., French, 2003; Nelson, 1999; Pickett et al., 2003). The increase in numbers and proportions of SPED parapros, of course, was decidedly not undertaken to change the profession or to change professionals, but to help schools undertake what had previously seemed almost wildly inappropriate (i.e., enrolling nearly all exceptional children rather than a small minority).

But these generous provisions, commonplace by 1980, arrived at the very end of an era that prized social equity goals: henceforth, however, a focus on teacher quality and accountability dramatically refocused national goals. Outcomes became the focus, rather than equitable access or inputs (see, e.g., Apple, 1992; Bickel, 2013; Cookson, 1995; Walberg & Bast, 1998). During the 1990s, well into the new era of accountability, employment of SPED parapros increased by 50% nationally, with growth in some states nearly doubling the SPED parapro workforce (French, 2003; Nelson, 1999). Paraprofessionals—irregulars at best—were of almost no interest in addressing the new national goals because their very irregularity rendered them unaccountable by definition: their utility has consistently seemed to lie almost entirely as extra hands for the management of public schooling's most difficult students.

Also in play in the evolution of the new outlook and reality, however, was an evolving perspective on accountability itself. Initially, accountability test results were computed for schools in general: all student scores, combined, represented school performance. After the passage of *No Child Left Behind* (2001), however, results were “disaggregated” by race, social class (i.e., impoverishment), and students with IEPs (i.e., exceptional students). Judgment of schools and districts thereafter included an ensemble of test-score indicators.

The *A Nation at Risk* report (National Commission on Excellence, 1983) serves still as an emblem of the shift from one era to the next. Although much has changed in American schooling since 1983 (in accord with the values prevailing in the new era), the rights granted by special education law remain, and IEPs still govern school programming for exceptional children—though the available options and delivery systems vary substantially by state and locale within states. And the “management” assistance obviously supplied by SPED parapros (i.e., buffering the system from students, and students from the system) has clearly been institutionalized as well.

The durable lack of attention given to the deployment and development of the SPED parapro role, so often reported by researchers (e.g., Giangreco et al., 2010; Pickett et al., 2003; Riggs & Mueller, 2001), is thus broadly explained by the weakened concern for equity, especially for the sorts of opportunities and affordances originally projected for parapros in general (again, see Gartner & Riessman, 1974, for this long-lost perspective).

**Evolution of SPED Paraprofessionals' Functionality**

Across the decades, the clearly most momentous influence on the evolving functionality of SPED parapros has been the federal mandate that required public schooling to accommodate a new clientele and a new patronage (parents with voice), and to institutionalize arrangements for both the children and the parents. Both SPED teachers and SPED parapros had been previously more rare in schools, and in short order they were increasingly much more common (French, 2003; USDOE, 2010).

The 1975 special education revolution in fact replaced an incremental approach for improvement at the professional margin (paraprofessional service in special education to improve services and professional responsiveness) with a change—radical in degree and in kind—that mandated and specified them in great detail: virtually overnight. Previously, the slowly increasing presence of SPED parapros might have been hoped to change the profession incrementally to render it more responsive to the marginalized populations—such as exceptional children—who are the usual, poorly served, object of “human services.” But the 1975 law produced so many changes that the previous incremental approach became quickly irrelevant. SPED paraprofessionals were suddenly not just needed, but required in some circumstances.

Of course, substantive improvement cannot be so easy. But a great many more exceptional children henceforth enjoyed previously unknown access and attention.

In the sudden transformation, concerted attention to a career path for SPED paraprofessionals all but disappeared: they would in future be less likely to aspire to become professionals themselves;

they would not become “new professionals” (a banished concept); and no longer would professional leaders entertain the possibility that interaction with SPED paraprofessionals might alter the construct of “professionalism” itself *for the better*.[9]

In short, the era of accountability has substantially altered the functionality of SPED paraprofessionals. Notably, in the changed circumstance, the previous plan that “irregularity” would help to expand equity and *alter the conceptualization of the education profession itself* has disappeared altogether. What we see in the lists of particular parapro functions (to follow, below) is the desire to establish a firm division of labor between what SPED teachers do and what SPED parapros do. The distinction is an ideal; actual practice to approximate the ideal is apparently more difficult than it might otherwise seem—an insight that was formerly the point of leverage for using parapros to change the profession. In any case, aside from the dramatic change for special education following the 1975 law and its contingent implications for how professional education leaders and policymakers subsequently viewed the parapro role, two other changes have influenced SPED parapro functionality.

First, the conventional wisdom of special education changed. In the decade following implementation of PL94-142, the first approach to schooling the new population was organized around categories of disability. Each category was presumed to need its own special materials and methods, and special classes (full-time or part-time placements) became the early norm for many students presenting even mild conditions (Algozzine & Morsink, 1989; Harris & Kierstead, 1985). Though not intended, special education started to function as a segregated preserve (see, e.g, Algozzine & Morsink, 1989) and the concept of “least restrictive environment” often meant a student would persist in special classes indefinitely. Thus by the late 1980s, federal special education policy started to emphasize “inclusion,” by which term the least restrictive environment (for everyone) was to be understood as the

9 Teaching itself has long struggled—unsuccessfully—to secure public esteem as a profession (Cremin, 1962; Gottleib & Cornbleth, 1989). Whether or not it has achieved professional status remains highly debatable (see, e.g., Ingersoll & Perda, 2008; Riggs, 2013; Zancanella, 2008). Ingersoll and Perda (2008) conclude that teachers are semi-professionals. But so, then, might SPED parapros themselves—with good reason—claim semi-professional status.

regular[10] (henceforth known as “general”) education classroom (e.g., Algozzine & Morsink, 1989). The now-familiar Response-to-Intervention (RTI) and Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) templates can be understood to reflect this change: removal from general education becomes advisable *only* when a series of modifications suggests partial and temporary removal as a benefit (see, e.g., Barnett, Daly, Jones, & Lentz, 2004). A major aim of these templates is to improve instruction in general education for all children presenting special needs in schools, and PL 94-142 itself anticipated such a goal by bringing such students to school and emphasizing the durable concept of the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Second, the emphases of education reform on accountability and high-stakes testing, which have so sharply changed the tenor of professional practice (see, e.g., Daly, Der-Martirosian, Ong-Dean, Park, & Wishard-Guerra, 2011; Olsen & Sexton, 2009; Zancanella, 2008), also exert substantial influence within special education. Most obviously, students with IEPs are considered under the terms of federal accountability provisions as a category for whom test scores must be “disaggregated” for the purpose of determining Adequate Yearly Progress. Also, manifesting a different sort of accountability, the Education Sciences Reform Act (2002) presses schools to use only “scientifically proven” methods with students. Some accounts of RTI (e.g., Barnett et al., 2004) adopted this approach as well. Overall though, RTI and MTSS perhaps do—or might—open a wider functionality in general education classrooms for parapros, including SPED parapros.

Of course, some districts sequester special education students from accountability testing in order to enhance their accountability standing (see, e.g., Thornton, Hill, & Usinger, 2006), and some SPED teachers (e.g., Meek, 2006) argue that grade-level group testing is inappropriate for many children with even mild disabilities. In this arguably frantic context, attention to SPED parapros

10 Here again is the distinction between regularity and irregularity.

becomes increasingly *less* critical to reputed school success (i.e., success as advertised in “state report cards”).

The evolution of functionality aside, what, exactly, do SPED parapros do? Discussion turns next to recent catalogs of particular SPED parapro functions.

**Recent Catalogs of SPED Parapro Functions**

A number of teams have reported the tasks (functions) that SPED parapros carry out (e.g., Carlson et al., 2000; Giangreco et al., 2010). The SPeNSE project (Carlson et al., 2000; Westat, 2001) reported that SPED parapros nationwide spent *at least 10%* of their time on these tasks:

- teaching students in small-groups,
- teaching students individually,
- modifying instructional materials,
- managing behavior (via behavioral plans),
- monitoring students (hall duty, study halls),
- conferring with teachers,
- recording data (about students), and
- attending to students' personal care.

In their updated report of the empirical and rhetorical literature on parapros, Giangreco and colleagues (2010) characterized parapro tasks as:

- teaching academic content,
- teaching functional skills,
- teaching vocational skills (in community sites),
- gathering and maintaining data,
- helping to manage challenging behavior,

- facilitating social interaction with general education students,
- providing personal care, and
- completing clerical tasks.

The range of functions is wide, but official considerations and formal definitions of the SPED parapro role struggle to assert the position that parapros *should* be supervised by professional teachers and that they *should not*, under such supervision, carry out a variety of tasks believed to distinguish regular *professional* practice from irregular *paraprofessional* practice. Pickett and colleagues (2003, p. 8) offer a list of functions (quoted verbatim below) that *should be off-limits* for SPED parapros:

- diagnosing learner needs,
- consulting with colleagues to plan individualized/personalized programs for all learners who can benefit from them,
- creating and maintaining learner-centered environments,
- aligning curriculum with instructional strategies,
- planning lessons,
- modifying content and instructional activities to meet the needs of individual learners,
- facilitating learning,
- assessing learning outcomes, and
- involving parents or other caregivers in all aspects of their child's education.

Such lists strive to distinguish regular (professional) teaching from irregular teaching. Unfortunately, the extent to which professional teachers are capable of exercising the desired supervision is reportedly low (French, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2010). Moreover, if teachers are indeed themselves more semi- than fully professional (Ingersoll & Perda, 2008), one can appreciate that the maneuver on view in this list is a difficult one! It seems, in fact, that for some (perhaps many) children and youth assigned a

SPED parapro, the paraprofessional is, and perhaps inevitably given the circumstances, doing a larger share of the teaching than one might hope (French, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2010; Pickett et al., 2003).

Amid the professional struggle to specify a role or to distinguish regular from irregular teaching, one may still turn to an authoritative definition that exists *outside* the profession. The BLS offers a description of the current role and its functions (BLS, 2015). The description appears as Appendix A. The listed functions do not differ sharply from those already given, but they are phrased more modestly and more clearly. The difficulty of "irregular teaching" is dealt with in the BLS account by the word *reinforce*. Parapros reinforce lessons. The BLS definition manages what the professional definitions seemingly cannot: stating clearly the subordinate functionality of parapros.

On this basis, one might more clearly inquire about what reasonable entry-level preparation and subsequent professional development could be designed to optimize this subordinate functionality. Thus, a brief recapitulation of the preparation that SPED parapros bring to their role seems in order and is presented next. What preparation do they have for doing things they actually do?

**SPED Parapro Preparation**

Across the nation, formal preparation to work as a SPED parapro is rarely required in practice.[11] Formal preparation programs exist, but they train only a small minority of working parapros (Carlson et al., 2000). As for educational attainment, Carlson and colleagues (2000) estimated that about a third possessed an associate's degree, a third had some college experience, and a third had a high school diploma or less. Just 13% held a paraprofessional credential: 6%, however, held a *professional* teaching credential of some sort—some incumbents in the SPED parapro role are actually professionals *already*.

11 Some sources (e.g., Nelson, 1999), cite federal requirements that after 2006, some parapros *must* possess two-year degrees. The research team has not determined if this cited requirement still exists or where it might at present be honored. Clearly, this "requirement" has not been applied to SPED parapros in Ohio.

Educational level is positively related to SPED parapros' self-assessed competence,[12] as is amount of professional development (PD). However, the Carlson team found that SPED parapros with higher educational attainment received more PD hours than those with lower attainment levels. The most reasonable hypothesis from the available literature is that training and preparation are helpful to those carrying out the functions enumerated above. Discussion turns next to a consideration of what is known about SPED parapros in Ohio.

**SPED Paraprofessionals in Ohio**

Ohio formally established the "teacher's aide" role rather early, and it was among 11 states to develop parapro credentialing programs during the 1960s and 1970s—but no requirements or standards were mandatory (Pickett et al., 2003). Although regular school districts in Ohio (n=614) now (i.e., 2012-2013 school year) employ a total of 15,308 parapros,[13] the credentialing regime remains virtually unchanged. An unknown proportion of applicants take and pass the parapro test offered by the Educational Testing Service (2015a), which essentially establishes that applicants exhibit an elementary level of academic competency (personal communication from study advisor; affirmed by inspection of sample test[14]). But even that qualifying step is optional—needed only by those parapros whom districts wish to count as "ESEA[15] qualified." One respondent asserted, "All you need in Ohio is to be 18 and graduate high school and give the state 10 bucks and you are licensed." It seems an accurate, if blunt,

12 Although self-assessed competence (see above) is not an objective measure of competence, the relationship between the two measures is likely moderate to strongly positive.

13 Educational Service Centers, charter schools, and special schools employ an additional 3,822 parapros. WordFarmers computed these numbers from federal sources (Common Core of Data, 2015); as noted, federal sources do not distinguish parapros assigned to general or special education.

14 Educational Testing Service (2015b)

15 The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in question is actually NCLB; previous iterations of the law apparently had not imposed this requirement.

assertion.[16] See Appendix H for the national professional development standards for SPED parapros adopted in 2011 by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC).

## Methods

As noted in the introduction, the OPEPP leadership contracted with WordFarmers Associates to design, administer, and analyze data from the first statewide study of Ohio's regular school districts' experience of the SPED parapro role and function. The study was to be based on survey research. Thus, the first task for the WordFarmers researchers was development of a framework document for the survey project, and the framework (approved by OPEPP) articulated the study purpose as follows:

> *Purpose of survey:* This survey aims to portray current district practices with, and training needs of, special education paraprofessionals in Ohio. The focus is paraprofessionals working with students who presently receive special education services. To make this focus clear, the invitation and instructions for respondents will say we are collecting information about "paraprofessionals officially employed to provide support to students with disabilities," whom the survey items will subsequently call "SPED paraprofessionals." (WordFarmers, 2015, p. 1)

The study team determined to gather information from two Ohio groups knowledgeable about district experience and needs relevant to SPED parapros: (1) superintendents of regular school districts and (2) lead special education consultants at Educational Service Centers (ESCs) and State Support Teams (SSTs). ESCs (formerly the Ohio county offices of education) provide a variety of services to Ohio school districts, including employment of special education personnel who actually work in school districts; such employees often encompass SPED paraprofessionals. The 16 SSTs provide assistance to Ohio school districts on a regional basis with special education efforts notable in the SST portfolio.[17]

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16 For the exact hiring provisions, see the Ohio Administrative Code: OAC 3301-25-01, OAC 3301-25-02, OAC 3301-25-05, and OAC 3301-25-07. These regulations have in common affirmation by the employing agency that (1) the applicant is of good moral character, (2) possess a high school diploma or equivalent, (3) displays adequate skills, (4) has "participated in and benefited from" in-service programs, and if renewing, (5) has performed satisfactorily.

17 The following copy appears on SST websites: *Using a connected set of tools to improve instructional practice and student performance on a continuing basis, SST staff assists districts in the development of a unified system of*

ESC and SST staff who lead the related special education work with districts are thus in a position to provide authoritative views of districts' experience with SPED parapros.

Because the study team believed the information it would gather might prove useful to the public in general and to policy makers in specific, the team secured approval from the University of Dayton's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in order to enable publication of scholarly reports from the study. The Dayton IRB classified the study as “exempt” based on the team's application materials.

**Survey Design**

Two substantive domains organized the creation of survey items: (1) role (preparation, deployment, supervision, authority) and (2) function (types of assistance to students, interaction with parents, nature of teamwork with faculty and others). The two substantive categories (role and function) were outlined roughly as follows (WordFarmers, 2015):

- **Paraprofessional role**: educational attainment; preparation; types of assignment; supervisory arrangements; participation in teams and meetings; turnover; confidentiality and IEP procedural adherence; low incidence focus; parapro fading.
- **Paraprofessional function**: Clerical, personal care, behavioral support, functionality instruction, academic instruction.

The rough outline was based on early reading of the related professional literature and consultation among researchers and OPEPP leaders, but it proved an insufficient basis to inform the creation of survey items.

In order to provide insight into specific Ohio circumstances, the researchers thus interviewed seven educators nominated by OPEPP as most knowledgeable and engaged with the issues relevant to

*education. This unified system builds the capacity of every district to move all students, including those with disabilities, to higher levels of performance. The reliance on data to determine appropriate actions of each district is integral to the success of Ohio's system of support.* (see, e.g., http://www.sst11.org/aboutsst/aboutindex.html and www.sstregion12.org/AboutUs.aspx)

the survey (five SST directors, one district special education director, one SPED parapro trainer). Interviews were conducted in mid-December 2014; the lead researcher recorded interviews and immediately created summary notes. Three questions shaped the interviews, which lasted about 40 minutes each:

- In the ideal world what would a SPED parapro be doing? Why?
- In the real world what are they actually doing? Why?
- Are SPED parapros useful? Why?

The interview notes gave the researchers details about the state context and concerns that proved essential for drafting the survey items. Based on the national literature and the state-level interviews, in early January 2015 WordFarmers created first-draft items and circulated them to the research team for comment. The final draft of survey items was adopted in late January for use in the survey protocol. (See Appendix B for a list of items and Appendix C for the actual survey forms.) Most items asked respondents to describe the current state of affairs, but some items additionally asked for respondents' “future preferences” for the practices in question. These items allow the analysis to compute difference scores, which can be interpreted as needs (see Kaufman & English, 1976, for one of the original expositions of this approach in education).

**Respondent Population**

The study planned to solicit responses from all superintendents (N=614). The list of superintendents of all traditional Ohio school districts is available from the Ohio Department of Education.

The study also planned to solicit responses from all SST and ESC staff who supervise those organizations' special education efforts, but a consolidated, publicly accessible list of such staff could not be found. WordFarmers therefore developed a list based on information found on these

organizations' websites. The ensuing list identified what the study team believed to be the relevant population (N=31 SST staff and N=129 ESC staff, for a combined SST and ESC population of N=170). Preparation of the respondent lists was completed in late February 2015.

The study *did not* draw a sample from this population (N=784), but instead invited the entire population to complete the survey. Administration (described next) occurred via SurveyMonkey, a popular utility for administering surveys in an online format. Nonetheless, the two panels (i.e., superintendents and ESC-SST staff), necessitated the creation of somewhat different language for some items (e.g., “districts that you serve” vs. “your district”), and the study team decided to solicit information via two different protocols—one for the superintendent panel and one for the ESC-SST panel (see Appendix C for the two versions). The version for superintendents invited them to forward the survey invitation to other staff members if desired. The superintendent version presented respondents with 26 questions and the ESC-SST version 27 questions: the additional question on the latter survey asked respondents to identify their supervisory entity as an ESC or SST in particular.

**Administration**

WordFarmers maintains a SurveyMonkey account and began loading the approved items to the site in late January 2015. Several rounds of proof-reading then proceeded, in order to minimize flaws. By late February, as the respondent lists were finalized, the survey was also ready to administer.

Data collection began February 23. Unfortunately, March proved to be a trying month for schools—cold weather and snow kept many schools closed for many days. For this reason, the study team decided to continue gathering data for longer than planned, and to issue *five* reminder messages. As response rates to the final reminders declined, the team decided to end data collection; the final response from the superintendent panel was received on March 24, and the final response from the ESC-SST panel was received on March 18.

During the course of the administration, a special education director in one district asked to forward the survey link to the district's SPED teachers. The researchers conferred and granted the request, but established a separate email-based vector for this data collection, a provision that made it possible to identify these respondents (essentially as a third panel of respondents: N=31 in the final data set). Predictably the teacher-respondents found it difficult in some instances to assess district-level experiences.

From the 614 superintendents, the study received 111 responses—a response rate of 18%. From the 170 ESC-SST staff members, the study received 73 responses—a response rate of 43%. For the planned respondents (i.e., not counting the adventitiously acquired teacher panel) the overall response rate was 23.4% [i.e., (111+73)/(614+170)]. Including the teacher panel (N=31), the administration yielded 215 cases for analysis.

**Data Preparation and Analysis**

The researchers extracted the data sets from the SurveyMonkey site and merged information from the three panels into a single analysis file (i.e., superintendents, ESC-SST staff, teachers[18]). Data preparation at this step involved creating variable names, variable labels, and value labels; recoding some variables to make them more useful; and computing several new variables, also for the sake of usefulness. One of the computed variables, for instance, was a panel identifier—to permit separate analyses by panel, should it prove useful. Other new variables were the difference scores computed to indicate need (see previous mention under Survey Design).

In addition to the data gathered from the survey, the study team also imported to the merged data set district-level items from the National Center for Education Statistics's *Common Core of Data* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015a) and the census-based *School District Demographics System* (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015b). These additional data apply only to the school

18 Teachers completed the protocol sent to superintendents.

district panel (N=111), and were added to the cases in the superintendent panel as contextual variables that might prove to be associated with survey items: district enrollment, district locale (urban, suburban, rural), student ethnicity, number of aides (parapros) [all from the CCD]; median family income, median value of owner-occupied housing, median monthly housing cost, and the GINI coefficient of income inequality [all from the SDDS]. The completed data set was ready for start of analysis on April 17.

This study is essentially a "landscape study:" an effort that describes current practice but tests no formal hypotheses relevant to any identifiable theory. Thus, familiar statistical tools are applied in the data analysis: descriptive statistics, correlations, and tests of mean differences. In particular, the study was interested to determine if contextual variables might be associated with current practice or needs. (The short answer is: *they are not*.)

In addition to quantitative data, the study collected a large volume of qualitative data in the form of comments. Nearly every question invited optional comments from respondents: see Appendix D for all 313 comments, organized by survey item or item group. The survey included many comment fields in order to help the study provide depth and richness to its conclusions.

## Findings

This study posed the two questions cited in the introduction:

1. What district practices and experiences shape the role and function of special education paraprofessionals?
2. What district practices and experiences shape the training needs of special education paraprofessionals?

The data offer multiple pathways to address the research questions. This analysis addresses the first question by grouping relevant items[19] into categories that describe *current* practices and experiences:

- Role definition and context
- Teaming
- Deployment of SPED parapros, and
- Specific concerns (these figured notably in the design-phase interviews)

The analysis addresses the second question in two modes: direct and inferred. The direct approach uses data from the questions specifically about training per se:

- Training source-now and
- Access to PD.

The inferred approach uses the data from the series of questions about current practice and preferred practice in the future, as follows. First, the researchers calculated difference scores (future-current) and, second, they then assessed statistical significance and effect size. Second, those pairs of questions exhibiting effect sizes greater than .50 (i.e., half a standard deviation) were selected as most practically important and considered for that reason in the report narrative (under Findings, see the narrative for question 2). Note that Appendix F presents frequencies and descriptive statistics for all survey items.

**Findings about Research Question 1 (role and function)**

This section is structured by responses to questions grouped into four categories: (1) role definition and context, (2) teaming, (3) deployment of SPED parapros, and (4) specific concerns. Discussion turns first to role definition and context. See Table 1 for the related statistical analysis.

19 In this discussion, items are indicated by their abbreviated item name: see Appendix D for a list that pairs the abbreviated name with the full text of each item.

**Role definition and context.** A number of survey items relate logically to role definition and context. Table 1 displays the frequencies and descriptive statistics for the relevant variables. The logic linking these variables concerns how districts shape the role itself: their awareness of competing definitions of the SPED parapro role, what definitions they consult in defining the role locally, how frequently they revisit the local definition (the local SPED parapro job description), whether or not they link educational attainment to remuneration, and the pay level relevant to the reported $23,000 average gross annual income for full-time Ohio parapros.

What picture emerges from the data about role definition and context? Among respondents, 38% judge their districts to be familiar or very familiar with standards for parapros, and 33% judge their districts to be unaware (10%) or not familiar (23%) with them. On average districts are "somewhat familiar" (mean = 3). This item was paired with a "future preference" version, and the difference will be considered in the discussion of findings relating to research question 2. Nonetheless, it seems apparent that not being familiar with the standards for parapros (33% of districts) might represent a problem.

The study also asked respondents to specify what documents local educators used in defining the SPED parapro role—state standards, national standards, the standards of other states, and the local job description. Not surprisingly, the most frequently nominated source (by 73% of respondents) was the local job description. The Ohio parapro standards were the second-ranked document, cited by just 24% of respondents. Respondents could claim use of any of the documents, and an unanswered question is *how many* of the indicated sources respondents claimed. The researchers computed a variable to answer the question. Consistent with the previous finding perhaps, 58% consulted just one document, while 15% reported consulting *no document at all*—including 12% of superintendents (or their designees) and 14% of ESC/SST respondents.

As for reviewing the local job description, 77% of reporting districts reviewed it irregularly at best (30% of respondents are either unsure or believe review to be inapplicable). Only 3% review it every year or two. Perhaps districts view the functionality of the role as so limited that review is unnecessary: one cannot be certain, but future work might probe the issue. The proper frequency for such review is not clear, either, and may be a matter of discretion, but it would seem that infrequent review or none (77% of reporting districts) would pose a problem *if* educators held serious aspirations for the role and its work. The item about "consulting documents" occurred in the survey just after the item about frequency of review of job descriptions, an intended proximity. The responses to both questions suggest to the researchers that the parapro role is viewed as relatively static and perhaps as meriting relatively little central-office attention.

With respect to remuneration issues, the survey asked (1) if responding districts linked educational attainment to educational credentials (e.g., possession of an associate's degree, a bachelor's degree, or a high-school diploma) and (2) if districts' pay level was equal to, more, or less than the state average income for parapros. A small majority (56%) of responding districts did link educational credentials and pay level. But many (44%) clearly did not.

Nearly all reporting districts pay SPED parapros the average or less than the average income cited in the survey item. Just 5% report paying more. This odd result[20] probably has much to do with the ambiguity of the cited statistic ($23,000 per annum for full-time employment) and the reality that many SPED parapros are *not* employed full-time. Indeed, one respondent (see comments) noted that SPED parapros who are assigned to a single child *do not* work if the child is absent from school (in that district). This item, however, is among those paired with a "future preferences" item, and additional insights will emerge in the discussion for research question 2.

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20 One expects half to pay more than average, and half to pay less.

**Teaming.** This category of items collects the five items—all five of which had "future preference" pairings—that asked respondents what teams (informal instructional, formal instructional, IEP meetings, whole-school faculty meetings, and Teacher-Based Teams [TBTs]) engaged the participation of SPED parapros. Teaming, as subsequent discussion (research question 2) will stress, turns out to be an important feature of SPED parapro functionality. In the question 1 discussion, the task is simply to describe current practice. Table 2 presents the relevant data.

Of the five "teaming" practices, only whole-school faculty meetings typically include SPED parapros (57% of respondents report that SPED parapros attend meetings frequently [33%] or almost always [24%]). They rarely attend any other meetings. The mean for these four practices (1.68 - 2.11) indicates an average response (for all four items) of "sometimes but not frequently." The proportions attending "sometimes but not frequently" or "never" are: (1) informal instructional team meetings (68%), (2) formal instructional team meetings (76%), IEP meetings (76%), and TBT meetings (83%).

Because SPED parapros attend whole-school meetings, it seems fair to conclude that the role is acknowledged organizationally. But the low participation rates on instructionally relevant teams (notably including low participation on *informal* instructional teams) suggests that SPED parapros are rarely considered members of the instructional team. This finding seems, at best, to affirm the subservient functionality of the role.

**Deployment of SPED parapros.** In this report "deployment" refers to the actual functions assigned to SPED parapros (what they actually do—at least as reported by respondents). One would perhaps expect to find considerable variety in assignments across the responding districts: many respondents commented that circumstances dictate how their districts use SPED parapros.

**Table 1**

**Role Definition and Context Items (Frequencies, Descriptive Statistics)**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Standards—now | | | | |
| 1=unaware of their existence | 19 | 10.00 | NA | NA |
| 2=aware but not familiar | 43 | 22.63 | NA | NA |
| 3=somewhat familiar | 54 | 28.42 | NA | NA |
| 4=familiar | 54 | 28.42 | NA | NA |
| 5=very familiar | 20 | 10.53 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 190 | 100.00 | 3.07 | 1.15 |
| Specific documents consulted | | | | |
| Ohio standards | 51 | 100.00 | NA | NA |
| Local job description | 156 | 100.00 | NA | NA |
| Other states' standards | 4 | 100.00 | NA | NA |
| National standards | 28 | 100.00 | NA | NA |
| Number of documents consulted | | | | |
| none | 33 | 15.35 | NA | NA |
| one | 124 | 57.67 | NA | NA |
| two | 43 | 20 | NA | NA |
| three | 14 | 6.51 | NA | NA |
| four | 1 | 0.47 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 215 | 100.00 | 2.72 | 1.24 |
| Job description review – now | | | | |
| 1=unknown or not applicable | 54 | 29.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=irregularly | 90 | 48.65 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=every 2-4 years | 35 | 18.92 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=every year or two | 6 | 3.24 | **NA** | **NA** |
| AGGREGATE | 186 | 100.00 | 2.97 | 0.85 |
| Credentials & pay – now | | | | |
| 0=no | 93 | 56.36 | NA | NA |
| 1=yes | 72 | 43.64 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 165 | 100.00 | 0.52 | 0.60 |
| Pay level - now | | | | |
| 1=rather lower | 83 | 47.43 | NA | NA |
| 2=about the same | 84 | 48.00 | NA | NA |
| 3=rather higher | 8 | 4.57 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 175 | 100.00 | 1.57 | 0.58 |

**Table 2**

**Teaming (Frequencies, Descriptive Statistics)**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Informal teams – now | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 50 | 26.60 | NA | NA |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 78 | 41.49 | NA | NA |
| 3=frequently | 49 | 26.06 | NA | NA |
| 4=almost always | 11 | 5.85 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 188 | 100 | 2.11 | 0.87 |
| Formal teams – now | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 73 | 39.04 | NA | NA |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 70 | 37.43 | NA | NA |
| 3=frequently | 34 | 18.18 | NA | NA |
| 4=almost always | 10 | 5.35 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 187 | 100.00 | 1.90 | 0.88 |
| IEP meetings – now | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 66 | 35.11 | NA | NA |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 76 | 40.43 | NA | NA |
| 3=frequently | 35 | 18.62 | NA | NA |
| 4=almost always | 11 | 5.85 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 188 | 100.00 | 1.95 | 0.88 |
| Whole-school meetings – now | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 25 | 13.37 | NA | NA |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 55 | 29.41 | NA | NA |
| 3=frequently | 61 | 32.62 | NA | NA |
| 4=almost always | 46 | 24.60 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 187 | 100.00 | 2.68 | 0.99 |
| Teacher-Based Teams – now | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 100 | 54.05 | NA | NA |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 54 | 29.19 | NA | NA |
| 3=frequently | 21 | 11.35 | NA | NA |
| 4=almost always | 10 | 5.41 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 185 | 100.00 | 1.68 | 0.88 |

Three series of items are most relevant to deployment:

(1) three items soliciting estimated proportions of SPED parapros assigned to different contexts —(a) a single student, (b) SPED classrooms, and (c) general education classrooms;

(2) a series of items asking respondents to judge how important were five different kinds of "activities": (a) clerical duties, (b) personal care, (c) teaching functional skills, (d) teaching academics, and (e) providing support to students with low-incidence conditions; and

(3) two items about academic instruction: (a) frequency of instructional activities and (b) types of instructional activities.

Table 3 reports the relevant data about the deployment of SPED parapros.

The three context items suggest that responding districts distribute their SPED parapros across a variety of contexts. One way to summarize these data is to examine the proportion of SPED parapros assigned to the context at a rate of 40% or higher. On this basis, assignment of SPED parapros to an entire SPED classroom was most common (42% of responding districts reported that 40% or more of their SPED parapros were assigned to this context). The least common assignment (on this 40%+ basis) was assignment to a single student (27% of responding districts); assignment to a general education classroom fell in the middle (34% of reporting districts). Assignment to a single student and assignment to a general education classroom were almost equally uncommon, however, with about 50% of responding districts reporting that they assigned 20% or fewer SPED parapros to those contexts.

The second series (about activities) comprised five items, as noted previously. Respondents rated the "importance" of each activity from unimportant to most important. The importance of the activities is easily judged from inspection of item means. The highest average was 4.0 (important)—a very high average rating for "support for LI students." Academics, functional skills, and personal care were also deemed "important" on average. Very clearly, and across the entire panel of respondents, clerical support (often cited as a traditional parapro activity in the relevant literature) was judged

"important" or "most important" by only 11% of responding districts. By comparison, *none* of the respondents reported that support for students with LI conditions was "unimportant"; and 32% reported it was "most important"—the highest proportion for "most important" of any of the five activities. On average, for this item, respondents believe that an instructional role is "sometimes" appropriate: but only 6% of responding districts find it "almost always" appropriate.

The third series, focusing on the SPED parapro instructional role, suggests that districts view the instructional role as limited and circumscribed. Fully 24% of responding districts report that an instructional role is exercised, at best, "rarely." But 33% report it is common: "typically" or "almost always." Opinion is clearly divided, but less than 2% of responding districts indicate that an instructional role is "seldom appropriate." It appears that in some districts, then, the function is considered appropriate, but SPED parapros are seldom assigned it. Recall that districts in Ohio range from small and very rural to very large and urban: one respondent reported that the district employed a *single* SPED parapro. The scope of the instructional function is rather narrow: 63% of respondents indicate that the most appropriate instructional role of SPED parapros is to follow explicit directions of teachers. But, more in line with the professional literature, only 8% of respondents indicate that *developing* instruction under teacher direction (a high expectation for the role as traditionally described) is the *most appropriate* instructional role.

These data suggest that deployment of SPED parapros is a nuanced and complex endeavor and no doubt varies with local circumstances. Assignment to a single student, for instance, is correlated with rural locale ($r=.26$; $p<.01$; rural=1; other=0), but assignment to a special education classroom is correlated to the proportion of African American students in the district ($r=.21$; $p<.05$).[21] At the same time, however, the high level of importance placed on deployment of SPED parapros to support students with LI conditions is probably *consistent* with the low proportion assigned to single students—

21 Ancillary analyses not reported in Tables.

that is, LI conditions may be those most likely to involve single-student assignment.[22] Contexts of assignment vary widely, as best one can judge from these data, except that assignment to a single student is comparatively more rare across all reporting districts (i.e., with a slightly greater likelihood in rural districts). Activities, too, show considerably varied importance across responding districts. Roughly 40-50% of the districts judged personal care, functional skills, academics, and LI support as "important"; but the other 50-60% take other positions on the issue. The findings about what SPED parapros actually do provides more detail to the findings reported nationally, but is (not surprisingly) consistent with the overall national circumstance.

**Specific concerns.** This category does not represent miscellaneous or minor concerns, but instead responds to concerns the study team heard about in the design-phase interviews. The items designed to collect information about these concerns dealt with (1) fading, (2) the professional discretion of SPED parapros, and (3) general education teachers. *Fading* is short-hand for "fading of SPED paraprofessional support." The operant principle for assigning a SPED parapro is that such support prove temporary, with a typical goal being timely removal or diminution. The principle is consistent with the construct of the least restrict environment: the presence of a SPED paraprofessional can cultivate an unnecessary dependence (e.g., "learned helplessness"). At the same time, the actual withdrawal (more incrementally, the *fading*) of SPED parapro support entails circumspection as to student need, context, role, and SPED parapro functionality. The series of fading questions (see Appendices B and C) was meant to address the range of related issues.

One question asked about how responding districts dealt with fading overall ("fading practices"); another question asked respondents to assess degree of concern as to four named issues (i.e., learned helplessness, subsequent reassignment, parent preference, and teacher preference)—respondents could also nominate other concerns (and 25 did so). Another item asked respondents to

22 Even though LI support is highly valued, low incidence is rare by definition: so the LI assignment is less used than other assignments.

specify the most important reassignment contexts (after support is ended) at present: to another student, to several other students rather than just one, to a SPED classroom, and to a general education classroom.

The “professional discretion” items related particularly to the already noted irregularity of SPED parapros: that is, to professional expectations (and need for) circumspection and confidentiality among SPED parapros—who *are not* “professionals,” and who are (as the literature suggests) lay members of local communities with all the bonds that inhere in community connectedness (see, e.g., Putnam, 2000). The professional perspective, of course, that information about students with whom SPED parapros work *must* be kept confidential—and not disclosed to friends and neighbors with whom the SPED parapro would ordinarily speak openly. But this principle of discretion applies across the special education process: so the item also listed professional demeanor, contributions in IEP meetings, maintaining IEP records, and understanding IDEA. The clear expectation is that SPED parapros act professionally in dealing with the special education process.

The final “special concern” addressed the general education context with two items: the first asked respondents to assess general education teachers' overall receptivity to inclusion, and the second asked about general education teachers' capacity to supervise SPED parapros. These two items seemed critical to design-phase interviewees because inclusion in general education is an overarching goal in the reconceptualization of special education purpose (see relevant discussion in the preceding literature review).

**Table 3**

**Deployment (Frequencies, Descriptive Statistics)**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assigned now to a single student | | | | |
| 1=about 20% or less | 97 | 53.01 | NA | NA |
| 2=about 20-40% | 37 | 20.22 | NA | NA |
| 3=about 40-60% | 25 | 13.66 | NA | NA |
| 4=about 60-80% | 10 | 5.46 | NA | NA |
| 5=about 80% or more | 14 | 7.65 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 183 | 100.00 | 1.95 | 1.26 |
| Assigned now to a SPED classroom | | | | |
| 1=about 20% or less | 26 | 21.85 | NA | NA |
| 2=about 20-40% | 43 | 36.13 | NA | NA |
| 3=about 40-60% | 23 | 19.33 | NA | NA |
| 4=about 60-80% | 17 | 14.29 | NA | NA |
| 5=about 80% or more | 10 | 8.40 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 119 | 100.00 | 2.51 | 1.22 |
| Assigned now to a GenEd classroom | | | | |
| 1=about 20% or less | 84 | 49.12 | NA | NA |
| 2=about 20-40% | 29 | 16.96 | NA | NA |
| 3=about 40-60% | 37 | 21.64 | NA | NA |
| 4=about 60-80% | 19 | 11.11 | NA | NA |
| 5=about 80% or more | 2 | 1.17 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 171 | 100.00 | 1.98 | 1.12 |
| Clerical support – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 55 | 32.16 | NA | NA |
| 2=not very important | 47 | 27.49 | NA | NA |
| 3=relevant | 50 | 29.24 | NA | NA |
| 4=important | 18 | 10.53 | NA | NA |
| 5=most important | 1 | 0.58 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 171 | 100.00 | 2.20 | 1.03 |
| Personal care – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 2 | 1.16 | NA | NA |
| 2=not very important | 7 | 4.07 | NA | NA |
| 3=relevant | 42 | 24.42 | NA | NA |
| 4=important | 86 | 50.00 | NA | NA |
| 5=most important | 35 | 20.35 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 172 | 100.00 | 3.84 | 0.83 |

**Table 3 (continued)**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Functional skills – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 2 | 1.16 | NA | NA |
| 2=not very important | 5 | 2.91 | NA | NA |
| 3=relevant | 50 | 29.07 | NA | NA |
| 4=important | 83 | 48.26 | NA | NA |
| 5=most important | 32 | 18.6 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 172 | 100.00 | 3.80 | 0.81 |
| Academics – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 2 | 1.16 | NA | NA |
| 2=not very important | 6 | 3.47 | NA | NA |
| 3=relevant | 46 | 26.59 | NA | NA |
| 4=important | 74 | 42.77 | NA | NA |
| 5=most important | 45 | 26.01 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 173 | 100.00 | 3.89 | 0.87 |
| Support for LI students – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 0 | 0.00 | NA | NA |
| 2=not very important | 8 | 4.62 | NA | NA |
| 3=relevant | 43 | 24.86 | NA | NA |
| 4=important | 67 | 38.73 | NA | NA |
| 5=most important | 55 | 31.79 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 173 | 100.00 | 3.98 | 0.87 |
| Frequency of instructional role | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 14 | 7.95 | NA | NA |
| 2=rarely | 28 | 15.91 | NA | NA |
| 3=sometimes | 76 | 43.18 | NA | NA |
| 4=typically | 48 | 27.27 | NA | NA |
| 5=almost always | 10 | 5.68 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 176 | 100.00 | 3.07 | 0.99 |
| Most appropriate instructional role | | | | |
| 1=role is seldom appropriate | 3 | 1.69 | NA | NA |
| 2=follow explicit directions of teacher | 112 | 62.92 | NA | NA |
| 3=modify lesson plan teacher direction | 49 | 27.53 | NA | NA |
| 4=develop instruction teacher direction | 14 | 7.87 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 178 | 100.00 | 2.42 | 0.66 |

Table 4 presents the data relevant to the foregoing “special concerns.” Discussion begins with concerns about fading. More than half (53%) of responding districts characterized concern for learned helplessness as “substantial” or “highest,” and the item average (3.49 on the 4-point rating scale) falls midway between these two ratings: on average respondents considered learned helpless quite important. Not surprisingly, the concern of parents for removal of SPED parapro support is of about equal (i.e., “quite important”) concern (average rating of 3.58). Districts assessed concern for teachers' reaction to SPED parapro fading as somewhat less (i.e., “some concern” on average), and concern for reassignment of the SPED parapro being faded even lower: with a mean of 2.74 (rather less than “some concern”).

The four contexts for SPED parapro reassignment seem almost equally important to respondents, on average: centering on “sometimes important,” though reassignment to general education is regarded as somewhat less important. About one-third of respondents consider reassignment to a single student, to several students, or to a special education classroom as “often” or “always” important; but only one-fourth found reassignment to a general education classroom of such importance (i.e., “often” or “always” important).

Findings for the five “professional discretion” items suggest that three items about the behavior of SPED parapros—maintaining confidentiality, professional demeanor, and understanding IDEA provisions are considered the most important concern by respondents: with an average rating of importance midway between “some concern” and “substantial concern.” For the confidentiality item, 52% of respondents considered the concern substantial or highest; for professional demeanor, 49%; and for IDEA provision, 44% considered it of substantial or highest concern. The other two items, on average, posted a level of concern somewhat weaker than “of some concern” (averages of 2.72 for IEP records and 2.89 for contributions to IEP meetings). The item for “contribution to IEP meetings” elicited no ratings at all (none) at the top of the 5-point Likert scale. The responses seem to reflect a

low level of confidence in SPED parapros' opinions relevant to instructional program planning (i.e., for the children with whom they most likely work).

Finally, the discussion considers findings that relate to general education teachers' (1) receptivity to inclusion and (2) capacity for supervising SPED parapros. To be clear, inclusion has proven difficult for general education teachers (e.g., Avramidis & Norwich, 2002; Monahan, Marino, & Miller, 1996). Moreover, the SPED parapro literature is clear that supervision of SPED parapros is difficult for teachers overall, whether in special or general education (see, e.g., Giangreco et al., 2010).What is the situation in Ohio according to this study? As for receptivity to inclusion, the consensus in these data is that teachers are “accepting and struggling hard” to manage inclusion (average rating of 2.97). However, 25% of respondents judge general education teachers to be “vocally opposed” (4%) or “skeptical but not actively resistant” (21%). Still, 27% of respondents judge general education teachers in their districts to be “practiced and engaged” with respect to inclusion. Capacity for supervising SPED parapros is rather different, with almost half (46%) of respondents reporting that general education teachers in their districts are no more than “occasionally” prepared to exercise such supervision. Nonetheless, 30% of respondents report that general education teachers in their districts are frequently (22%) or almost always (8%) prepared to supervise SPED parapros.

**Table 4**

**Special Concerns**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fading: learned helplessness | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 11 | 6.51 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 11 | 6.51 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 58 | 34.32 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 63 | 37.28 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 26 | 15.38 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 169 | 100 | 3.49 | 1.04 |
| Fading: concern for reassignment | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 24 | 14.37 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 37 | 22.16 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 68 | 40.72 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 34 | 20.36 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 4 | 2.4 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 167 | 100.00 | 2.74 | 1.02 |
| Fading: parental concern | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 6 | 3.57 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 9 | 5.36 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 57 | 33.93 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 74 | 44.05 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 22 | 13.1 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 168 | 100.00 | 3.58 | 0.91 |
| Fading: teacher concern | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 5 | 2.99 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 25 | 14.97 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 73 | 43.71 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 52 | 31.14 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 12 | 7.19 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 167 | 100.00 | 3.25 | 0.90 |
| Fading: to one – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 9 | 6.08 | NA | NA |
| 2=rarely important | 24 | 16.22 | NA | NA |
| 3=sometimes important | 66 | 44.59 | NA | NA |
| 4=often important | 29 | 19.59 | NA | NA |
| 5=always important | 20 | 13.51 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 148 | 100.00 | 3.18 | 1.06 |

**Table 4**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fading: to several – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 7 | 4.7 | NA | NA |
| 2=rarely important | 16 | 10.74 | NA | NA |
| 3=sometimes important | 71 | 47.65 | NA | NA |
| 4=often important | 46 | 30.87 | NA | NA |
| 5=always important | 9 | 6.04 | **NA** | **NA** |
| AGGREGATE | 149 | 100.00 | 3.23 | 0.89 |
| Fading: to SPED classroom – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 7 | 4.73 | NA | NA |
| 2=rarely important | 13 | 8.78 | NA | NA |
| 3=sometimes important | 73 | 49.32 | NA | NA |
| 4=often important | 44 | 29.73 | NA | NA |
| 5=always important | 11 | 7.43 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 148 | 100.00 | 3.26 | 0.90 |
| Fading: to GenEd classroom – now | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 24 | 16.33 | NA | NA |
| 2=rarely important | 41 | 27.89 | NA | NA |
| 3=sometimes important | 47 | 31.97 | NA | NA |
| 4=often important | 25 | 17.01 | NA | NA |
| 5=always important | 10 | 6.8 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 147 | 100.00 | 2.70 | 1.14 |
| Maintaining confidentiality | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 15 | 8.72 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 23 | 13.37 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 45 | 26.16 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 41 | 23.84 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 48 | 27.91 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 172 | 100.00 | 3.49 | 1.27 |
| Professional demeanor | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 15 | 8.72 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 23 | 13.37 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 50 | 29.07 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 50 | 29.07 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 34 | 19.77 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 172 | 100.00 | 3.38 | 1.20 |
| Contribution in IEP meetings | 17 | 10 | | |
| 1=not a concern | 40 | 23.53 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 66 | 38.82 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 39 | 22.94 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 8 | 4.71 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 0 | 0 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 170 | 100.00 | 2.89 | 1.02 |

**Table 4**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Maintaining IEP records | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 34 | 19.77 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 37 | 21.51 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 57 | 33.14 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 31 | 18.02 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 13 | 7.56 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 172 | 100.00 | 2.72 | 1.19 |
| Understanding IDEA provisions | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 4 | 3.7 | NA | NA |
| 2=not much of a concern | 18 | 16.67 | NA | NA |
| 3=some concern | 39 | 36.11 | NA | NA |
| 4=substantial concern | 23 | 21.3 | NA | NA |
| 5=highest concern | 24 | 22.22 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 108 | 100.00 | 3.42 | 1.12 |
| GenEd teachers receptivity to inclusion | | | | |
| 1=vocally opposed | 7 | 4.07 | NA | NA |
| 2=quite skeptical but not actively resistant | 37 | 21.51 | NA | NA |
| 3=accepting and struggling hard | 82 | 47.67 | NA | NA |
| 4=practiced and engaged | 46 | 26.74 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 172 | 100.00 | 2.97 | 0.81 |
| GenEd teachers capacity to supervise | | | | |
| 1=never or very rarely | 34 | 20.12 | NA | NA |
| 2=occasionally | 44 | 26.04 | NA | NA |
| 3=more than occasionally but not frequently | 40 | 23.67 | NA | NA |
| 4=frequently | 37 | 21.89 | NA | NA |
| 5=almost always | 14 | 8.28 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 169 | 100.00 | 2.72 | 1.24 |

**Summary of research question 1 findings.** The following paragraphs summarize the question 1 findings. The paragraphs organize discussion in this order: (1) role definition, (2) teaming, (3) deployment, and (4) specific concerns.

A third of responding districts are not familiar with available standards for the SPED parapro role; most districts refer to just *one* document to define the role—the local job description—but a surprising minority report referring to no document at all. SPED parapro job descriptions are rarely reviewed: very few districts review it every year or two. A little over half of responding districts link

educational attainment to wages, but pay levels overall are reportedly low—in part because of part-time employment arrangements.

Participation in five sorts of teams is reportedly low among Ohio SPED parapros, except for whole-school faculty meetings. Indeed, most districts indicate that SPED parapros occasionally or almost never participate in any meetings related to instruction—including even *informal* team meetings. The rarity of informal meetings is additional evidence affirming the weakness of supervision over the SPED parapro role.

Assignment of SPED parapros to special education classrooms (as compared to assignment to a single child or to a general education classroom) was most common overall, and assignment to a single child was least common. Support for assigning SPED parapros to students with LI conditions was high —most respondents rated it a 4 or 5 on the 5-point Likert scale.[23] But academics, functional skills, and personal care were also rated, on average, as "important." Clerical activity was judged as, at best, "not very important" by most respondents.

Reporting districts, although judging academic support as an important function, nonetheless described SPED parapro engagement in academic instruction as *limited*: a sizable minority reported that an instructional role is exercised rarely at best. Overall, respondents favored a strict following of instructions from teachers. This preference, though, should probably be nuanced by the finding about how rarely SPED parapros participate in informal meetings about instruction.

With respect to fading, a majority of responding districts were prominently concerned with learned helplessness and parental considerations. Responding districts, though, were equally concerned

23 The study did not ask about SPED parapros who might have been working as *interveners* for students with deaf-blindness; however, the assignment of parapros as the personnel who provide intervener services is typical. Clearly this function requires special training and experience well beyond what is typical for SPED parapros in Ohio. (Interveners play a specifically mediating role between students with deaf-blindness and the requirements of their physical, social, and instructional environment that are inaccessible to them because of deaf-blindness.)

with the four contexts for SPED parapros as support for students are "faded:" all were judged "somewhat important" on average.

The professional discretion items of most concern to responding districts were (1) maintaining confidentiality, (2) sustaining professional demeanor, and (3) understanding IDEA provisions. Notably, no respondent rated SPED parapro contributions to IEP meetings as of "highest" concern (a unique result across all survey items; see Appendix F). On average, responding districts judged general education teachers as "accepting and struggling hard" to implement inclusion in their classrooms. But responding districts indicated that general education teachers were no better than "occasionally" prepared actually to supervise SPED parapros.

**Findings about Research Question 2 (practices and experiences that shape training needs)**

As noted previously, the study addressed the second research question[24] in two ways—direct and inferred. Two items (current training source and access to PD) provide direct evidence, and difference scores for paired "now" and "future preference" items provided a basis for relevant inferences.

**Direct evidence.** Table 5 presents data about current training source and access to PD. "Access" in this case refers specifically to high-quality PD, whereas training source refers to the most common source at present. Overwhelmingly, the training source is local: a very large majority of respondents identify the local district or its ESC (i.e., the former "county office"; respondents referred to "our" ESC in comments) as originating training. And indeed, about half of this number sponsor SPED parapro training all on their own. In light of local self-reliance, then, one must applaud the honesty of the 10% of respondents who report having *no* access to high-quality PD for SPED parapros. A minority (about one-quarter) nonetheless affirms consistent local access to high-quality PD.

24 What district practices and experiences shape the training needs of special education paraprofessionals?

**Indirect evidence from difference scores.** On the basis of direct evidence alone, the current situation for providing PD to SPED parapros seems consistent with the assessment given training in extant national literature: inconsistent and weak (see, e.g., Giangreco et al., 2010). For this study, however, the research team used a series of 20 item pairs that asked respondents to assess matters as they *now* stand and the same matters as they would prefer them to be *in the future.* The “now” and the “preferred future” items were worded identically.

As noted previously, the researchers calculated difference scores and then assessed statistical significance and effect size. Pairs exhibiting effect sizes (ES) greater than half a standard deviation (a moderately high effect) are of seeming practical importance. They represent features of role or functionality that respondents' differential future preference show as harboring the largest gaps—the strongest needs. In essence, the study is inferring *greatest need* from respondents' own judgments of the most important work to be done in improving the SPED parapro role and functionality (cf. Kaufman & English, 1976).

As Table 6 shows, 10 of the 20 item pairs produced an effect size that met the study's established criterion (ES ≥ .50). The 10 item pairs appear first in Table 5, listed in descending order of effect size, from ES=1.2 to ES=.65:

- SPED Parapros on Teacher-Based Teams
- Job description review
- SPED parapros on formal instructional teams
- SPED parapros on IEP meetings
- Awareness of standards now
- SPED parapros on informal instructional teams
- Pay level

- Credentials & pay
- SPED parapros on whole-school faculty meetings
- SPED teachers on Teacher-Based Teams

Of these 10 pairs, fully half of them deal with the *teaming* of SPED parapros: *every* pair related to teaming that appeared on the survey. All exhibit practical significance (and a very high level of statistical significance).

Respondents appear to believe that SPED parapros *should* be part of a wide range of teams. The findings for research question 1, of course, indicate that their participation at present is low, but respondents' future preferences for teaming are for a much higher level of engagement across all teaming options on the survey. The gap disclosed by the preponderance of data in Table 5 can be read as a serious issue for the SPED parapro role and its functionality, and hence for training.

The situation with teaming, though, is even more serious, since one of the five remaining item pairs concerns the participation of SPED *teachers* on TBTs. Though teachers are not the focus of this study, supervising SPED parapros represents an additional load to their portfolio of functions—and a problematic one according to the literature (Giangreco et al., 2010). Thus, six of 10 practically significant differences deal with the issue of teaming.

The research team cautions readers that findings about the significance of teaming *do not* readily translate into recommendations that SPED parapros need more training about teaming. The role and functionality of teaming, and the kinds of structures used to promote collaboration are more clearly an issue of organizational culture and organizational development. The recommendations section will provide additional discussion of this insight.

**Table 5**

**Direct Evidence: Training and Access to PD (Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics)**

| Item | N | Percent | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Training source - now | | | | |
| 1=our district itself | 79 | 42.02 | NA | NA |
| 2=ESC | 74 | 39.36 | NA | NA |
| 3=SST | 26 | 13.83 | NA | NA |
| 4=college or university | 3 | 1.60 | NA | NA |
| 5=other (describe in comments) | 6 | 3.19 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 188 | 100.00 | NA | NA |
| Access to PD | | | | |
| 1=no access | 18 | 10.00 | NA | NA |
| 2=access at remote location | 27 | 15.00 | NA | NA |
| 3=inconsistent local access | 84 | 46.67 | NA | NA |
| 4=consistent local access | 51 | 28.33 | NA | NA |
| AGGREGATE | 180 | 100.00 | 2.93 | 0.91 |

The remaining four item pairs (job description review, awareness of standards, and the two items related to pay) provide another sort of context. Overall, these four item pairs concern role definition under the control of district leadership and are thus more clearly issues for district administration. Awareness of standards, however, is an issue that seems to present clear training implications, and such awareness has a logical connection to districts' practices of creating and evolving SPED parapro job descriptions. Recall from the findings for research question 1 that awareness of standards is comparatively weak and that in defining the SPED parapro role, reference to standards of various sorts is not common. Indeed, some districts report referring to none when defining the role. Training for administrative staff (rather than parapros) would seem in order. But SPED parapros would logically need to be trained for a role that does refer to standards—so SPED parapros' internalization of the role would logically benefit from training with a basis in such standards.

Issues of pay levels seem well beyond consideration relevant to the training of SPED parapros. Respondents *would* seemingly prefer better pay, on average, but they are not sanguine about prospects for better pay. One respondent commented: “It's not going to happen.” Maybe not, but the issue of pay relates to the issue of the variety of rewards any role entails. A great deal of the literature (again, see Giangreco et al., 2010) concerns the low status and “respect” accorded SPED parapros. In this logic, the issue of rewards connects to the important issue of teaming. Team membership bestows some status inherently, but also provides opportunities for a member to enhance status through influence. And positive influence wins a measure of respect, whatever the differentials in team members' income might be. Involving all employees in organizational improvement efforts is a major theme in the literature on leadership (Lovett & Gilmore, 2003; Ouchi, 1981). But because they are largely isolated from team membership, SPED paraprofessionals have few opportunities to share what they know about individual students, effective instructional or behavioral strategies, or any other pertinent matters.

**Summary of research question 2 findings.** Training for SPED parapros is a mostly local endeavor, and access to high-quality PD is reportedly uncommon. The issues relevant to training needs inferred from item-pair differences point to the participation of SPED parapros on the full range of instructionally focused teams in schools (informal and formal instructional teams, IEP meetings, TBTs). Related training needs concerned the ways districts structure and reward the SPED parapro role (awareness of standards, job description review, and the wage issue). One further observation seems in order as a footnote to training needs: the training source item pair (see Table 6) indicates a preference for (more) non-local sources (e.g., SSTs, community colleges, universities, other providers). Many comments about training indicated preference for an array of training options (see Appendix E): a substantial contrast with the do-it-yourself approach now so reportedly common.

**Table 6**

**Paired Needs Items**

| Item pair | N | Difference | t-value | p-value | Effect Size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| paras on Teacher-Based Teams | 179 | 1.11 | 16.32 | <.001 | 1.22 |
| job description review | 183 | 1.01 | 15.35 | <.001 | 1.13 |
| paras formal instructional teams | 186 | 0.95 | 15.19 | <.001 | 1.11 |
| paras on IEP meetings | 187 | 0.92 | 14.72 | <.001 | 1.08 |
| awareness of standards now | 183 | 1.33 | 14.08 | <.001 | 1.04 |
| paras on informal instructional teams | 188 | 0.78 | 13.85 | <.001 | 1.01 |
| paylevel | 169 | 0.62 | 12.76 | <.001 | 0.98 |
| credentials & pay | 169 | 0.46 | 11.86 | <.001 | 0.91 |
| paras on whole-school faculty meetings | 185 | 0.67 | 9.81 | <.001 | 0.72 |
| SPED teachers on Teacher-Based Teams | 184 | 0.52 | 8.80 | <.001 | 0.65 |
| reassignment to a GenEd classroom | 134 | 0.43 | 5.66 | <.001 | 0.49 |
| training source | 182 | 0.71 | 5.95 | <.001 | 0.44 |
| functional skill support | 166 | 0.26 | 5.28 | <.001 | 0.41 |
| academic instruction (as professionally directed) | 167 | 0.25 | 4.95 | <.001 | 0.38 |
| reassignment to several students | 136 | 0.26 | 4.17 | <.001 | 0.36 |
| varied support for low-incidence conditions | 166 | 0.14 | 3.73 | <.001 | 0.29 |
| reassignment to a SPED classroom | 136 | 0.15 | 2.80 | <.01 | 0.24 |
| personal care | 167 | 0.05 | 1.41 | NS | 0.11 |
| reassignment to another individual student | 136 | 0.05 | 0.68 | NS | 0.06 |
| clerical support | 166 | 0.01 | 0.27 | NS | 0.02 |

Note. NS = not statistically significant

## Conclusions

It seems useful to synthesize the findings across research questions as conclusions. The findings for the two research questions inform the following conclusions:

1. Well-informed definition of the SPED parapro role is *uncommon* across Ohio districts.

   Indeed, a minority of districts report consulting *no* sources at all when defining the role.

2. The day-to-day supervision of SPED parapros is dubious in Ohio (as it is nationally), and yet such supervision is essential to the subsidiary status of the role.
3. Compared to applicable standards and considerations in the professional literature, expectations for using SPED parapros in an instructional role are meager in Ohio.
4. SPED parapros seldom function as members of instructional teams in Ohio.
5. Ohio districts assign and reassign SPED parapros to a wide range of contexts; support for students with low-incidence disabilities is clearly valued.
6. Concern about the discretion and professional demeanor of SPED parapros is common in Ohio.
7. Training for SPED parapros in Ohio is a largely local, and perhaps *ad hoc*, endeavor.
8. Access to high quality PD for SPED parapros is spotty at best in Ohio.
9. Ohio districts want more and better training opportunities for their SPED parapros.
10. Greater engagement of SPED parapros in instructional teams is a *major* aspiration across Ohio districts.

Support for these conclusions perhaps varies from moderate to strong, given the design of the survey and the data gathered. One way to test the strength of the conclusions is to categorize by the conclusion the many comments offered by respondents (Appendix E). Arguably, stronger conclusions elicited more comments relevant to them from respondents: this approach offers a rough guide, of course. Inspection of Appendix E relates this rough guide to importance: the greatest number of comments group themselves around four issues: *training* (conclusions 7, 8, and 9—66 comments), *role definition and structure* (conclusion 1—40 comments), *assignment* (conclusion 5—22 comments), and *teaming* (conclusions 4 and 10—20 comments).

## Limitations

This study invited response from the population of educators in charge of, and most knowledgeable about, district experiences with the role and functionality of SPED parapros: 784 individuals. Response rate was comparatively low (23% overall after an initial request and five reminders—18% for the superintendent panel and 43% for the ESC-SST panel). The research team had sought a higher response rate—perhaps above 50%. Low response rates are often associated with a biased sample—a subset of the population that is systematically (and unintentionally) different from the population. Because such studies as this one try to make claims about the population (i.e., the experience of all Ohio districts, in this case), systematic bias threatens the study findings.

One way to test for the presence of systematic bias is to compare the obtained sample with data for the population, if known. In this case, because the study attempted to survey the entire population (all Ohio districts), and because the study assembled demographic information about the population (i.e., from the CCD and the SDDS), comparison of the sample and the population is easy for the related variables (e.g., median family income, number of schools, district enrollment). Observed differences on all variables proved small:  for example, median family income for the sample was $61,833 and for the population $62,849. Other variables displayed similarly small differences. Differences were about one-tenth of that adopted for practical significance in the analysis of item-pair differences (an ES of about .05 compared to .50). The analysis of demographic variables did not, therefore, suggest systematic bias on the basis of district demographics.

This finding, however, cannot rule out the presence of systematic bias. First, in ancillary analyses, demographic variables surprisingly showed almost no relationship to information gathered by the survey (nearly all correlations center on 0). Second, those educators who *did* complete the survey seem to have been unusually engaged by the issue of SPED parapros, as their entry of more than 300 *optional* comments suggests. Thus, it does seem probable that respondents are more concerned than

others (i.e., non-respondents) with issues of an irregular, poorly paid, and low-status cadre of non-professionals performing critical roles in schools. Third, the difference in response rates between the superintendent panel and the ESC-SST panel seems telling. The ESC-SST response rate proved close to what the study team anticipated (43% received vs. 50% expected), whereas the superintendent response rate (18%) was low—even very low: 111 of 614. One might infer that the survey request simply did not secure the attention of superintendents for some reason (e.g., because SPED parapros are of marginal importance to district functioning overall or accountability standings).

Thus it seems possible that the sample is biased in some unknown way. The findings need to be understood in this context: they represent what respondents with some stake in the role and functionality of SPED parapros think about the present circumstances concerning the use of SPED parapros and their aspirations for improved circumstances. If this interpretation has merit, it also means that the findings and recommendations presented in this report represent *a more positive picture than may well prevail across the state as a whole*. The conclusions, of course, point to circumstances that nonetheless suggest widespread need for improvement efforts.

## Discussion

Overall (on average and not in every case or in every district), it seems likely that Ohio SPED parapros occupy an irregular, often ill-defined role, and often seem to carry out their assigned functions with little collaboration, supervision, training, or direction. Their mission, as some of the comments indicated, is to work with students who confront some of the most difficult educational challenges to be seen in schools. One comment from a respondent is worth quoting in part:

> Paraprofessionals are over used in our region. They seem to be used as the stop gap measure when dealing with a student that has behavioral or academic concerns in the classroom. In many cases the para becomes the teacher to address educational needs for the student in a general

> education setting. The training is minimal and the expectations on the paraprofessionals is unfair.

Almost 40 years ago, Alan Gartner, a champion of what was then considered the paraprofessional "movement," summarized the reception of *irregular* paraprofessionals by *regular* professionals this way:

> Professionals, who at first were reluctant to accept paraprofessionals, soon accepted them gladly as a buffer between themselves and the poor and minorities. The paraprofessional was sometimes called a bridge to the poor. In a sense, the paraprofessional was the lesser of two evils; the other "evil" was the poor or minority consumer who was highly critical of teachers, social workers, and other human service professionals. (Gartner, Jackson, & Riessman, 1977, p. 2)

Perhaps the more things change, the more they stay the same. Of course, Gartner was writing about paraprofessionals in general, and in this passage, students with disabilities are not mentioned. They can easily be added: "poor, minority, and exceptional children." As for critical consumers—parents certainly led the struggle to secure a free and appropriate education for children with disabilities (Ong-Dean, 2009).

The frequent absence of SPED parapros from instructional planning teams, as disclosed by the findings of this study, is perhaps a symbol of their low-status irregularity. Entry-level requirements in Ohio remain low for SPED parapros, and subsequent training is often haphazard at best (not in every district and not in every case); too often it seems there is no training at all. Their pay is predictably low and perhaps (as some respondents suggest) likely to remain low. SPED parapros are *not* professionals; but it is nonetheless important (to respondents in this study) that they function appropriately within a professional system. No longer (as in Gartner's day) does anyone hope that parapros might change professional practice for the better because of their connections to the community.

Districts sometimes assign SPED parapros to help students with disabilities acclimate to general education classrooms. This assignment, however, is probably not well supported: they rarely take part in informal instructional meetings (supervision is weak). And even though teaching is a long-acknowledged function, the system as a whole is wary of the assignment.

The interpretation of findings accords, so far, rather well with the national research literature. The findings about teaming, however, are specific to the Ohio circumstance. Little in the research literature has yet considered[25] the functioning of SPED parapros on collaborative teams—and no wonder: given the findings, conclusions, and discussion so far. What prepares them or entitles them to exercise such a function? Although the occasional respondent in this study seems to find SPED parpros valuable to instructional teams, many (probably more than half) do not. Logically, and in general, a professional would *not* welcome a non-professional to what really is an executive function in professional education: planning curriculum and instruction. Participation on a team that is planning curriculum and instruction for a school's most challenged students might seem the least likely role for a SPED parapro. Surely, such planning requires a range of professional specializations (all of which are mentioned in applicable legislation and regulations). Indeed, if the critical functionality of a SPED parapro is to buffer student and system, they would need to be excluded from such participation!

One is left with the difficult views just quoted: SPED parapros may be irregular, minimally prepared, indifferently directed or supervised, assigned to varied challenging contexts, ignored as assets for collaborative effort, and haphazardly trained—but their critical and seemingly traditional functionality as buffer persists. The buffering functionality is systemic: the institution of schooling still struggles (mightily) to include exceptional children, and these children still figure as irritants within the

25 The recent revision by the Council for Exceptional Children of their standards for SPED parapros specifically provides for the participation of SPED parapros on instructional teams. These 2011 standards (see Appendix H) repeatedly invoke “the instructional team.”

system: objects of marginalization, pity, and, too often of victimization and even neglect (Raskauskas & Modell, 2011).

At the same time, as Gartner and colleagues (1977) suggested, parapros (in urban schools in impoverished neighborhoods) initially helped buffer *professionals* from the community, but they also helped link large urban schools to an alienated community. The special education buffering is different because the role was rapidly inserted into schools under a very different impetus (i.e., legal necessity) and under the very different circumstances prevailing after the end of the era of the social contract (Bickel, 2013). Today, the earlier linking functionality of parapros seems largely forgotten in special education, and, as the analysis of SPED discretion and demeanor in this study suggest, such linkages are widely regarded in Ohio, not as assets, but as shortcomings. This outlook on buffering would seem uncharitable, harsh, or even "cynical," except that the interpretation is supported both by previous research and by the findings of this study.

SPED parapros might indeed be used well in a variety of *other* ways, and sometimes are, but the history of the role and its functionality contextualize the interpretation just given. That is, and with less bluntness, SPED parapros help the system of public schools enroll "difficult" students, whatever the presenting difficulty (disability)—and, more recently, to help keep them "enrolled" in general education settings.

Schooling must provide more than enrollment, of course. Helping students with disabilities thrive widely in inclusive settings remains a challenge in which SPED parapros would logically play an important role. But their functionality must expand to meet this challenge. Still, one must not lose sight of the changes since 1970. Many school districts *have* gone further than mere enrollment (USDOE, 2010).

The circumstances for special education students in general education classrooms are clearly an issue. In particular, caseloads for *general education classrooms* with a few or many special education

students seems critical. Although Ohio's operating standards, revised in 2014 (Ohio Operating Standards, 2014) specify when SPED parapros are required in *special education classes*, nothing of the sort applies to inclusive general education classrooms. Buffering is useful: but it is a low standard of performance.

At present, buffering may also be a desperate maneuver. Suter and Giangreco (2009) discovered that the buffering functionality of SPED parapros is relied on most by schools where special education staffing is too meager (ratios lower than 1 special education teacher to 80 enrolled students). Giangreco and colleagues (2013) observed:

> Schools with special educator school density levels at 1:100 or higher seemed to be the least healthy, less able to absorb routine fluctuations affecting service delivery, and quicker to add paraprofessionals in response to perceived stressors. (Giangreco, Suter, & Hurley, 2013, p. 122)

General education teachers (and their classrooms) need to be organized for inclusion (Giangreco et al., 2013). Such organization would develop rules of thumb (and later on, perhaps actual specifications) for the circumstances and supports needed in general education classrooms, notably including the assignment of SPED parapros. The first strategic task with respect to general education, then, seems to be to establish something like what *already* applies in special education with respect to sensible caseloads.

Except for the Giangreco team's work, the issue has been little considered. Very few studies about caseload or class size have ever focused on students with disabilities. The most recent summary of the available research was conducted by McCrea (1996), though Giangreco and colleagues (2013) review related literature as well. McCrea (1996) found that the maximum student-teacher ratio *in special education classrooms* is usually 15:1, but that class size is affected by many variables including student behavior and the use of paraprofessionals. Nothing like this meager data base exists for inclusive general education, though the Giangreco team is apparently pursuing the issue. This domain

of issues is systemic, and the systemic features of inclusion should be addressed in any plan for improvement of the functionality of SPED parapros.

The issue is important because general education is promoted nationwide as the home-base for all students (i.e., the intended or hoped-for least restrictive environment). To what extent SPED parapros might—as a large cadre of people who work with students—carry out, modify, and develop academic instruction in genuine collaboration with teachers, both special and general, remains an open question according to the national literature and this study. Clearly, in view of the findings of Giangreco and colleagues (2013), SPED parapro functionality is contingent on SPED *teacher* functionality; and one might well speculate that general education teacher functionality is yet another contingency.

Certainly some teacher-SPED parapro teams are doing much more, even at present. For instance, those who advised the design of this study told of SPED parapros who were *remarkably capable and who functioned as well-informed and insightful teaching assistants and problem solvers*: co-teaching members of a few highly-tuned informal instructional teams. Such reports show that, even in the midst of the currently prevailing neglect, some SPED parapros and teachers are not limited by the role's long-standing functionality as buffer to the system. The existence of these teams suggests that many other teachers and SPED parapros need not be limited in that way *either*. Momentous *systemic changes* would seem necessary to help far more classrooms, schools, and districts breach such limits.

What might such changes entail?

The issue of teaming, in Ohio, seems a strong clue. (In light of the recent work of the Giangreco team, recall that in this study respondents *also* suggested greater participation by *SPED teachers* on TBTs.) Overall, this study's findings clearly show district leaders and supporters to harbor strong aspirations both for more inclusive teaming and for more and for far better training. Everyone involved in such teams would need preparation for the change. That preparation would certainly entail

professional development for SPED parapros, and for teachers both special and general: and no doubt for many principals and central office staff. But direct-instruction related to teaming (e.g., what it means, what it looks like, how it is done well), though probably necessary, is clearly not sufficient.

Part of the preparation arguably useful for SPED parapros, both to participate in school-based teams and to work more circumspectly with instructional functions, concerns pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge: what teaching is in general and what teaching various sets of knowledge and skills (functional, academic, or social) entails. But SPED parapros seemingly (in view of the study findings) need both greater latitude and more attentive supervision in carrying out instructional tasks. This issue is a durable one in the literature: very few success stories appear in the professional literature about progress toward this end. Fortunately, in Ohio, the prevailing improvement model puts stress on collaboration—as indeed does much of the literature on school improvement (e.g., Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012).

## Recommendations

A great deal might be done—logically speaking—toward improving the role and the functionality of SPED parapros, and the need to do so has been stated repeatedly (see, e.g., French, 2003; Giangreco et al., 2010; Giangreco et al., 2001; Nelson, 1999; Riggs & Mueller, 2001). Nelson (1999) bluntly summarizes the need—consistent with the current situation in Ohio and the conclusions of this Ohio study:

> School districts that have used paraeducators without proper training and supervision need to change their approach. Current and proposed legislation reflects this need. Administrators must be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations for paraeducators and the need for time to communicate and plan. Teachers should understand their role in directing the paraeducator and their ultimate legal and ethical responsibility for students' instruction. Work performed by

> paraeducators should augment the teacher's lessons and never be used as a substitute for instruction by the teacher. (Nelson, 1999, p. 6)

Cobb (2007) offered a seemingly modest best-case scenario for deploying parapros (including SPED parapros):

> Best-case scenarios have paraprofessionals working with one teacher within the classroom. The paraprofessional has time to observe the teacher during reading and writing instruction. There are multiple opportunities for the teacher and paraprofessional to work with students in tandem. During small-group instruction, the teacher and paraprofessional are both working with students to meet their instructional needs. Best-case scenarios, however, always occur in "school heaven." (Cobb, 2007, p. 686)

Cobb's characterization sounds remarkably simple, but *widespread* creation of such best-case scenarios has eluded the system for a very long time.

So practicality is another matter. School heaven is someplace else.

SPED parapros have consistently performed a function that clearly became critical once federal legislation mandated that schools serve all students with disabilities (the *buffering* function). One needs to be clear about the fact. This functionality among the irregular workforce is the equivalent of the babysitting service regularly supplied by compulsory attendance. That is, even what professionals regard as bad practice and low standards ("just babysitting") remains an *important* functionality: and it remains important even where and when aspirations and performance become far more robust.

The key difficulty and promise—a full 40 years after the passage of the original special education law—is that *most* incumbents in the SPED parapro role can *probably* perform well a range of other functions, notably including the scaffolding of instruction for exceptional students in inclusive settings, but they have been too infrequently called upon for such purposes (Giangreco et al., 2013; Nelson, 1999). To elicit the assets that many SPED parapros can provide under improved scenarios (not

necessarily the best scenarios, but better and more decent scenarios) would require systemic capacity to issue the call and then to support and develop expanded functionality for the role.

The system, one might argue, needs to grow the role. Parapros are just doing their jobs as conceived for them, so the strongest need is for systemic leadership to conceive the job differently, more systemically, and to facilitate staffing and functionality consistent with the reconceptualization (see, e.g., Giangreco et al., 2013, for the systemic view). If the schooling system (or systems: legislature, state department of education, school districts, schools, within-school-teams) lack the capacity either to issue the call or, more substantially, to support it well, the prospects for growing the role would be poor. But lack of systemic capacity can neither explain nor excuse the prevailing situation; it is not an option. The system operates all the schooling roles, as it must. The study thus offers seven systemic recommendations, across three levels of the state system:

**State-Level Systemic Recommendations**

1. The first recommendation embeds high standards and expectations: staffing appropriate to a functionality that allows all children to prosper: *Ohio should review its own SPED parapro "job description" (the 2008 standards) to refashion the role as that of junior co-teacher (with a living, not minimum, wage).* Future revisions to this "job description" should attend to recommendations from the entity described in the next recommendation.
2. Ohio should support the development of a state-level unit to improve the consistency and quality of services provided by paraprofessionals across the entire state, giving particular attention to SPED parapros (as serving the system's most challenged students). The unit should develop a portfolio of strategies adequate to the task, in view of the relevant professional literature and the counsel of local- and regional-level stakeholders. It should formally consult with national leaders (e.g., Michael Giangreco).

**Regional-Level Systemic Recommendations**

3. Ohio ESCs and SSTs should *jointly* contribute to the development and use of resources to be created though the centralized SPED paraprofessional structure (mentioned in recommendation #2), providing well-informed stakeholder counsel.
4. Ohio ESCs and SSTS must also coordinate and exploit more fully all existing SPED parapro training efforts, but focusing most attention on un-served or little-served local districts.
5. ESCs and SSTs *individually* should develop and deploy tactics for facilitating more frequent inclusion of SPED parapros on instructionally relevant teams (e.g., informal, formal, IEP, TBTs).

**Local-District-Level Systemic Recommendations**

6. Local districts should establish or refresh working groups to consider the professional literature on the role and functionality of SPED parapros and to re-assess local deployment of SPED parapros. Local job descriptions depend on this reassessment, of course. The density of special education staffing locally is relevant (Giangreco et al., 2013).
7. Local districts should begin incremental changes to the SPED parapro role: in expectations, instructional assignments, supervision, teaming, and training. Assessing the local situation and becoming much more conversant with the professional literature will help. For one local and incremental approach, see Cobb (2007).

Surely, SPED parapros *already* deserve better pay: a living wage, for instance, as similar roles earn their incumbents in other developed nations. In the meantime, because they are there and because they present community-based assets to the schools, they can surely do more (on average) than buffer the system and its children from each other. Even statewide changes can be incremental—but they must be based on a far more complete picture of the role and its possibilities.

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### Bureau of Labor Statistics' Description of "Teacher Assistant"

(verbatim from: http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/teacher-assistants.htm#tab-2)

Teacher assistants work under a teacher’s supervision to give students additional attention and instruction.

**Duties**

Teacher assistants typically do the following:

- Reinforce lessons presented by teachers by reviewing material with students one-on-one or in small groups
- Enforce school and class rules to help teach students proper behavior
- Help teachers with recordkeeping, such as tracking attendance and calculating grades
- Help teachers prepare for lessons by getting materials ready or setting up equipment, such as computers
- Help supervise students in class, between classes, during lunch and recess, and on field trips

Teacher assistants also are called teacher aides, instructional aides, paraprofessionals, education assistants and paraeducators.

Generally, teachers introduce new material to students, and teacher assistants help reinforce the lessons by working with individual students or small groups of students. For example, after the teacher presents a lesson, a teacher assistant may help a small group of students as they try to master the material.

Teachers may seek feedback from assistants to monitor students’ progress. Some teachers and teacher assistants meet regularly to discuss lesson plans and student development. Teacher assistants sometimes help teachers by grading tests and checking homework.

Some teacher assistants work only with special education students. These students often attend regular classes, and teacher assistants help them understand the material and adapt the information to their learning style.

With students who have more severe disabilities, assistants may work with them in separate classes. Teacher assistants help these students with basic needs, such as eating or personal hygiene. With young adults, they may help students with disabilities learn skills necessary for them to find a job or live independently after graduation.

Some teacher assistants work in specific locations in the school. For example, some work in computer laboratories, teaching students how to use computers and helping them use software. Others work as recess or lunchroom attendants, supervising students during these times of the day. Although most teacher assistants work in elementary, middle, and high schools, others work in preschools and childcare centers. Often, one or two assistants work with a lead teacher to provide the individual attention that young children need. They help with educational activities. They also supervise the children at play and help with feeding and other basic care.

## APPENDIX B

Abbreviated Item Name and Verbatim Survey Question

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Respondent vantage on district issues*** | <derived from survey wave> |
| ***Years respondent an educator*** | How many years have you been employed as an educator? (please enter a numeral from 1-50) |
| ***Years respondent in current position*** | How many years have you occupied this position? (please enter a numeral from 1-50) |
| ***Respondent's current position?*** | What is your current position? |
| ***Respondent ever licensed as SPED teacher?*** | Have you ever been licensed (or certified) as a special education teacher? |
| ***Standards—now*** | Various professional groups (e.g., the Council for Exceptional Children) have defined the roles and capacities of SPED paraprofessionals. How familiar is your district now with such descriptions and how familiar would you like your district to be in the future? |
| ***Standards – preferred future*** | Various professional groups (e.g., the Council for Exceptional Children) have defined the roles and capacities of SPED paraprofessionals. How familiar is your district now with such descriptions and how familiar would you like your district to be in the future? |
| ***Assigned now to a single student*** | About what percentage of SPED paraprofessionals in your district are assigned to the following contexts? (percentages are approximate; please try to estimate as best you can) |
| ***Assigned now to a SPED classroom*** | About what percentage of SPED paraprofessionals in your district are assigned to the following contexts? (percentages are approximate; please try to estimate as best you can) |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Assigned now to a GenEd classroom*** | About what percentage of SPED paraprofessionals in your district are assigned to the following contexts? (percentages are approximate; please try to estimate as best you can) |
| ***Informal teams – now*** | How often do SPED paraprofessionals now participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***Informal teams – preferred future*** | How often would you like in the future to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to approximate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***Formal teams – now*** | How often do SPED paraprofessionals now participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***Formal teams – preferred future*** | How often would you like in the future to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to approximate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***IEP meetings – now*** | How often do SPED paraprofessionals now participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***IEP meetings – preferred future*** | How often would you like in the future to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to approximate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***Whole-school meetings – now*** | How often do SPED paraprofessionals now participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Whole-school meetings – preferred future*** | How often would you like in the future to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to approximate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***Teacher-Based Teams – now*** | How often do SPED paraprofessionals now participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***Teacher-Based Teams – preferred future*** | How often would you like in the future to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to approximate as best you can, across all schools in the district) |
| ***SPED teachers on TBTs – now*** | Intervention specialists (i.e., special education teachers) sometimes participate in Teacher-Based Teams (TBTs). In your district how often do they currently participate in TBTs and how often in the future would your prefer them to participate in TBTs? |
| ***SPED teachers on TBTs – preferred future*** | Intervention specialists (i.e., special education teachers) sometimes participate in Teacher-Based Teams (TBTs). In your district how often do they currently participate in TBTs and how often in the future would your prefer them to participate in TBTs? |
| ***Job description review – now*** | How often does your district now revise the job description(s) for SPED paraprofessionals and how often would you in the future prefer to see the job description(s) revised? |
| ***Job description review – preferred future*** | How often does your district now revise the job description(s) for SPED paraprofessionals and how often would you in the future prefer to see the job description(s) revised? |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Consult Ohio standards*** | To what document(s) does your district refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (check all that apply) |
| ***Consult local job description*** | To what document(s) does your district refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (check all that apply) |
| ***Consult other states' standards*** | To what document(s) does your district refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (check all that apply) |
| ***Consult national standards*** | To what document(s) does your district refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (check all that apply) |
| ***Consult other documents*** | To what document(s) does your district refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (check all that apply) |
| ***Training source - now*** | SPED paraprofessionals need training for professional development and licensure. Please select the source of training now most common among districts in your region and what source you would prefer to be most common in the future. |
| ***Training source – preferred future*** | SPED paraprofessionals need training for professional development and licensure. Please select the source of training now most common among districts in your region and what source you would prefer to be most common in the future. |
| ***Access to PD*** | To what extent does your district have access to high-quality professional development for SPED paraprofessionals (including PD to qualify for licensure)? (please select one answer) |
| ***Credentials & pay – now*** | Does your district now differentiate pay for SPED paraprofessionals on the basis of educational qualifications and would you prefer in the future that their pay be differentiated on such a basis? |
| ***Credentials & pay – preferred future*** | Does your district now differentiate pay for SPED paraprofessionals on the basis of educational qualifications and would you prefer in the future that their pay be differentiated on such a basis? |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Pay level - now*** | The mean annual wage (or salary) for SPED paraprofessionals in Ohio is about $23,000. In your estimation, does your district now have a rather lower, about the same, or rather higher average salary (or annual wage); and in the future, what would you prefer? |
| ***Pay level – preferred future*** | The mean annual wage (or salary) for SPED paraprofessionals in Ohio is about $23,000. In your estimation, does your district now have a rather lower, about the same, or rather higher average salary (or annual wage); and in the future, what would you prefer? |
| ***Clerical support – now*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Clerical support – preferred future*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Personal care – now*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Personal care – preferred future*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Functional skills – now*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Functional skills – preferred future*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Academics – now*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Academics – preferred future*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Support for LI students – now*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Support for LI students – preferred future*** | The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district now and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be in the future. (please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important) |
| ***Frequency of instructional role*** | To what extent are the SPED paraprofessionals in your district assigned an instructional role? |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Most appropriate type instructional role*** | What instructional role seems to you most appropriate for SPED paraprofessionals, not in every case, but in general? |
| ***Fading practices*** | How does your district practice the fading of SPED paraprofessional support? |
| ***Fading: learned helplessness*** | To what extent does fading raise the following concerns in your district? |
| ***Fading: concern for reassignment*** | To what extent does fading raise the following concerns in your district? |
| ***Fading: parental concern*** | To what extent does fading raise the following concerns in your district? |
| ***Fading: teacher concern*** | To what extent does fading raise the following concerns in your district? |
| ***Fading: other concern*** | To what extent does fading raise the following concerns in your district? |
| ***Fading: to one – now*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Fading: to one – preferred future*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Fading: to several – now*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Fading: to several – future*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Fading: to SPED classroom – now*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Fading: to SPED classroom – future*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Fading: to GenEd classroom – now*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Fading: to GenEd classroom – future*** | Please rate the importance now in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer in the future. (please record choice using drop-down menus) |
| ***Maintaining confidentiality*** | Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of the local community and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your district. |
| ***Professional demeanor*** | Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of the local community and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your district. |

| Abbreviated Item Name | Verbatim Survey Question |
|---|---|
| ***Contribution in IEP meetings*** | Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of the local community and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your district. |
| ***Maintaining IEP records*** | Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of the local community and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your district. |
| ***Understanding IDEA provisions*** | Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of the local community and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your district. |
| ***GenEd teachers receptivity to inclusion*** | How might you characterize the reception of general education teachers in your district to the inclusion of special education students in their classrooms? (please select an estimate) |
| ***GenEd teachers capacity to supervise*** | To what extent are general education teachers in your district able to supervise SPED paraprofessionals effectively? (please select the best answer) |

# APPENDIX C

District and ESC-SST Questionnaires

## Welcome to Ohio Special Education Paraprofessional Survey

**Thank you for your interest in the OPEPP survey of district needs relevant to special education paraprofessionals (SPED paraprofessionals). They are a large proportion of the special education workforce, but there has been no systematic assessment of districts' needs in organizing their work. If you start the survey, you are giving your agreement to participate. As noted in the invitation to participate, however, even if you start the survey you may discontinue it at any time. Simply activate the "next" button at the bottom of this page to begin. There are 25 questions; answering them will take about 15 minutes. Thanks for your help!**

Next

## General information about you

1. How many years have you been employed as an educator? (please enter a numeral from 1-50)

2. What is your current position?

- ○ superintendent
- ○ special education director (or similar district role)
- ○ Other (please specify)

3. How many years have you occupied this position? (please enter a numeral from 1-50)

4. Have you ever been licensed (or certified) as a special education teacher?

- ○ yes
- ○ no

Comments (optional)

Prev Next

## Information about the SPED paraprofessional role in your district

5. Various professional groups (e.g., the Council for Exceptional Children) have defined the roles and capacities of SPED paraprofessionals. How familiar is your district *now* with such descriptions and how familiar would you like your district to be *in the future*?

| | unaware of their existence | aware but not familiar | somewhat familiar | familiar | very familiar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

6. About what percentage of SPED paraprofessionals in your district are assigned to the following contexts? (**percentages are approximate; please try to estimate as best you can**)

| | about 80% or more | about 60-80% | about 40-60% | about 20-40% | about 20% or less |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| assigned to a single student | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| assigned to a special education classroom | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| assigned to a general education classroomabout 40-60% | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

7. How often do SPED paraprofessionals *now* participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all schools in the district)

| | almost never | sometimes but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| informal instructional teams (ad hoc meetings, ad hoc participants) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| formal instructional teams (i.e., regular meetings, several specified team members) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| IEP meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| whole-school faculty meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Teacher-Based Teams | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

8. How often would you like *in the future* to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in your district? (**please try to approximate as best you can, across all schools in the district**)

| | almost never | sometimes but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| informal instructional teams (ad hoc meetings, ad hoc participants) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| formal instructional teams (i.e., regular meetings, several specified team members) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| IEP meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| whole-school faculty meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Teacher-Based Teams | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

9. Intervention specialists (i.e., special education teachers) sometimes participate in Teacher-Based Teams (TBTs). In your district how often do they *currently* participate in TBTs and how often *in the future* would your prefer them to participate in TBTs?

| | almost never | sometimes, but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

10. How often does your district *now* revise the job description(s) for SPED paraprofessionals and how often would you *in the future* prefer to see the job description(s) revised?

| | unknown or not applicable | irregularly | every 2-4 years | every year or two |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

11. To what document(s) does your district refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (*check all that apply*)

- ☐ Ohio Program Standards for Educational Paraprofessional Associate
- ☐ district job description
- ☐ standards from other states (e.g., Minnesota)
- ☐ national standards (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children)
- ☐ other (please describe in comments)

Comments (optional)

12. SPED paraprofessionals need training for professional development and licensure. Please select the source of training *now* most common among districts in your region and what source you would prefer to be most common *in the future*.

| | our district itself | another district | ESC | SST | college or university | other (describe in comments) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Specify "others," if listed above; add additional comments if desired, as well

13. Does your district *now* differentiate pay for SPED paraprofessionals on the basis of educational qualifications and would you prefer *in the future* that their pay be differentiated on such a basis?

| | no | yes |
|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

14. To what extent does your district have access to high-quality professional development for SPED paraprofessionals (including PD to qualify for licensure)? (**please select one answer**)

| no access | access at remote location | inconsistent local access | consistent local access |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Other (please specify)

15. The mean annual wage (or salary) for SPED paraprofessionals in Ohio is about $23,000. In your estimation, does your district *now* have a rather lower, about the same, or rather higher average salary (or annual wage); and *in the future*, what would you prefer?

| | rather lower | about the same | rather higher |
|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

Prev Next

## Information about SPED paraprofessionals' work in your district

16. The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities in your district *now* and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be*in the future*. (**please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important**)

| | current situation | future situation |
|---|---|---|
| clerical support | | |
| personal care (mobility, toileting, etc.) | | |
| functional skill support (teaching activities of daily living) | | |
| academic instruction (as professionally directed) | | |
| varied support for students with low-incidence conditions | | |

Comments (optional)

17. To what extent are the SPED paraprofessionals in your district assigned an instructional role?

| they are almost never assigned an instructional role | they are rarely assigned an instructional role | they are sometimes assigned an instructional role | they are typically assigned an instructional role | they are almost always assigned an instructional role |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

18. What instructional role seems to you most appropriate for SPED paraprofessionals, not in every case, but in general?

| it is seldom appropriate | follow explicit instructional directions of teacher | modify a lesson plan with teacher direction | develop instructional event with teacher direction |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Other (please specify)

Prev Next

## Information about SPED paraprofessionals' work in your district

**“Fading” is the practice of a planned withdrawal of SPED paraprofessional services to a particular child. The three questions that follow deal with this issue. (They conclude the survey.)**

19. How does your district practice the fading of SPED paraprofessional support?

| fading is uncommon | plans for fading are sometimes considered in IEP meetings | plans for fading are routinely considered in IEP meetings | plans for fading are required in IEP meetings and actual IEPs |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

20. To what extent does fading raise the following concerns in your district?

| | not a concern | not much of a concern | some concern | substantial concern | highest concern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| dealing with learned helplessness | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| concern for SPED paraprofessional reassignment | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| parental insistence on direct support from the SPED paraprofessional | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| teacher insistence on direct support from the SPED paraprofessional | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| other (specify below) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Other (please specify if indicated above)

21. Please rate the importance *now* in your district of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and what you would prefer *in the future*. (**please record choice using drop-down menus**)

| | current situation | future situation |
|---|---|---|
| eventual assignment to another individual student | | |
| eventual assignment to several students | | |
| eventual assignment to a special education classroom | | |
| eventual assignment to a general education classroom | | |
| other (specify in comments) | | |

Other (please specify)

Prev Next

## Information about SPED paraprofessionals' work in your district

22. Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of the local community and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your district.

| | not a concern | not much of a concern | some concern | substantial concern | highest concern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| maintaining confidentiality | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| professional demeanor in interactions (e.g., with parents) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| participating productively in IEP meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| maintaining IEP records | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| understanding IDEA provisions (e.g., LRE, appropriate services, role of assessment) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

23. How might you characterize the reception of general education teachers in your district to the inclusion of special education students in their classrooms? (please select an estimate)

| vocally opposed | quite skeptical but not actively resistant | accepting and struggling hard | practiced and engaged |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

24. To what extent are general education teachers in your district able to supervise SPED paraprofessionals effectively? (please select the best answer)

| never or very rarely | occasionally | more than occasionally but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

25. If you have additional observations about the preparation, role, assignments, and capacities of paraprofessionals please consider sharing them here.

## You have finished the survey. Thank you for taking the time to share your experience and insights.

Prev Done

## Welcome to Ohio Special Education Paraprofessional Survey

**Thank you for your interest in the OPEPP survey of district needs relevant to special education paraprofessionals (SPED paraprofessionals). They are a large proportion of the special education workforce, but there has been no systematic assessment of districts' needs in organizing their work. If you start the survey, you are giving your agreement to participate. As noted in the invitation to participate, however, even if you start the survey you may discontinue it at any time. Simply activate the "next" button at the bottom of this page to begin. There are 26 questions; answering them will take about 15 minutes. Thanks for your help!**

***If you provide services to a local school district but are employed by an ESC, you may already have completed the survey at the request of the superintendent; this is essentially the same survey and we don't need your information twice. Again: thanks.***

Next

## Describe your circumstances

1. How many years have you been employed as an educator? (please enter a numeral from 1-50)

2. For which organization(s) do you work? (please select all that apply; "work" means to perform services, regardless of actual employer)

- [ ] Educational Service Center
- [ ] State Support Team
- [ ] a local school district
- [ ] other arrangement (please specify in comment field)

Other (please specify)

3. What is your position title *relevant to special education*? (i.e., sometimes people hold more than one title and occupy multiple roles)

4. How many years have you occupied this position? (please enter a numeral from 1-50)

5. Have you ever been licensed (or certified) as a special education teacher?

- yes
- no

Comments (optional)

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## Information about the SPED paraprofessional role in your region

6. Various professional groups (e.g., the Council for Exceptional Children) have defined the roles and capacities of SPED paraprofessionals. How familiar on average do you think the districts in your region are *now* with such descriptions and how familiar would you like them to be *in the future*?

| | unaware of their existence | aware but not familiar | somewhat familiar | familiar | very familiar |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | | | | | |
| future preference | | | | | |

Comments (optional)

7. About what percentage of SPED paraprofessionals in districts in your region are assigned to the following contexts? (percentages are approximate; please try to estimate as best you can)

| | about 80% or more | about 60-80% | about 40-60% | about 20-40% | about 20% or less |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| assigned to a single student | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| assigned to a special education classroom | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| assigned to a general education classroom | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

8. How often do SPED paraprofessionals *now* participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in districts in your region? (please try to estimate as best you can, across all districts in the region)

| | almost never | sometimes but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| informal instructional teams (ad hoc meetings, ad hoc participants) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| formal instructional teams (i.e., regular meetings, several specified team members) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| IEP meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| whole-school faculty meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Teacher-Based Teams | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

9. How often would you like *in the future* to see SPED paraprofessionals participate in the following sorts of teams and meetings in districts in your region? (please try to approximate as best you can)

| | almost never | sometimes but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| informal instructional teams (ad hoc meetings, ad hoc participants) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| formal instructional teams (i.e., regular meetings, several specified team members) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| IEP meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| whole-school faculty meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Teacher-Based Teams | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

10. Intervention specialists (i.e., special education teachers) sometimes participate in Teacher-Based Teams (TBTs). How common is such participation among districts in your region *currently* and how often *in the future* would your prefer it to be? (please make an estimate)

| | almost never | sometimes, but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

11. How often do districts in your region *now* revise the job descriptions for SPED paraprofessionals and how often would you *in the future* prefer to see the job descriptions revised? (please make an estimate)

| | unknown or not applicable | irregularly | every 2-4 years | every year or two |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

12. To what documents do districts in your region refer when defining the role of SPED paraprofessional? (***please check all that apply***)

- [ ] Ohio Program Standards for Educational Paraprofessional Associate
- [ ] district job description
- [ ] standards from other states (e.g., Minnesota)
- [ ] national standards (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children)
- [ ] other (please describe in comments)

Comments (optional)

13. SPED paraprofessionals need training for professional development and licensure. Please select the source of training *now* most common among districts in your region and what source you would prefer to be most common *in the future*.

| | the district itself | another district | ESC | SST | college or university | other (please describe in comments) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Specify "others," if listed above; add additional comments if desired, as well.

14. To what extent do districts in your region have access to high-quality professional development for SPED paraprofessionals (including PD to qualify for licensure)? (please select one answer)

| no access at most districts | access at remote locations in most districts | inconsistent local access in most districts | consistent local access in most districts |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

15. Do districts in your region*now* differentiate pay for SPED paraprofessionals on the basis of educational qualifications and would you prefer *in the future* that their pay be differentiated on such a basis? (**please estimate on average**)

| | no | yes |
|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

16. The mean annual wage (or salary) for SPED paraprofessionals in Ohio is about $23,000. In your estimation, does your region *now* have a rather lower, about the same, or rather higher average salary (or annual wage); and *in the future*, what would you prefer?

| | rather lower | about the same | rather higher |
|---|---|---|---|
| current situation | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| future preference | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

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## Information about SPED paraprofessionals' work in your region

17. The SPED paraprofessional role might include a variety of activities. Please rate the prevalence of the following activities across districts in your region *now* and the prevalence as you would prefer it to be *in the future*. (**please use the pull-down menus to select your rating: 1 = least important... 5 = most important**)

| | current situation | future situation |
|---|---|---|
| clerical support | | |
| personal care (mobility, toileting, etc.) | | |
| functional skill support (teaching activities of daily living) | | |
| academic instruction (as professionally directed) | | |
| varied support for students with low-incidence conditions | | |

Comments (optional)

18. To what extent do districts in your region assign SPED paraprofessionals an instructional role? (please estimate)

| they are almost never assigned an instructional role | they are rarely assigned an instructional role | they are sometimes assigned an instructional role | they are typically assigned an instructional role | they are almost always assigned an instructional role |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

19. What instructional role seems to you most appropriate for SPED paraprofessionals, not in every case, but in general?

| it is seldom appropriate | follow explicit instructional directions of teacher | modify a lesson plan with teacher direction | develop an instructional event with teacher direction |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

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## Information about SPED paraprofessionals' work in your region

**“Fading” is the practice of a planned withdrawal of SPED paraprofessional services to a particular child. The three questions that follow deal with this issue.**

20. How do districts in your region most commonly practice the fading of SPED paraprofessional support? (please estimate)

- ○ fading is uncommon
- ○ plans for fading are sometimes considered in IEP meetings
- ○ plans fading is an are routinely considered in IEP meetings
- ○ plans for fading are required in IEP meetings and actual IEPs

Comments (optional)

21. To what extent does fading raise the following concern among districts in your region? (please offer an estimate)

| | not a concern | not much of a concern | some concern | substantial concern | highest concern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| dealing with learned helplessness | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| concern for SPED paraprofessional reassignment | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| parental insistence on direct support from the SPED paraprofessional | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| teacher insistence on direct support from the SPED paraprofessional | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| other 1 (specify below) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| other 2 (specify below) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Other (please specify if indicated above)

22. Please rate the importance (1) *now,* across districts in your region, of the following possibilities for reassignment of the SPED paraprofessional if support is faded from a particular student and (2) what you would prefer *in the future*. (**please use the drop-down menus**)

| | current situation | future situation |
|---|---|---|
| eventual assignment to another individual student | | |
| eventual assignment to several students | | |
| eventual assignment to a special education classroom | | |
| eventual assignment to a general education classroom | | |
| other 1 (specify in comments) | | |
| other 2 (specify in comments) | | |

Other (please specify)

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## Information about SPED Paraprofessionals' work in your region

23. Considering that SPED paraprofessionals often have close personal ties to members of their local communities and may not understand the need for discretion, some IEP process features can be challenging. Please rate the extent to which the following IEP process issues are a concern in the behavior of SPED paraprofessionals in your region.

| | not a concern | not much of a concern | some concern | substantial concern | highest concern |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| maintaining confidentiality | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| professional demeanor in interactions (e.g., with parents) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| participating productively in IEP meetings | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| maintaining IEP records | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| understanding IDEA provisions (e.g., LRE, appropriate services, role of assessment) | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

24. How would you characterize the reception of general education teachers across districts in your region to the inclusion of special education students in their classrooms? (**please provide an estimate**)

| vocally opposed | quite skeptical but not actively resistant | accepting and struggling hard | practiced and engaged |
|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

25. To what extent are general education teachers across districts in your region able to supervise SPED paraprofessionals effectively? (**please select the best answer**)

| never or very rarely | occasionally | more than occasionally but not frequently | frequently | almost always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Comments (optional)

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## Information about SPED Paraprofessionals' work in your region

26. If you have additional observations about the preparation, role, assignments, and capacities of paraprofessionals please consider sharing them here.

You have finished the survey. Thank you for taking the time to share your experience and insights.

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## APPENDIX D

Comments by Item or Item Group

***Respondent ever licensed as SPED teacher?***

- Also worked on State Support Team
- But served as guidance counselor responsible for arranging IEP meetings
- Gifted Intervention Specialist; Licensed with a Professional Clear in California (includes Special Ed)
- I am not certified in Special Education. However, I was a Special Education Supervisor for one year. Since then, I have studied the IDEA book several times so I may keep up on all the changes in the law.
- I have K-3 general ed and K-12 special ed, and curriculum instruction K-12 administration
- I have been the director of special education while I was the asssitant superintendent these last 20 years
- I hold a license as a Speech-Language Pathologist
- I taught high school ED for 18 years and was a SPED supervisor for 4 years prior to now being a director.
- I worked 12 years as the Director of Special Education for a local school district, and just last year moved into this position. I have 13 years experience as Special Education Director.
- Intervention Specialist K-12 Mild/Moderate
- LD/BD, EEH
- Mild to Moderate Intervention--14 years
- Multiple Disabilities Teacher
- Permanent Certificate: SLD/BD/ID. Reading K-12 Endorsement
- SLP, SLD/SBH instructor
- School Psychologist, Administrator
- Temp License

***2-item group: Standards—now & preferred future (ITEM GROUP)***

- I answered this in terms of special education teachers, not paraprofessionals...
- I currently work with 10 school district
- I think this question is poorly worded and I don't understand what it is asking. I really don't know how familiar my district is with the descriptions of the roles and capacities of SPED paraprofessionals. I assume they know the roles because I feel my district is on top of Special Education. The ""current situation"" question doesn't make sense to me.
- I would be curious to know the paraprofessionals response to this question.

***3-Item group: Assigned now (single student, SPED classroom, GenEd classroom)***

- Assigned by need of building
- I answered this in terms of special education teachers, not just paraprofessionals..

- I really don't know
- I think there should have been a much lower number offered for "assigned to a single student."
- II am new to this district, and I do not have the information for this question.
- Majority of paraprofessionals are assigned to students for medical or behavioral needs.
- Most special ed students are in inclusion settings, very few are in resource rooms separated from their typical peers
- This would be only in preschool settings. There are more one/one aides in our school age multi handicapped program.
- Typically the para-pro in the special education classroom will assist with a specific child (autism or behavioral)
- We have no paraprofessionals in the district only teacher's aides in SPED classrooms.
- We have specific schedules for our Paras to follow. They cover several students going from special classes to regular classes. We rarely assign 1 para to 1 child. This more often creates dependence/codependence and does more harm than good.
- We only have one parapro. All others are licensed teachers.
- above answers are pure guesses
- more dependent on grade level than anything else
- unknown
- we have building aides not assigned to a single student, but inevitably do work with a similar student on a daily basis

**5-Item group: Teams now (informal, formal, IEP, whole faculty, TBTs)**

- Again, we have only one parapro.
- I answered this in terms of special education teachers, not just paraprofessionals...
- It is very difficult for me to comment or to form an opinion about what goes on outside of my building.
- Limitations to contract and coverage for student impede the above partnerships
- Scheduling and coverage prohibits involvement in TBTs - students need to be covered.
- There attendance IEP meetings depends on if they are assigned to a specific student. If they are assigned to a 1 on 1 then they are in the IEP meeting, so I'm sure if my answer is appropriate.
- Times that meetings are held are generally not in the the scheduled workday for a parapro.
- We offer annual training for all paras prior to the start of the year and have recently started some monthly staffings that include some paras.
- We recently had a paraprofessional join our BLT (this year) but prior to this they are almost never involved in any type of meeting.
- Whole school faculty meetings - participation depends on the time of day for those meetings. If after school all staff participate- if in the mornings- often used to cover classes while teachers meet. Involvement in IEP meetings depends on the student
- Would have to pay/outside work hours, creates financial barriers. (my thought)
- above answers are pure guesses

- do not have teacher based teams
- unknown

**5-Item group: Teams preferred future (informal, formal, IEP, whole faculty, TBTs)**

- Because most IEP Meetings happen during the school day, the cost of paying 2 substitutes for the same classroom would be prohibitive. Moving the meeting to after school is not a good option because that would cost the district overtime pay.
- I answered this in terms of special education teachers, not just paraprofessionals...
- I would say the attendance of a SPED paraprofessional participating in some of these meetings should be as appropriate.
- If a paraprofessional is providing one-on-one assistance to a student they may need to be a part of the lesson planning for that student, there needs to be a time for the paraprofessional to meet and discuss what they need to execute with that students, instead of always disrupting class to figure it out.
- If paraprofessionals are involved with students then they should be participating in meetings and their opinions should be noted.
- In my experience, paraprofessionals (handicap aides, instructional aides, one-on-one aides) oftentimes advocate for their positions because it becomes an employment issue for them if they are not needed. I see many aides working too closely with students thereby reinforcing learned helplessness. (Students become prompt dependent.) We oftentimes assign the least educated and trained adults to work with the most challenging students. Something is wrong with this picture.
- It is really dependent on the paraprofessional and how they work in the classroom or with a particular student.
- This answer depends on the situation that the paraprofessional is involved in. If assigned to an individual student, then the paraprofessional should be involved. If assigned as a general support person to the classroom, then they do not need to be at the meetings.
- This partially depends on the para's role. If the para is assigned to a specific student, they should be part of decision making meetings regarding that student. They typically are more familiar with the student than anyone else except, perhaps, the parent.
- Union related issues do not require paras to participate in these types of meetings, and those who do participate do so by choice.
- Without the proper training, they tend to be a distraction and/or bring about confidentiality concerns when they are included in teams and meetings.
- depends on what is being 5-stepped

***2-item group: SPED teachers on TBTs (now, preferred future)***

- Again - in "current situation" difficult for me to comment about what happens in other buildings. Why would Intervention Specialists NOT participate in TBT's?? Of course they should!
- Depends on the topic. This is important time for them to prepare for the students.
- Hard with schedules with the multiple grade levels served and scheduled TBT times. IS want to meet minutes regarding IEP's. Balancing act.

- It is our hope that this would not be "sometimes participate in TBTs" - they often have the clearest perspective on teams!
- Our paras and intervention specialists work with specialized populations of students (AU, MD, ED), When the content is appropriate then participation is very helpful. On the other hand we don't want it to be a waste of time either.
- SPED teachers are heavily leaned upon and often run/facilitate TBTs.
- Teacher based professional teams are held weekly for 60 minutes.
- This is the situation for my school only, I cannot speak for other buildings.

**2-item group: Job description review (now, preferred future)**

- As needed based on changes in the district.
- I believe paraprofessionals should be reassigned every two years so the emotional attachments are not reinforced through long-term relationships.
- I don't know what past practices were in my new district.
- One would need separate job descriptions for a classroom aide versus an individual student aide
- Regular meetings for updates/expectations would be great
- Sorry - again - I don't understand this questions. "Revise?" From what to what?
- This is essential in the changing structure of our schools.
- We evaluate the parapro annually, as we do all staff.
- We have plenty of paperwork now. I don't think more paperwork would improve the situation. I like to see staff working with students.

**5-item group: Documents (Ohio, job desc, other states, national, other)**

- Contracts
- Does Ohio have adopted paraprofessional standards beyond passing the licensing exam? I have specifically looked for them unsuccessfully.
- I am unaware
- I do not know
- I really don't know the answer to this question.
- I'm not sure what they use
- IEPs and ETRs of students involved in their placement.
- NEOLA and Board-Approved Job descriptions are used. As needed, special job descriptions are developed.
- No idea
- Not part of this planning
- Not sure
- OTES
- Our paras are employed and contracted through an ESC
- Rubric designed to determine areas of school day that student requires most assistance and least assistance.
- Search for job descriptions on the Internet
- Special Education Rules
- The ESC has created a job description using many of the resources above. Our districts rely on the ESC to hire staff and define their role.
- Unaware

- Union contract regulates this at present
- unknown
- unsure

**2-item group: Training (now, preferred future)**

- A combination of training sources are available for districts. I would like to see paraprofessionals with at least a two year degree in a health, medical or educational field. Additional training can come from the ESCs and SSTs as well as private companies.
- A variety of training options would be preferred.
- Also community colleges
- Also participate in safety trainings
- As a district either we hold professional development for our Para Pros or we out source to various agencies within the community.
- Combination of district, ESC, SST
- Currently utilize a combination and will continue to do so.
- District decision
- ESC and other district opportunities are made available as well.
- I am not aware of the training that the paraprofessionals need or take
- I believe there can be a variety as long as it is high quality.
- I believe this training should be provided by more than one entity. Districts know their specific needs, however, don't always understand best practice or the dynamics of the SPED environment. For example, the district may desire that every student spends time in the general education setting, but won't provide more than one para per SPED classroom. If a SPED classroom has eight students in three
- I feel that the training should be a collaborative effort between the agencies listed above as each agency brings different knowledge and skills to the table.
- I think the districts have the support of the ESCs and SSTs and can continue to do their own training to support their needs
- I would like to see a combination of in-district PD as well as from the ESC, and SST. Ultimately, I would like our parapro's to be working toward some type of educational certificate.
- It would be ideal for SSTs to offer an array of online modules. I was made aware of some modules, but have not yet looked into them.
- Our district utilizes in-house and out of house sources of PD SST, ESC, Colleges, and local agencies (DD, CSB, private professionals, etc.)
- SST training University 2 year parapro training, district doing annual updates and having consistent evaluations
- SSTs can tailor training to meet our district needs specifically.
- The ESC provides a vital role in this area. The training we do is very good but limited because of lack of financial support at the State level.
- The type of training to be provided would determine the source of training. In general the district should be responsible. The district should have one or more administrators trained by ESC, SST or colleges and they would be responsible for training paraprofessionals in their district.

- This survey has made me realize how little I know about paraprofessionals in our district. I think they should receive the BEST training possible and this training needs to be applicable for increasing knowledge about dealing with all types of students - especially identified students. I would venture a guess that many paraprofessionals don't know current goals and objectives for students with with whom they regularly interact.
- Training could come from a variety of places depending on the ""expert"" in the field. Most of the time, our training comes from the ESC/SST.
- Varied sources preferred depending on individual learner'
- We use a combination of training for staff. Some is conducted in house by supervisors/speakers. Some is provided by specialists from ur SST-10 and our ESC. Some is through Public Schoolworks.
- very little training - most is on the job

***Access to PD***

- Again - I'm sorry. I don't know the answer to this question.
- HQT = training over time doesn't happen. Specific one day trainings occur in local districts for specific topics, but there is no follow-up.
- I am only speaking as a special education teacher, I am not aware of the training that the paraprofessionals need or take. However, the opportunities for PD varies within the district from building to building.
- I do not know
- Most parapro training seems to be CPR. But not consistent and applicable training on laws. Restraint and seclusion, disability awareness and how disability might present, over stereotyping, family awareness, Confidentiality!!!
- My district does not provide training for paraprofessionals. They only are paid to attend work if the students for whom they are responsible are in school.
- Negotiated agreement and limited financial resources hinder access to professional development. We need more opportunity (time) and funding in order to provide on-going quality professional development to them without interruption of support to students who need them.
- Nothing I am aware of
- SST does a good job
- Something that needs to be addressed in future! Trainings for paraprofessional s. we are truly lacking in these opportunities in region 15!
- This is an area I have recently tried to bolster. WE are having a problem with retaining good, quality, paraprofessionals. I am putting on an 8 week mini training course for my parapro's. About 20+ parapro's in the ESC MD program. These classes are completely optional, but I was shocked to see how many people I already have signed up for them.
- We have a very good SST in Region 4
- We send some PP out for specialized training. I am unaware of specific parapro licensure except in the case of preschool mandates for program licensure
- unknown

***2-item group: Credentials & pay (now, preferred future)***

- Again, union contract controls this at present.

- At least training might be more effective. But, I have had parapros w/o training but training I provided in my classroom and my procedures be more effective. It's a teacher parapro collaboration.
- I am not aware of the salary schedule for Paraprofessionals
- I am unsure.
- I do not know
- I don't know
- I don't know the answer to this question.
- I have no idea of their pay.
- I would prefer that their pay be based be differentiated on qualifications, assignment and job performance.
- Paras don't make enough money to attend college or other fee based classes. I would only support this proposal in the future if the district provided free training.
- This is a union issue
- This is seriously unfair for the staff. ODE specifies specifics in classrooms ratios based on needs of a students but when a paprapro works in these rooms they have zero compensatory for the difficulty they work with.
- This may encourage more to continue their own education. They may feel now as if there is no benefit for them for doing so.
- Union nightmare.....
- Unsure how to answer the second question. There are variables that would affect the answer, such as union and district decisions (our special education paras are ESC employees).
- We discussed differentiating pay for paras who work with students who have significant social emotional disabilities/behavioral disorders. This would be linked to specific behavioral training.
- When they have specific trainings, like TEACCH, I think the investment in their training and qualifications support a pay differentiation.
- have just started looking into differentiating pay dependent on roles in specific classrooms
- the base it on years. Some of our para's have bachelor's degrees, others have an associates. It'd be nice for them, to get paid a little more accordingly.
- unknown

**2-item group: Pay level (now, preferred future)**

- All papraprofessionals have insurance that is values at 28,000. a family plan. They pay 1152.00 per year for this insurance. This makes up for the lower wage. Paraprofessionals only work 1080 hours per year in our district.
- Benefits would be very appealing to retention of staff
- Depends on what their qualifications and training.
- Higher w training and more updates and evaluations. My region varies much in pay. If you want quality u need to pay, same as in nursing homes. However, more pay equates w more professional training and evaluations of on the job professionalism.
- I do not know

- I feel our district leans towards "above average" pay and that is why I chose the answer that I did.
- I feel that the salary should be based on the education of the Para
- I understand that paying for parapro's can be expensive. Especially when looking at the over all costs. I do feel like you get what you pay for. Competent Parapro's are worth paying for.
- I would always like to be able to pay our staff more money as they earn it but finances are always tight and it is not always possible to pay any staff member what they are worth.
- My Appalachian district can't/won't pay this much.
- Our SPED paraprofessionals make approximately $15,000 depending on the number of hours worked.
- Our annual wage is $14,709
- This is NOT going to happen.
- Tiered for education
- Unsure
- We also offer every paraprofessional insurance so I'm not sure if that plays into the job consideration as I know some districts around us offer higher wages but only offer insurance is they work "enough" hours per week.
- We are seeing a lot of paraprofessionals positions being filled by two part-time people rather than one full time as it is often more cost effective (?) for the district.
- don't know
- not sure I know what districts are paying support staff
- unknown
- with no insurance

**10-item group: Paraprofessional Role (now, preferred future—clerical, care, funct skill, acad, LI)**

- All of these activities are relevant and important, but this varies from building to building and different situations
- Because our model is inclusive, our most valuable asset is a para who can assist with significant behavioral concerns
- I think all important and pertinent to their jobs based on teacher/ therapists decisions. Also, dependent on students. Data collection. Students need to be valued and not marginalized. Age appropriate and not Velcro to aide. Also, aide as instructed to present academics but not become the teacher of student. Gen Ed and Intervention Specialists need to be primary teacher to all kids.
- Support with behavior modification and management is critical
- The academic instruction should be done by the teachers.
- Were the ratings supposed to be exclusive? Did you want one to get ""1"" - one to get ""2"" etc. or could we give the same ratings to multiple categories? I'm really not trying to be obnoxious - this survey is just unclear to me in many respects. Again - I am very uncomfortable commenting about what goes on in other buildings because I just don't know.
- consistent message that paras support teachers. Paras do not teach, teachers teach.
- para skills need to match student IEP needs, whatever they are.
- unknown

***2-item group: Instructional role (frequency, most appropriate type)***

- Depends on their license
- I think paraprofessionals should be included to the largest extent possible with teacher direction.
- I would say that this answer is dependent on the situation, the student and his or her needs and the paraprofessionals skill and knowledge base.
- In our building, it varies from one paraprofessional to another. Some plan their own instruction, some modify as needed, and some follow explicit instruction of a teacher. This depends on who the paraprofessional is and which general education specialist or intervention specialist they are working with.

***Fading practices***

- Fading is considered as the student gains the skills for independent functioning.
- My opinion is based on my building only. The questions keep asking about my district and I really don't know.
- Newer subject here
- Parents over rely on the IS and this reliance limits student growth.
- Probably more prevalent in the upper grades.
- Teams may have several meetings with parents prior to fading the support. Data is collected and shared at these meetings to demonstrate if fading is appropriate. The IEP is typically amended to include the data and the plan to fade along with timelines.
- This is always considered and depending on the needs of the children, included in this document.
- This is considered on a child-by-child case.
- Very difficult to fade paraprofessionals once they are assigned to specific students. Parents become very territorial to "their" child's paraprofessional.
- unknown

**5-item group: Fading issues (helplessness, reassign, parent, teacher, other)**

- Depends on the teacher use of the para. Some used appropriately and other times not. Inconsistent.
- I do not know
- I don't know how often fading takes place in other buildings.
- In my current ESC position I have not been in many meetings were fading was a discussion point. My above response is based on 32 years in an Ohio urban school district.
- Medical needs of the student are a major concern.
- Money Money
- N/A
- Usually the concern for the para is other assignment or job stability.
- unknown

**8-item group: Reassignment options (now, preferred future: one, several, SPED,**

**GenEd)**

- 99% of our special education students are mainstreamed into mainly specific regular education classrooms. These classrooms require the most support.
- Again - I can't comment on the current situation and I'm unclear how I am to do these ratings. Do you want 1 in only 1 and 2 in only one or can ratings duplicate?
- Again it would depend on the situation, the paraprofessional and the student(s).
- Because of our contract, seniority rules in regard to who works with individual students. Should a student no longer need parapro services then the bumping begins. A bigger concern is not being able to assign an adult based on student needs. Additionally, we would like to move away from one-on-one aides except in extreme cases and move more to an adult working with more than one student.
- Hard to say, each school/classroom/groups of students are different.
- I don't understand the rankings for this question. We do not have any concerns related to reassignment, we are almost always hiring paras due to turn-over (retirements and leave for other districts), and our overall population is growing.
- I have told my aides that they can work themselves out of a job by getting a student ready to go on his own, then I will reassign them to new students entering school. A good aide will work to end their job -- this will show they have done what needs to happen ... the student has gained independence.
- If a paraprofessional loses a student due to fading, moving, etc.., he or she may have seniority to "bump" another paraprofessional and take his or her position
- It is challenging to balance the potential for reduction in force due to eliminated or reduced need for support (and rthen the bumping caused by the contract when this happens with large investment in quality and ongoing training in highly structured, evidence-based practices to support SWD.
- Most of ours are hired a in substitute position pending the enrollment or need of the student.
- N/A
- Paraprofessionals are always assigned to buildings and have fluid roles. It is difficult to answer this question.
- Parapros are under paid, districts seriously fuss about the cost of a parapro and frequently wait until something serious take place before accessing a person.
- Personalities of students/paras/IS/reg ed teachers is essential when thinking about placement of kids. This would hold true for all students, but especially for our most at risk learners.
- Rather than laying member off, see if they can be cross-trained to serve the district in another capacity.
- The imprtance depends on the needs of the district at any particular time.
- The paras only are assigned to SPED classrooms, never to a gen ed classroom.
- This was difficult. So, individualized. I like parapros to be rotated, even though that is difficult. At least in resource room. Too often make kids dependent or someone else can't fill role. They will not be a lifetime aide. Kids need to generalize and work with others and to be self advocated
- Unsure how to answer this questions. It varies depending on the situation.
- We have negotiated an agreement with Parapros that they will remain in another dduty until the following year shuold they ""loose"" their student or their position. At the beginning of the school year, we open bid all current positions. No PP can be

displaced by another (bumped) until the following year.

- We have no para-pros in general ed classrooms unless they are assigned to an individual student. Union contract dictates who goes where if there is an opening. I prefer to assign para-pros based on skill sets and personality match with students, which I can do at the start of the year. If an opening happens mid-year, para-pros can apply to move, and if they have seniority, they automatically get to move.
- not sure i understood this question????
- unknown - these are administrative decisions that are not shared with staff

**5-item group: Discretion (confidentiality, demeanor, IEP mtgs, IEP records, IDEA)**

- Complete lack of understanding in most districts
- Concern is important to ensure proper training and reminding of the importance of discretion. I do not have concerns about our staff because we regularly discuss the importance of confidentiality.
- Concern? "Are we specifically worried about this issue" or "Is this an issue which is considered important?
- Confidentiality is my biggest concern.
- Data Collection for intervention and behavior plans is an extremely high priority.
- I frequently speak of the concerns for confidentiality to my large parapro staff. Reminders are helpful
- Professionalism and confidentiality is a significant concern. We have provided specific training, but continue to struggle.
- We are extremely careful to review these areas in our yearly Professional development sessions. This is always something to monitor but not a huge issue in the district.
- We have exceptional people serving as Paraprofessionals.

***GenEd teachers receptivity to inclusion***

- Acceptance at the elem. level is better than the upper levels.
- Depends on the indivual
- Difficult question to answer as I could check each answer depending on the teacher I consider. Overall, our general education teachers are working hard to do the right thing.
- General Education teachers especially at the 5-12 level feel it is not there job to assist and work with IEP students.
- I would say that it depends on the district, the building, the teacher and the needs of the student. If the child has more intensive needs the general education teachers are more often resistant to that student being in their classroom. It would also depend on if that student had a paraprofessional assigned to them or if the general education teacher would be required to do most of the work with the student.
- In my building there are pockets of each category.

- It ranges from some teachers being very accepting and rise to the challenge, while others are exclusive and strongly voice objections to having special education students.
- Some are accepting. Others struggle. There has been a real shift in the last few years, much more accepting.
- Some of them have good reason however others do not. It is the responsibility of the Principal to set an expectation.
- State they don't know what to "do" or how to use.
- Teachers lack training working daily in an inclusion classroom.
- Testing has created numerous barriers to acceptance in the general education environment.
- Their "struggle" centers not on the SPED children, but the ""slowing down"" of instruction for the rest of the children.
- This really depends on the building. We have one Elementary and High School that are practiced and engaged. These two building have the students with behavioral issues in their buildings. Once the student(s) begin attending school in one/both of the buildings, the students feels accepted, calms down and in most cases earns their way to the regular classroom.
- depends on building culture
- teachers are accepting they just need more support and strategies to assist with their diverse learners.
- this truly varies from teacher to teacher

***GenEd teachers capacity to supervise***

- Able to different than expected to-I answered from able to. And effective was hard to measure.
- Again, with one parapro, not an issue really.
- Depends on how the paraprofessional is utilized in that particular classroom.
- General education teachers don't not have paras assigned tot hem. The para is assigned to one or more students under the supervision of a special education teacher.
- I know Gen Ed teachers in the area districts have a hard time with supervisor. Most of the teachers I work with do well with.
- I really have no idea except to comment that our district hires professional teachers so I'm assuming that they have the ability to supervise SPED paraprofessionals effectively.
- In the same two buildings stated above in question # 23, the teachers almost always supervise the SPED paraprofessionals with high success.
- Need to gather more information on this
- Observation
- Our intervention specialists in the MD/ED/Autism classrooms directly supervise and evaluate the Paras assigned to their classrooms.
- Teachers are uncomfortable supervising the paraprofessionals...
- They have never receive instruction or guidance on how to work with and supervise a paraprofessional in their classroom. The same can be said for the majority of the intervention specialist.

- They supervise regularly meaning they are "watching" them all the time. However, I take supervise to mean that they will offer assistance and suggestions. That is the part that the general education teachers struggle with.
- This varies depending on the individuals involved.
- has to be a building/district expectation
- not applicable- supervised by the principals.
- supervised" has management conotations. Our Classified agreement states that PP will follow the directions of the classroom teacher. This can be a problem when some of our PPs do not follow those directions. In such cases, the teacher usually lets administration know and administration steps in to correct problems.
- the general ed teachers do not supervise paraprofessionals

**Additional comments (i.e., respondents volunteer other observations)**

- A discussion is needed with teachers to discuss what the role of paraprofessionals in the classroom is; addressing what they should or should not be doing.
- All answers from this individual survey were from the perspective of the Director of PRESCHOOL Services, including Preschool Special Education Services. Current enrollment is 357 students on an IEP, 248 typically developing students (either ECE grant or tuition paying student). Total of students is 605 students in 12 school districts. Each classroom has at least 1 parapro with a teacher and several students have 1-1 parapros.
- Data Collection for intervention and behavior plans is an extremely high priority.
- Everyone should be given a voice and paraprofessionals should be included and utilized to the fullest extent possible. One-on-one tutoring is very important because students really need this individual assistance.
- Families frequently do not understand the role of a para. Teachers generally do not understand the role of the para. SPED Coordinators rarely provide direction to paras on a day-to-day basis. Teachers, primarily sped teachers, are left to direct the role of paras in the classroom.
- Formalized training as an educational assistant would be optimal.
- I believe that paraprofessionals can be a valuable resource if assigned correctly and if provided the appropriate training and instruction. But sad to say, they are often hired and either place in a classroom or with a student with no to minimal training.
- I feel ALL paraprofessionals need to have high quality training before they begin working. SPED paraprofessionals need basic training along with behavioral/mental issues training. The paraprofessionals need to have an understanding of where the student is coming from, how far they have come and how to get them to where they need to be a successful adult in society.
- I feel like each paraprofessional is trained and treated differently. Depending on the needs of the building that particular year...which works and doesn't. Since each year is different, paraprofessionals have to "re-learn" everything every year depending upon their placement. If the proper supports were in place, this transition would probably be much more smooth for all involved.

- I feel that there isn't enough training for paraprofessionals when it comes to how to deal with behaviors, safety of students, following the teacher's lead, etc. Our paraprofessionals need much, much more training for them to be more effective within the classrooms and dealing with the special education population.
- I have recently thought about an in district mentoring program for paraprofessionals.
- I'm not sure what you're after bc this survey seems to be so subjective. I work for an ESC, consult in 10 districts and I am the principal of a school with all students who have autism. Because of my current position I see more than an average person does and I work with multiple parapros who have various jobs. I would be glad to discuss what I experience and know through my experience with anyone who is trying to build a foundation for our fantastic parapros. They are a crucial piece to making education work for our most difficult students and I've found that most who work for me are people who go above and beyond. I'm very proud of what we have done for our staff at CEC-North but they are underpaid and overworked employees.
- Many trainings do not occur b/c there are limited resources for subs in our area for paraprofessionals and many are pd according to the hrs. the students are in session so this does not allow time for training.
- My biggest concern are the number of parapros at our DD facility. In most cases, there are as many or more adults in the room as students. It would be nice to be able to move to ""parapro services"" as opposed to a 1-on-1 parapro. There are many times that a parapro is sitting beside a student which is extremely unproductive.
- ODE needs to require more qualifications so there is not bumping just based on seniority - It is hard to weed out those not effective - as it is often about the number of hours worked - not the interest in working with special education students -
- Our current parapro will be cross trained as the child she is currently serving will hopefully be ""weaned"" from her oversight, and become more independent.
- Our paraprofrssionals are a valued asset in the district. Many times when I take visitors to classrooms, they are unable to distinguish the teacher from the paraprofessional.
- Our parapros, while well intentioned, often lack the training and resources to adequately engage in a pro-cative partnership with our educators. By increasing salary to draw first year teachers seeking future employment, the district would benefit from a higher caliber of employee with increased benefit to confidentiality and quality instructional support. A dynamic and specific training program would serve to better outline the role and expectations of the parapro, which can often change several times annually.
- Paraprofessionals are over used in our region. They seem to be used as the stop gap measure when dealing with a student that has behavioral or academic concerns in the classroom. In many cases the para becomes the teacher to address educational needs for the student in a general education setting. The training is minimal and the expectations on the Para professionals is unfair. Para wages at this time are minimum wage without benefits. After two years with successful evaluations and minimal call offs the individuals can make an additional 45 cents an hour. Parent education as well as training

- Paraprofessionals can be a vital part of the "treatment team". Their participation could be valuable in the IEP process, but I understand that is sometimes difficult to have them attend. They should however, be given the opportunity to participate through written comments. It is important that you are always growing the capacity of your paraprofessionals through relevant in-service, workshops, evaluations, team meetings, etc. (Not just pushing them into meetings that are irrelevant to their area to meet some hourly requirement). I have found that paraprofessionals are very often the most
- Several of the questions are questions that we plan to address locally in the near future. We look forward to the results of this work.
- The assignment of the PP in this district is based on the ETR and IEP for each student. Their strengths and weaknesses are also considered and therefore matched with students appropriately.
- The biggest problem is that parapro position has evoled in our district from a "warm" body to help a very involved child get through the school day, to a much more training intense position. Our older para-pros are not well-trained, but all you need in Ohio is to be 18 and graduate high school and give the state 10 bucks and you are licenced. That makes it tough on those who have negotiated agreements with unions that evolved over the last 30 years. The legislature needs to step in and say that para-pros need to have an associate degree in child care or some related field to their work or an
- The paraprofessional often perceives they are employed by the parent/family rather than to the district. The parent often thinks he/she can select who the paraprofessional is.
- There is a lack of quality resources for training paraprofessionals. It is difficult to hind qualified individuals due to the low pay and the demands. Some paraprofessionals don't get the "professional" part of the job nor realize the importance of their positions.
- There needs to be more professional development opportunities and better training of paraprofessionals,
- They are a crucial component to the success of our students with special needs and do so very much for our kids! I support them as best I can and believe they can and should contribute to the team as much as possible.
- This is a significant struggle within our district. I look forward to the state analyzing this data and making some specific recommendations for the role, as well as training options.
- WE consider them to be a valuable asset and human resource in our district.
- We have recently started to focus on the area of Executive Functioning. We are encouraging IEP teams to include a goal to support independence through the explicit instruction in the EF area of most need when a paraprofessional is indicated in the IEP.

## APPENDIX E

Comments Organized by Conclusions

### 1. Use of sources (and role definition)

- ODE needs to require more qualifications so there is not bumping just based on seniority - It is hard to weed out those not effective - as it is often about the number of hours worked - not the interest in working with special education students
- The ESC has created a job description using many of the resources above. Our districts rely on the ESC to hire staff and define their role.
- I would be curious to know the paraprofessionals response to this question.
- all you need in Ohio is to be 18 and graduate high school and give the state 10 bucks and you are licenced
- Our paras are employed and contracted through an ESC
- We have plenty of paperwork now. I don't think more paperwork [job description review] would improve the situation. I like to see staff working with students.
- We have no paraprofessionals in the district only teacher's aides in SPED classrooms.
- Union contract regulates this at present [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- Contracts [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- Does Ohio have adopted paraprofessional standards beyond passing the licensing exam? I have specifically looked for them unsuccessfully.
- IEPs and ETRs of students involved in their placement. [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- Rubric designed to determine areas of school day that student requires most assistance and least assistance. [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- NEOLA and Board-Approved Job descriptions are used. As needed, special job descriptions are developed. [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- Special Education Rules [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- Search for job descriptions on the Internet [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role***]
- I really don't know how familiar my district is with the descriptions of the roles and capacities of SPED paraprofessionals. I assume they know the roles because I feel my district is on top of Special Education.
- I am unaware; I do not know; I'm not sure what they use; Not part of this planning; Not sure; Unaware; unknown; unsure [***documents consulted to define SPED parapro role: comments from 8 respondents***]
- Paras don't make enough money to attend college or other fee based classes. I would only support this proposal [**pay tied to credentials**] in the future if the district provided free training.
- This [***pay***] is a union issue
- This is seriously unfair for the staff. ODE specifies specifics in classrooms ratios based on needs of a students but when a paprapro works in these rooms they have zero compensatory for the difficulty they work with.
- This [***pay tied to credentials***] may encourage more to continue their own education. They may feel now as if there is no benefit for them for doing so.

- the[y] base it on years. Some of our para's have bachelor's degrees, others have an associates. It'd be nice for them, to get paid a little more accordingly.
- We discussed differentiating pay for paras who work with students who have significant social emotional disabilities/behavioral disorders. This would be linked to specific behavioral training.
- When they have specific trainings, like TEACCH, I think the investment in their training and qualifications support a pay differentiation.
- All papraprofessionals have insurance that is values at 28,000. a family plan. They pay 1152.00 per year for this insurance. This makes up for the lower wage. Paraprofessionals only work 1080 hours per year in our district.
- Benefits would be very appealing to retention of staff
- [Pay] depends on what their qualifications and training.
- I feel that the salary should be based on the education of the Para
- I understand that paying for parapro's can be expensive. Especially when looking at the over all costs. I do feel like you get what you pay for. Competent Parapro's are worth paying for.
- I would always like to be able to pay our staff more money as they earn it but finances are always tight and it is not always possible to pay any staff member what they are worth.
- My Appalachian district can't/won't pay this much [i.e., $23,000 per year FTE]
- Our SPED paraprofessionals make approximately $15,000 depending on the number of hours worked.
- Our annual wage is $14,709
- This [pay tied to training and education and adequate wage] is NOT going to happen.
- We also offer every paraprofessional insurance so I'm not sure if that plays into the job consideration as I know some districts around us offer higher wages but only offer insurance is they work "enough" hours per week.
- We are seeing a lot of paraprofessionals positions being filled by two part-time people rather than one full time as it is often more cost effective (?) for the district.
- [paid below average in our district] with no insurance
- This [the role and function of SPED parapros overall] is a significant struggle within our district. I look forward to the state analyzing this data and making some specific recommendations for the role, as well as training options.
- This [job description review] is essential in the changing structure of our schools.
- I am unaware of specific parapro licensure except in the case of preschool mandates for program licensure

**2. Supervision of SPED parapros**

- I really have no idea except to comment that our district hires professional teachers so I'm assuming that they have the ability to supervise SPED paraprofessionals effectively.
- Our intervention specialists in the MD/ED/Autism classrooms directly supervise and evaluate the Paras assigned to their classrooms.
- Teachers are uncomfortable supervising the paraprofessionals...
- They [general education teachers] have never receive instruction or guidance on how to work with and supervise a paraprofessional in their classroom. The same can be said for the majority of the intervention specialist.

- They supervise regularly meaning they are "watching" them all the time. However, I take supervise to mean that they will offer assistance and suggestions. That is the part that the general education teachers struggle with.
- *Supervised* has management connotations. Our Classified agreement states that PP will follow the directions of the classroom teacher. This can be a problem when some of our PPs do not follow those directions. In such cases, the teacher usually lets administration know and administration steps in to correct problems.
- A discussion is needed with teachers to discuss what the role of paraprofessionals in the classroom is; addressing what they should or should not be doing.
- Families frequently do not understand the role of a para. Teachers generally do not understand the role of the para. SPED Coordinators rarely provide direction to paras on a day-to-day basis. Teachers, primarily sped teachers, are left to direct the role of paras in the classroom.
- My biggest concern are the number of parapros at our DD facility. In most cases, there are as many or more adults in the room as students. It would be nice to be able to move to ""parapro services"" as opposed to a 1-on-1 parapro. There are many times that a parapro is sitting beside a student which is extremely unproductive.
- In the same two buildings stated above in question # 23, the teachers almost always supervise the SPED paraprofessionals with high success.
- Complete lack of understanding in most districts [***related to professional discretion—comment indicates a general supervision issue***]

**3. Expectations for using SPED parapros in an instructional role**

- Majority of paraprofessionals are assigned to students for medical or behavioral needs.
- consistent message that paras support teachers. Paras do not teach, teachers teach.
- In our building, it varies from one paraprofessional to another. Some plan their own instruction, some modify as needed, and some follow explicit instruction of a teacher. This depends on who the paraprofessional is and which general education specialist or intervention specialist they are working with.
- Because our model is inclusive, our most valuable asset is a para who can assist with significant behavioral concerns
- Support with behavior modification and management is critical
- The academic instruction should be done by the teachers.
- 99% of our special education students are mainstreamed into mainly specific regular education classrooms. These classrooms require the most support.
- I would venture a guess that many paraprofessionals don't know current goals and objectives for students with with whom they regularly interact.
- One-on-one tutoring is very important because students really need this individual assistance.
- I think paraprofessionals should be included to the largest extent possible [in instruction] with teacher direction.
- The paras only are assigned to SPED classrooms, never to a gen ed classroom.
- Paraprofessionals are over used in our region. They seem to be used as the stop gap measure when dealing with a student that has behavioral or academic concerns in the classroom.

**4., 10. Teaming**

- Limitations to contract and coverage for student impede the above partnerships

- Scheduling and coverage prohibits involvement in TBTs - students need to be covered.
- There attendance IEP meetings depends on if they are assigned to a specific student. If they are assigned to a 1 on 1 then they are in the IEP meeting
- Times that meetings are held are generally not in the scheduled workday for a parapro.
- We recently had a paraprofessional join our BLT (this year) but prior to this they are almost never involved in any type of meeting.
- We offer annual training for all paras prior to the start of the year and have recently started some monthly staffings that include some paras.
- Would have to pay/outside work hours, creates financial barriers. (my thought)
- do not have teacher based teams
- Because most IEP Meetings happen during the school day, the cost of paying 2 substitutes for the same classroom would be prohibitive. Moving the meeting to after school is not a good option because that would cost the district overtime pay.
- I would say the attendance of a SPED paraprofessional participating in some of these meetings should be as appropriate.
- If a paraprofessional is providing one-on-one assistance to a student they may need to be a part of the lesson planning for that student, there needs to be a time for the paraprofessional to meet and discuss what they need to execute with that students, instead of always disrupting class to figure it out.
- If paraprofessionals are involved with students then they should be participating in meetings and their opinions should be noted.
- In my experience, paraprofessionals (handicap aides, instructional aides, one-on-one aides) oftentimes advocate for their positions because it becomes an employment issue for them if they are not needed. [***future teaming preferences***]
- It [participation on teams] is really dependent on the paraprofessional and how they work in the classroom or with a particular student.
- This answer depends on the situation that the paraprofessional is involved in. If assigned to an individual student, then the paraprofessional should be involved. If assigned as a general support person to the classroom, then they do not need to be at the meetings.
- This partially depends on the para's role. If the para is assigned to a specific student, they should be part of decision making meetings regarding that student. They typically are more familiar with the student than anyone else except, perhaps, the parent.
- Union related issues do not require paras to participate in these types of meetings, and those who do participate do so by choice.
- Hard with schedules with the multiple grade levels served and scheduled TBT times. IS [intervention specialists] want to meet minutes regarding IEP's. Balancing act.
- It is our hope that this would not be "sometimes participate in TBTs" - they often have the clearest perspective on teams!
- Our paras and intervention specialists work with specialized populations of students (AU, MD, ED), When the content is appropriate then participation is very helpful. On the other hand we don't want it to be a waste of time either.

**5. Assignment to a wide range of contexts**

- Majority of paraprofessionals are assigned to students for medical or behavioral needs.

- Typically the para-pro in the special education classroom will assist with a specific child (autism or behavioral)
- We have specific schedules for our Paras to follow. They cover several students going from special classes to regular classes. We rarely assign 1 para to 1 child. This more often creates dependence/codependence and does more harm than good.
- Since each year is different, paraprofessionals have to "re-learn" everything every year depending upon their placement. If the proper supports were in place, this transition would probably be much more smooth for all involved.
- we have building aides not assigned to a single student, but unevitably do workwith a similar student on a daily basis
- All of these activities are relevant and important, but this varies from building to building and different situations
- Because our model is inclusive, our most valuable asset is a para who can assist with significant behavioral concerns
- para skills need to match student IEP needs, whatever they are.
- In our building, it varies from one paraprofessional to another. Some plan their own instruction, some modify as needed, and some follow explicit instruction of a teacher. This depends on who the paraprofessional is and which general education specialist or intervention specialist they are working with.
- One-on-one tutoring is very important because students really need this individual assistance.
- Very difficult to fade paraprofessionals once they are assigned to specific students. Parents become very territorial to "their" child's paraprofessional.
- Medical needs of the student are a major concern.
- 99% of our special education students are mainstreamed into mainly specific regular education classrooms. These classrooms require the most support.
- Paraprofessionals are always assigned to buildings and have fluid roles.
- Personalities of students/paras/IS/reg ed teachers is essential when thinking about placement of kids. This would hold true for all students, but especially for our most at risk learners.
- The paras only are assigned to SPED classrooms, never to a gen ed classroom.
- I like parapros to be rotated, even though that is difficult. At least in resource room. Too often make kids dependent or someone else can't fill role. They will not be a lifetime aide. Kids need to generalize and work with others and to be self advocated
- Unsure how to answer this questions. It varies depending on the situation.
- We have no para-pros in general ed classrooms unless they are assigned to an individual student.
- Data Collection for intervention and behavior plans is an extremely high priority.
- My biggest concern are the number of parapros at our DD facility. In most cases, there are as many or more adults in the room as students. It would be nice to be able to move to ""parapro services"" as opposed to a 1-on-1 parapro. There are many times that a parapro is sitting beside a student which is extremely unproductive.
- Paraprofessionals are over used in our region. They seem to be used as the stop gap measure when dealing with a student that has behavioral or academic concerns in the classroom.

**6. Discretion and demeanor**

- The paraprofessional often perceives they are employed by the parent/family rather than to the district. The parent often thinks he/she can select who the paraprofessional is.

- Complete lack of understanding [of SPED parapro discretion and demeanor issues] in most districts
- I do not have concerns about our staff because we regularly discuss the importance of confidentiality.
- Confidentiality is my biggest concern.
- I frequently speak of the concerns for confidentiality to my large parapro staff. Reminders are helpful
- Professionalism and confidentiality is a significant concern. We have provided specific training, but continue to struggle.
- We are extremely careful to review these areas in our yearly Professional development sessions. This is always something to monitor but not a huge issue in the district.
- We have exceptional people serving as Paraprofessionals.
- Most parapro training seems to be CPR. But not consistent and applicable training on laws. Restraint and seclusion, disability awareness and how disability might present, over stereotyping, family awareness, Confidentiality!!!

**7. - 9. Training access and quality for SPED parapros is a largely local and ad hoc endeavor.**

- We offer annual training for all paras prior to the start of the year and have recently started some monthly staffings that include some paras.
- We oftentimes assign the least educated and trained adults to work with the most challenging students. Something is wrong with this picture.
- Without the proper training, they tend to be a distraction and/or bring about confidentiality concerns when they are included in teams and meetings
- We discussed differentiating pay for paras who work with students who have significant social emotional disabilities/behavioral disorders. This would be linked to specific behavioral training.
- When they have specific trainings, like TEACCH, I think the investment in their training and qualifications support a pay differentiation.
- A combination of training sources are available for districts. I would like to see paraprofessionals with at least a two year degree in a health, medical or educational field. Additional training can come from the ESCs and SSTs as well as private companies.
- A variety of training options would be preferred.
- Also community colleges
- Also participate in safety trainings
- As a district either we hold professional development for our Para Pros or we out source to various agencies within the community.
- Combination of district, ESC, SST
- Currently utilize a combination and will continue to do so.
- [Training is a] District decision
- ESC and other district opportunities are made available as well.
- I am not aware of the training that the paraprofessionals need or take
- I believe there can be a variety as long as it is high quality.
- I believe this training should be provided by more than one entity. Districts know their specific needs, however, don't always understand best practice or the dynamics of the SPED

environment. For example, the district may desire that every student spends time in the general education setting, but won't provide more than one para per SPED classroom.

- I feel that the training should be a collaborative effort between the agencies listed above as each agency brings different knowledge and skills to the table.
- I would like to see a combination of in-district PD as well as from the ESC, and SST. Ultimately, I would like our parapro's to be working toward some type of educational certificate.
- Our district utilizes in-house and out of house sources of PD SST, ESC, Colleges, and local agencies (DD, CSB, private professionals, etc.)
- SST training  University  2 year parapro training, district doing annual updates and having consistent evaluations
- SSTs can tailor training to meet our district needs specifically.
- The ESC provides a vital role in this area.  The training we do is very good but limited because of lack of financial support at the State level.
- The type of training to be provided would determine the source of training.  In general the district should be responsible.  The district should have one or more administrators trained by ESC, SST or colleges and they would be responsible for training paraprofessionals in their district.
- This survey has made me realize how little I know about paraprofessionals in our district.  I think they should receive the BEST training possible and this training needs to be applicable for increasing knowledge about dealing with all types of students - especially identified students.  I would venture a guess that many paraprofessionals don't know current goals and objectives for students with with whom they regularly interact.
- Training could come from a variety of places depending on the ""expert"" in the field.  Most of the time, our training comes from the ESC/SST.
- Varied sources preferred depending on individual learner
- We use a combination of training for staff.  Some is conducted in house by supervisors/speakers. Some is provided by specialists from ur SST-10 and our ESC.  Some is through Public Schoolworks.
- very little training - most is on the job
- HQT = training over time  doesn't happen. Specific one day trainings occur in local districts for specific topics, but there is no follow-up.
- I am only speaking as a special education teacher, I am not aware of the training that the paraprofessionals need or take. However, the opportunities for PD varies within the district from building to building.
- I do not know [what about training sources or quality]
- Most parapro training seems to be CPR. But not consistent and applicable training on laws. Restraint and seclusion, disability awareness and how disability might present, over stereotyping, family awareness, Confidentiality!!!
- My district does not provide training for paraprofessionals. They only are paid to attend work if the students for whom they are responsible are in school.
- Negotiated agreement and limited financial resources hinder access to professional development. We need more opportunity (time) and funding in order to provide on-going quality professional development to them without interruption of support to students who need them.
- Nothing I am aware of [provides high-quality training]
- SST does a good job

- [Training is] Something that needs to be addressed in future! Trainings for paraprofessional s. we are truly lacking in these opportunities in region 15!
- This [high-quality training] is an area I have recently tried to bolster. WE are having a problem with retaining good, quality, paraprofessionals. I am putting on an 8 week mini training course for my parapro's. About 20+ parapro's in the ESC MD program. These classes are completely optional, but I was shocked to see how many people I already have signed up for them.
- We have a very good SST in Region [for SPED parapro training]
- We send some PP out for speciaalized training. I am unaware of specific parapro licensure except in the case of preschool mandates for program licensure
- I feel that the salary should be based on the education of the Para
- At least training might be more effective. But, I have had parapros w/o training but training I provided in my classroom and my procedures be more effective. It's a teacher parapro collaboration.
- I would prefer that their pay be based be differentiated on qualifications, assignment and job performance.
- Paras don't make enough money to attend college or other fee based classes. I would only support this proposal in the future if the district provided free training.
- This [pay tied to qualifications] may encourage more to continue their own education. They may feel now as if there is no benefit for them for doing so.
- Higher w training and more updates and evaluations. My region varies much in pay. If you want quality u need to pay, same as in nursing homes. However, more pay equates w more professional training and evaluations of on the job professionalism.
- Rather than laying [a SPED parapro] member off, see if they can be cross-trained to serve the district in another capacity.
- Concern is important to ensure proper training and reminding of the importance of discretion. I do not have concerns about our staff because we regularly discuss the importance of confidentiality.
- Professionalism and confidentiality is a significant concern. We have provided specific training, but continue to struggle.
- We are extremely careful to review these areas [discretion, demeanor] in our yearly Professional development sessions. This is always something to monitor but not a huge issue in the district.
- Teachers lack training working daily in an inclusion classroom [included here because such teachers themselves must often provide context-specific training to SPED parapros]
- Formalized training as an educational assistant would be optimal.
- I believe that paraprofessionals can be a valuable resource if assigned correctly and if provided the appropriate training and instruction. But sad to say, they are often hired and either place in a classroom or with a student with no to minimal training.
- I feel ALL paraprofessionals need to have high quality training before they begin working. SPED paraprofessionals need basic training along with behavioral/mental issues training. The paraprofessionals need to have an understanding of where the student is coming from, how far they have come and how to get them to where they need to be a successful adult in society.
- I feel like each paraprofessional is trained and treated differently. Depending on the needs of the building that particular year...which works and doesn't. Since each year is different, paraprofessionals have to "re-learn" everything every year depending upon their placement. If

the proper supports were in place, this transition would probably be much more smooth for all involved.

- I feel that there isn't enough training for paraprofessionals when it comes to how to deal with behaviors, safety of students, following the teacher's lead, etc. Our paraprofessionals need much, much more training for them to be more effective within the classrooms and dealing with the special education population.
- I have recently thought about an in district mentoring program for paraprofessionals.
- Many trainings do not occur b/c there are limited resources for subs in our area for paraprofessionals and many are pd according to the hrs. the students are in session so this does not allow time for training.
- ODE needs to require more qualifications so there is not bumping just based on seniority - It is hard to weed out those not effective - as it is often about the number of hours worked - not the interest in working with special education students -
- Our current parapro will be cross trained as the child she is currently serving will hopefully be "weaned" from her oversight, and become more independent.
- Our parapros, while well intentioned, often lack the training and resources to adequately engage in a pro-cative partnership with our educators. By increasing salary to draw first year teachers seeking future employment, the district would benefit from a higher caliber of employee with increased benefit to confidentiality and quality instructional support. A dynamic and specific training program would serve to better outline the role and expectations of the parapro, which can often change several times annually.
- Paraprofessionals are over used in our region. They seem to be used as the stop gap measure when dealing with a student that has behavioral or academic concerns in the classroom. In many cases the para becomes the teacher to address educational needs for the student in a general education setting. The training is minimal and the expectations on the Para professionals is unfair. Para wages at this time are minimum wage without benefits. After two years with successful evaluations and minimal call offs the individuals can make an additional 45 cents an hour. Parent education as well as training.
- The biggest problem is that parapro position has evoled in our district from a "warm" body to help a very involved child get through the school day, to a much more training intense position. Our older para-pros are not well-trained, but all you need in Ohio is to be 18 and graduate high school and give the state 10 bucks and you are licenced. That makes it tough on those who have negotiated agreements with unions that evolved over the last 30 years. The legislature needs to step in and say that para-pros need to have an accociate degree in child care or some related field.
- There is a lack of quality resources for training paraprofessionals. It is difficult to hind qualified individuals due to the low pay and the demands. Some paraprofessionals don't get the "professional" part of the job nor realize the importance of their positions.
- This [the role and function of SPED parapros] is a significant struggle within our district. I look forward to the state analyzing this data and making some specific recommendations for the role, as well as training options.

## APPENDIX F
## Frequencies and Descriptive Statistics: All Items

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Respondent vantage on district issues** | | | | |
| 1=central office respondent | 111 | 51.63 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=special education teacher respondent | 31 | 14.42 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=ESC or SST respondent | 73 | 33.95 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 215 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Years respondent an educator** | 213 | 100.00 | 22.10 | 10.33 |
| **Years respondent in position** | 213 | 100.00 | 6.42 | 5.54 |
| **Respondent's current position?** | | | | |
| 1=other LEA position | 39 | 18.22 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=superintendent | 57 | 26.64 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=central office staff | 45 | 21.03 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=ESC or SST employee | 73 | 34.11 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 214 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Respondent ever licensed as SPED teacher?** | | | | |
| 1=yes | 121 | 56.54 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=no | 93 | 43.46 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 214 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Standards—now** | | | | |
| 1=unaware of their existence | 19 | 10.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=aware but not familiar | 43 | 22.63 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=somewhat familiar | 54 | 28.42 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=familiar | 54 | 28.42 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=very familiar | 20 | 10.53 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 190 | 100.00 | 3.07 | 1.15 |
| **Standards – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unaware of their existence | 1 | 0.54 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=aware but not familiar | 1 | 0.54 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=somewhat familiar | 21 | 11.41 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=familiar | 70 | 38.04 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=very familiar | 91 | 49.46 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 184 | 100.00 | 4.35 | 0.75 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Assigned now to a single student** | | | | |
| 1=about 20% or less | 97 | 53.01 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=about 20-40% | 37 | 20.22 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=about 40-60% | 25 | 13.66 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=about 60-80% | 10 | 5.46 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=about 80% or more | 14 | 7.65 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 183 | 100.00 | 1.95 | 1.26 |
| **Assigned now to a SPED classroom** | | | | |
| 1=about 20% or less | 26 | 21.85 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=about 20-40% | 43 | 36.13 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=about 40-60% | 23 | 19.33 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=about 60-80% | 17 | 14.29 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=about 80% or more | 10 | 8.40 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 119 | 100.00 | 2.51 | 1.22 |
| **Assigned now to a GenEd classroom** | | | | |
| 1=about 20% or less | 84 | 49.12 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=about 20-40% | 29 | 16.96 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=about 40-60% | 37 | 21.64 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=about 60-80% | 19 | 11.11 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=about 80% or more | 2 | 1.17 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 171 | 100.00 | 1.98 | 1.12 |
| **Informal teams – now** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 50 | 26.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 78 | 41.49 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 49 | 26.06 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 11 | 5.85 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 188 | 100.00 | 2.11 | 0.87 |
| **Informal teams – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 4 | 2.12 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 47 | 24.87 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 102 | 53.97 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 36 | 19.05 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 189 | 100.00 | 2.90 | 0.72 |
| **Formal teams – now** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 73 | 39.04 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 70 | 37.43 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 34 | 18.18 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 10 | 5.35 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 187 | 100.00 | 1.90 | 0.88 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Formal teams – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 5 | 2.66 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 50 | 26.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 101 | 53.72 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 32 | 17.02 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 188 | 100.00 | 2.85 | 0.72 |
| **IEP meetings – now** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 66 | 35.11 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 76 | 40.43 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 35 | 18.62 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 11 | 5.85 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 188 | 100.00 | 1.95 | 0.88 |
| **IEP meetings – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 10 | 5.32 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 56 | 29.79 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 72 | 38.30 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 50 | 26.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 188 | 100.00 | 2.86 | 0.87 |
| **Whole-school meetings – now** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 25 | 13.37 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 55 | 29.41 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 61 | 32.62 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 46 | 24.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 187 | 100.00 | 2.68 | 0.99 |
| **Whole-school meetings – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 3 | 1.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 21 | 11.23 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 71 | 37.97 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 92 | 49.20 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 187 | 100.00 | 3.35 | 0.74 |
| **Teacher-Based Teams – now** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 100 | 54.05 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 54 | 29.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 21 | 11.35 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 10 | 5.41 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 185 | 100.00 | 1.68 | 0.88 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Teacher-Based Teams – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 13 | 7.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 50 | 27.47 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 82 | 45.05 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 37 | 20.33 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 182 | 100.00 | 2.79 | 0.85 |
| **SPED teachers on TBTs – now** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 21 | 11.23 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 33 | 17.65 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 48 | 25.67 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 85 | 45.45 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 187 | 100.00 | 3.05 | 1.04 |
| **SPED teachers on TBTs – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 5 | 2.70 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes but not frequently | 10 | 5.41 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=frequently | 41 | 22.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=almost always | 129 | 69.73 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 185 | 100.00 | 3.59 | 0.72 |
| **Job description review – now** | | | | |
| 1=unknown or not applicable | 54 | 29.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=irregularly | 90 | 48.65 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=every 2-4 years | 35 | 18.92 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=every year or two | 6 | 3.24 | **NA** | **NA** |
| | 185 | 100.00 | 1.96 | 0.78 |
| **Job description review – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unknown or not applicable | 18 | 9.68 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=irregularly | 15 | 8.06 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=every 2-4 years | 107 | 57.53 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=every year or two | 46 | 24.73 | **NA** | **NA** |
| | 186 | 100.00 | 2.97 | 0.85 |
| **Consult Ohio standards** | 51 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Consult local job description** | 156 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Consult other states' standards** | 4 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Consult national standards** | 28 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Consult other documents** | 17 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Training source - now** | | | | |
| 1=our district itself | 79 | 42.02 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=ESC | 74 | 39.36 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=SST | 26 | 13.83 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=college or university | 3 | 1.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=other (describe in comments) | 6 | 3.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 188 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Training source – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=our district itself | 43 | 23.63 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=ESC | 74 | 40.66 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=SST | 42 | 23.08 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=college or university | 7 | 3.85 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=other (describe in comments) | 16 | 8.79 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 182 | 100.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **Access to PD** | | | | |
| 1=no access | 18 | 10.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=access at remote location | 27 | 15.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=inconsistent local access | 84 | 46.67 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=consistent local access | 51 | 28.33 | **NA** | **NA** |
| | 180 | 100.00 | 2.93 | 0.91 |
| **Credentials & pay – now** | | | | |
| 0=no | 93 | 53.45 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 1=yes | 72 | 41.38 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 174 | 100.00 | 0.52 | 0.60 |
| **Credentials & pay – preferred future** | | | | |
| 0=no | 52 | 30.77 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 1=yes | 117 | 69.23 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 169 | 100.00 | 0.98 | 0.77 |
| **Pay level - now** | | | | |
| 1=rather lower | 83 | 47.43 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=about the same | 84 | 48.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=rather higher | 8 | 4.57 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 175 | 100.00 | 1.57 | 0.58 |
| **Pay level – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=rather lower | 18 | 10.65 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=about the same | 103 | 60.95 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=rather higher | 48 | 28.40 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 169 | 100.00 | 2.18 | 0.60 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Clerical support – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 55 | 32.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 47 | 27.49 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 50 | 29.24 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 18 | 10.53 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 1 | 0.58 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 171 | 100.00 | 2.20 | 1.03 |
| **Clerical support – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 61 | 36.53 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 36 | 21.56 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 52 | 31.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 15 | 8.98 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 3 | 1.80 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 167 | 100.00 | 2.18 | 1.08 |
| **Personal care – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 2 | 1.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 7 | 4.07 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 42 | 24.42 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 86 | 50.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 35 | 20.35 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 172 | 100.00 | 3.84 | 0.83 |
| **Personal care – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 0 | 0.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 9 | 5.36 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 39 | 23.21 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 77 | 45.83 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 43 | 25.60 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 168 | 100.00 | 3.92 | 0.84 |
| **Functional skills – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 2 | 1.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 5 | 2.91 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 50 | 29.07 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 83 | 48.26 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 32 | 18.6 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 172 | 100.00 | 3.80 | 0.81 |
| **Functional skills – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 0 | 0.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 2 | 1.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 32 | 19.05 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 87 | 51.79 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 47 | 27.98 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 168 | 100.00 | 4.07 | 0.72 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Academics – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 2 | 1.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 6 | 3.47 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 46 | 26.59 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 74 | 42.77 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 45 | 26.01 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 173 | 100.00 | 3.89 | 0.87 |
| **Academics – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 1 | 0.6 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 2 | 1.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 27 | 16.07 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 82 | 48.81 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 56 | 33.33 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 168 | 100.00 | 4.13 | 0.76 |
| **Support for LI students – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 0 | 0.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 8 | 4.62 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 43 | 24.86 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 67 | 38.73 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 55 | 31.79 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 173 | 100.00 | 3.98 | 0.87 |
| **Support for LI students – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 0 | 0.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not very important | 8 | 4.79 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=relevant | 26 | 15.57 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=important | 73 | 43.71 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=most important | 60 | 35.93 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 167 | 100.00 | 4.11 | 0.84 |
| **Frequency of instructional role** | | | | |
| 1=almost never | 14 | 7.95 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely | 28 | 15.91 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes | 76 | 43.18 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=typically | 48 | 27.27 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=almost always | 10 | 5.68 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 176 | 100.00 | 3.07 | 0.99 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Most appropriate instructional role** | | | | |
| 1=role is seldom appropriate | 3 | 1.69 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=follow explicit directions of teacher | 112 | 62.92 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=modify lesson plan with teacher direction | 49 | 27.53 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=develop instructional event teacher direction | 14 | 7.87 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 178 | 100.00 | 2.42 | 0.66 |
| **Fading practices** | | | | |
| 1=fading is uncommon | 34 | 19.88 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=sometimes considered in IEP meetings | 76 | 44.44 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=routinely considered in IEP meetings | 52 | 30.41 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=plans for fading required on IEP | 9 | 5.26 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 171 | 100.00 | 2.21 | 0.82 |
| **Fading: learned helplessness** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 11 | 6.51 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 11 | 6.51 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 58 | 34.32 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 63 | 37.28 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 26 | 15.38 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 169 | 100 | 3.49 | 1.04 |
| **Fading: concern for reassignment** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 24 | 14.37 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 37 | 22.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 68 | 40.72 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 34 | 20.36 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 4 | 2.4 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 167 | 100.00 | 2.74 | 1.02 |
| **Fading: parental concern** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 6 | 3.57 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 9 | 5.36 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 57 | 33.93 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 74 | 44.05 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 22 | 13.1 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 168 | 100.00 | 3.58 | 0.91 |
| **Fading: teacher concern** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 5 | 2.99 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 25 | 14.97 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 73 | 43.71 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 52 | 31.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 12 | 7.19 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 167 | 100.00 | 3.25 | 0.90 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fading: other concern** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 17 | 68 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 1 | 4 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 3 | 12 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 2 | 8 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 2 | 8 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 25 | 100.00 | 1.84 | 1.37 |
| **Fading: to one – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 9 | 6.08 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 24 | 16.22 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 66 | 44.59 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 29 | 19.59 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 20 | 13.51 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 148 | 100.00 | 3.18 | 1.06 |
| **Fading: to one – preferred future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 12 | 8.57 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 17 | 12.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 54 | 38.57 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 32 | 22.86 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 25 | 17.86 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 140 | 100.00 | 3.29 | 1.15 |
| **Fading: to several – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 7 | 4.7 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 16 | 10.74 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 71 | 47.65 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 46 | 30.87 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 9 | 6.04 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 149 | 100.00 | 3.23 | 0.89 |
| **Fading: to several – future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 4 | 2.86 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 10 | 7.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 51 | 36.43 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 56 | 40 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 19 | 13.57 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 140 | 100.00 | 3.54 | 0.92 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fading: to SPED classroom – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 7 | 4.73 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 13 | 8.78 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 73 | 49.32 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 44 | 29.73 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 11 | 7.43 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 148 | 100.00 | 3.26 | 0.90 |
| **Fading: to SPED classroom – future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 6 | 4.29 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 10 | 7.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 56 | 40 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 53 | 37.86 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 15 | 10.71 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 140 | 100.00 | 3.44 | 0.93 |
| **Fading: to GenEd classroom – now** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 24 | 16.33 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 41 | 27.89 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 47 | 31.97 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 25 | 17.01 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 10 | 6.8 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 147 | 100.00 | 2.70 | 1.14 |
| **Fading: to GenEd classroom – future** | | | | |
| 1=unimportant | 17 | 12.32 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=rarely important | 23 | 16.67 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=sometimes important | 42 | 30.43 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=often important | 39 | 28.26 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=always important | 17 | 12.32 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 138 | 100.00 | 3.12 | 1.20 |
| **Maintaining confidentiality** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 15 | 8.72 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 23 | 13.37 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 45 | 26.16 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 41 | 23.84 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 48 | 27.91 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 172 | 100.00 | 3.49 | 1.27 |
| **Professional demeanor** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 15 | 8.72 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 23 | 13.37 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 50 | 29.07 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 50 | 29.07 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 34 | 19.77 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 172 | 100.00 | 3.38 | 1.20 |

| ITEM | VALID N | % VALID N | Mean | Std Dev |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Contribution in IEP meetings** | 17 | 10 | | |
| 1=not a concern | 40 | 23.53 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 66 | 38.82 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 39 | 22.94 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 8 | 4.71 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | | 0.00 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 170 | 100.00 | 2.89 | 1.02 |
| **Maintaining IEP records** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 34 | 19.77 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 37 | 21.51 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 57 | 33.14 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 31 | 18.02 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 13 | 7.56 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 172 | 100.00 | 2.72 | 1.19 |
| **Understanding IDEA provisions** | | | | |
| 1=not a concern | 4 | 3.7 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=not much of a concern | 18 | 16.67 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=some concern | 39 | 36.11 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=substantial concern | 23 | 21.3 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=highest concern | 24 | 22.22 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 108 | 100.00 | 3.42 | 1.12 |
| **GenEd teachers receptivity to inclusion** | | | | |
| 1=vocally opposed | 7 | 4.07 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=quite skeptical but not actively resistant | 37 | 21.51 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=accepting and struggling hard | 82 | 47.67 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=practiced and engaged | 46 | 26.74 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 172 | 100.00 | 2.97 | 0.81 |
| **GenEd teachers capacity to supervise** | | | | |
| 1=never or very rarely | 34 | 20.12 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 2=occasionally | 44 | 26.04 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 3=more than occasionally but not frequently | 40 | 23.67 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 4=frequently | 37 | 21.89 | **NA** | **NA** |
| 5=almost always | 14 | 8.28 | **NA** | **NA** |
| **AGGREGATE** | 169 | 100.00 | 2.72 | 1.24 |

## Appendix G

## Relevant Excerpts from Ohio's 2014 Operating Standards

“Paraprofessional services” include services provided by school, county board of DD, and other educational agency employees who are adequately trained to assist in the provision of special education and related services to children with disabilities. Paraprofessionals work under the supervision of teachers, intervention specialists, and/or related service providers. Other titles used to identify these service providers include teacher assistants, educational aides, school psychology aides, occupational therapy assistants, physical therapist assistants, and job coaches. (Ohio Operating Standards, 2014, p. 29)

The school district shall ensure services of paraprofessionals and related service assistants are supervised in accordance with Ohio law. (Ohio Operating Standards, 2014, p. 151)

(a) Paraprofessionals providing services to children with disabilities shall hold an educational aide permit or associate license and meets requirements under paragraph (I) of rule 3301-24-05 of the Administrative Code. Any school district that employs a paraprofessional shall have written policies and procedures outlining:

(i) Criteria for staff selection;

(ii) A planned sequence of continuing education and annual training opportunities to enable the paraprofessional to continue to develop the knowledge and skills that are specific to the students with whom the paraprofessional works, including following lesson plans, implementing follow-up instructional procedures and activities, supporting effective classroom organization and

behavior management, and working effectively with teachers and as part of an instructional team;

(iii) A process for direct continuing supervision by one or more licensed teachers or service providers and evaluation of the services of such personnel; and a job description of the role and function of a paraprofessional. (Ohio Operating Standards, 2014, pp. 152-153)

> Note. Rule 3301-24-05 of the Administrative Code ¶ I reads as follows:
>
> The one year or four year educational aide permit, valid for working with learners under the supervision of a fully licensed educator, shall be issued to an individual deemed to be of good moral character, who has a high school diploma or the equivalent, and who has been recommended by the employing school district, in accordance with Chapter 3301-25 of the Administrative Code. The term "ESEA qualified" shall be added to the educational aide permit for individuals who have successfully completed either the examination for paraprofessionals prescribed by the state board of education; or an associate degree (or higher) from an accredited institution of higher education; or at least two years of study at an accredited institution of higher education (defined as forty-eight semester hours or seventy-two quarter hours.) (Retrieved from http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3301-24-05)

An intervention specialist shall serve no more than twelve children with emotional disturbances.

(i) No more than ten children shall be served during any one instructional period.

(ii) The age range shall not exceed forty-eight months within any one instructional period.

(iii) There should be a plan on file and in operation in the school district to provide appropriate classroom management and crisis intervention support.

(iv) In the absence of a plan, the school district shall employ at least one full-time paraprofessional in each special class for these children.

An intervention specialist shall serve no more than eight children with multiple disabilities.

(i) No more than eight children shall be served during any one instructional period.

(ii) The age range shall not exceed sixty months within any one instructional period.

(iii) There shall be at least one full-time paraprofessional in each special class for children with multiple disabilities.

An intervention specialist shall serve no more than six children with autism, deaf-blindness and/or traumatic brain injury.

(i) The age range shall not exceed sixty months within any one instructional period; and

(ii) There shall be at least one full-time paraprofessional in each special class for these children. (Ohio Operating Standards, 2014, pp. 155-156)

**Directly Related provisions**

**[Supplemental Services]** "Supplementary aids and services" means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes, other education- related settings, and in extracurricular and nonacademic settings, to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate in accordance with the requirements for least restrictive environment in rule 3301-51-09 of the Administrative Code. (Ohio Operating Standards, p. 39)

**[LRE requirements]** Each school district must ensure that: (a) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or nonpublic institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (b) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. (Ohio Operating Standards, 2014, p.

**[Placements]** In determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, including a preschool child with a disability, each school district must ensure that:

(5) A child with a disability is not removed from education in age-appropriate regular classrooms solely because of needed modifications in the general education curriculum.

**Appendix H**

**CEC's**
**<insert Ohio's 2008 *Educational Paraprofessional Associate Standards*>**
**<insert CEC's 2011 *Special Education Paraeducator Common Core Specialty Set for PSPC*>**

Ohio | Board of Regents
Department of Education

# Educational Paraprofessional Associate

## 2008 Ohio Program Standards

The Associate License, valid for five years, shall be issued to an individual who holds an Associate's degree; who is deemed to be of good moral character; and who has completed an approved program of preparation in Educational Paraprofessional education.

# Ohio Educator Licensure Standards
# for
# Educational Paraprofessional
# Associate Teacher Licensure

## Introduction

The Ohio Educator Licensure Program Standards for Educational Paraprofessional Associate Teacher Licensure program were developed by an advisory committee after a thorough review of current programs and courses of study, Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession, and Ohio Performance-Based Teacher Licensure Standards.

We wish to acknowledge the following individuals who served on the advisory committee:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Dr. Aldena Francisco-Harris** | **Lorain County Community College** |
| **Nanette Kennedy** | **Jefferson Community College** |
| **Pamela Healy** | **Clark State Community College** |
| **Ellen Sostarich** | **Hocking Community College** |


### Performance-based standards

Ohio requires performance-based programs and program reports which must include candidate performance assessments. Performance-based assessments should be appropriate for the standards including multiple forms of measurement, and measurement at multiple points over a candidate's progression through a program.

## Licensure Rule 3301-24-05 (H) (1) (a)

The associate license, valid for five years, shall be issued to an individual who holds an associate's degree; who is deemed of good moral character; and who has completed an approved program of preparation in Educational Paraprofessional Associate.

## State Standards

On October 11, 2005 the State Board of Education adopted the Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession (2005 edition) as the state standards for Ohio replacing INTASC standards. The Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession can be found at www.ode.state.oh.us .

## EDUCATIONAL PARAPROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATE STANDARDS

**Standard 1. Candidates know and understand the principles of learning and child development in order to assist the classroom teacher.**

1.1 Candidates know and understand the learning principles and curriculum as they relate to basic math, writing, and reading skills.

1.2 Candidates identify the key concepts, principles, and theories of human growth and development.

1.3 Candidates know and understand various educational theories and philosophies.

1.4 Candidates know and understand educational programs designed to meet the needs of all students (e.g., students with disabilities, gifted, at-risk, ESL).

**Standard 2. Candidates assist teachers in creating learning environments that promote high levels of student learning and achievement.**

2.1 Candidates assist in maintaining effective and appropriate practices in the learning environment.

2.2 Candidates assist in integrating technology into learning activities, assessments, and record-keeping.

2.3 Candidates understand differentiated instruction; develop and use strategies to assist the teacher in meeting the learning needs of all students.

2.4 Candidates demonstrate an appreciation for cultural/ ethnic/racial/gender/ linguistic differences, as well as the impact of socioeconomic status on learning.

**Standard 3. Candidates assist in the implementation of instructional strategies that accommodate various learning styles, intelligences, and exceptionalities.**

3.1 Candidates recognize the characteristics of students with disabilities and at-risk students in order to assist in identification, instruction, and intervention including participating on Multi-factored Evaluation (MFE) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams.

3.2 Candidates support the resource services provided to the students to address physical and cognitive accommodations to maximize individual learning.

3.3 Candidates facilitate small group learning activities for developmental skill acquisition and enhancement

3.4 Candidates assist teachers with behavior management and the implementation of intervention plans.

| **Standard 4. Candidates assist teachers with the implementation of varied assessment tools.** |
|---|
| 4.1 Candidates understand and utilize a variety of formative and summative assessment strategies.<br><br>4.2 Candidates objectively record and report observations of student performance (through the use of anecdotal records, conferences, intervention plans).<br><br>4.3 Candidates assist in evaluating students' written and oral assignments.<br><br>4.4 Candidates assist teachers with student record-keeping. |
| **Standard 5. Candidates collaborate and communicate with students, parents, other educators, administrators, and the community to support student learning.** |
| 5.1 Candidates demonstrate proficiency in listening skills, and written and verbal communication skills.<br><br>5.2 Candidates collaborate with and assist other members of the instructional team to plan and implement learning activities. |
| **Standard 6. Candidates know and understand the importance of professional growth, ethical conduct, and involvement as an individual and as a member of a learning community.** |
| 6.1 Candidates demonstrate an understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of all educational professionals.<br><br>6.2 Candidates practice ethical, legal, and professional standards of conduct.<br><br>6.3 Candidates participate in professional development to remain current in their field and to maintain licensure<br><br>6.4 Candidates demonstrate an appreciation for the views and attitudes of parents, teachers, and other stakeholders in the educative process.<br><br>6.5 Candidates reflect on their effectiveness as an educational professional.<br><br>6.6 Candidates demonstrate professional work habits including confidentiality, dependability, and time management.<br><br>6.7 Candidates understand programs and mandates for special education services.<br><br>6.8 Candidates participate in 300 hours of field experiences in culturally, racially, socioeconomic ally diverse settings, and include opportunities to work with a range of student abilities. |

## Special Education Paraeducator Common Core Specialty Set for PSPC

## Professional Development Guideline 1 Foundations

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P1K1 | Purposes of supports and services for individuals with exceptionalities |
| P1K2 | Rights and responsibilities of individuals with exceptionalities, and other related stakeholders |
| P1K3 | Eligibility categories for special education and supports and services typically associated with each category |
| P1K4 | Impact of culture and the contributions of culturally diverse groups |
| P1K5 | Role of families in the educational process |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P1S1 | Use basic educational terminology |
| P1S2 | Implement concepts associated with disability rights, normalization, and inclusive practices |
| P1S3 | Demonstrate respect and appreciation for differences in values, languages, and customs among home, school, and community |
| P1S4 | Access credible resources to extend and expand understanding of exceptionalities |

## Professional Development Guideline 2 Development and Characteristics of Learners

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P2K1 | Typical and atypical human growth and development |
| P2K2 | Educational implications of characteristics of various exceptionalities |
| P2K3 | Family systems and the role of families in supporting development |
| P2K4 | Similarities and differences of individuals with and without exceptionalities and among individuals with exceptionalities |
| P2K5 | Impact of exceptionalities on individuals, families, and society |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| None | |

## Professional Development Guideline 3 Individual Learning Differences

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P3K1 | Cultural perspectives influencing the relationships among families, schools, and communities as related to instruction |
| P3K2 | Individual learner characteristics as the primary basis for instructional decision making, rather than disability categories or educational placements |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P3S1 | Facilitate friendships as determined by the instructional team |
| P3S2 | Use knowledge of individual's strengths and interests to encourage engagement in varied school and community activities as determined by the instructional team |
| P3S3 | Implement levels of support appropriate to academic and social-emotional needs of individuals with exceptionalities as determined by the instructional team |

## Professional Development Guideline 4 Instructional Strategies

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P4K1 | Concept of evidence-based practice |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P4S1 | Demonstrate proficiency in academics including oral and written communication, literacy, and mathematical skills appropriate to the paraeducator's assignment |
| P4S2 | Facilitate the integration of individuals with exceptionalities into various settings as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S3 | Support individuals' with exceptionalities use of self-assessment, problem-solving, and other cognitive strategies as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S4 | As determined by the instructional team use strategies to facilitate maintenance and generalization of skills |
| P4S5 | Use strategies to promote the individual's positive sense of identity, self-control, and self-reliance as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S6 | Use strategies that promote successful transitions for individuals with exceptionalities as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S7 | Support the use of learning strategies and study skills to promote acquisition of academic content as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S8 | Use instructional strategies and materials as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S9 | Adapt, instructional strategies and materials as determined by the instructional team |

| | |
|---|---|
| P4S10 | Modify pace of instruction and provide organizational cues as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S11 | Use and maintain educational and assistive technology for individuals with exceptionalities as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S12 | Use a variety of positive behavioral supports to enhance an individual's active participation in activities as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S13 | Use an individual's responses and errors, especially a pattern of errors, to guide next instructional steps and provide ongoing feedback as determined by the instructional team |
| P4S14 | Re-teach and reinforce essential concepts and content across the general curriculum as determined by the instructional team |

## Professional Development Guideline 5 Learning Environments and Social Interactions

| **Knowledge** | |
|---|---|
| P5K1 | Communicative intents of behaviors |
| P5K2 | Rules and procedural safeguards regarding behavioral support of individuals with exceptionalities |

| **Skills** | |
|---|---|
| P5S1 | Provide least intrusive level of support based on the demands of the learning environment as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S2 | Use routines and procedures to facilitate transitions as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S3 | Promote choice and voice of individuals with exceptionalities in building classroom communities as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S4 | Support safe, equitable, positive, and supportive learning environments in which diversities are valued as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S5 | Establish and maintain rapport with learners |
| P5S6 | Adapt physical environment to provide optimal learning opportunities as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S7 | Implement individualized reinforcement systems and environmental modifications at levels equal to the intensity of the behavior as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S8 | Promote self-advocacy and independence as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S9 | Use universal precautions to assist in maintaining a safe, healthy learning environment |
| P5S10 | Implement active supervision when responsible for non-instructional groups as determined by the instructional team |

| | |
|---|---|
| P5S11 | Use strategies as determined by the instructional team in a variety of settings to assist in the development of social skills |
| P5S12 | Support individuals with exceptionalities in following prescribed classroom routines as determined by the instructional team |
| P5S13 | Implement legal and ethical practices in behavioral interventions as determined by the instructional team |

## Professional Development Guideline 6 Language

| **Knowledge** | |
|---|---|
| P6K1 | Impact of speech and language development on academic and nonacademic learning of individuals with exceptionalities |
| P6K2 | Implications of language levels for individuals with exceptionalities learning the dominant language |
| P6K3 | Characteristics of one's own culture and use of language, and how these may differ from individuals with exceptionalities from other cultures |
| P6K4 | Implications of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication |

| **Skills** | |
|---|---|
| P6S1 | Match communication methods to individual's language proficiency as determined by the instructional team |
| P6S2 | Support the development of oral and written communication by reinforcing language and speech skills of individuals with exceptionalities as determined by the instructional team |
| P6S3 | Support individuals with exceptionalities in their use of augmentative and alternative communication skills and other assistive technology as determined by the instructional team |
| P6S4 | Support the acquisition and use of learning strategies to enhance literacy of individuals with exceptionalities as determined by the instructional team |
| P6S5 | Support individuals with exceptionalities in the maintenance and generalization of strategies for effective oral and written communication across environments as determined by the instructional team |
| P6S6 | Support the use of strategies with individuals with exceptionalities to remember verbal and written directions as determined by the instructional team |
| P6S7 | Support individuals with exceptionalities in the effective use of vocabulary in multiple environments as determined by the instructional team |

## Professional Development Guideline 7 Instructional Planning

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P7K1 | Purpose of individual plans relative to general curriculum |
| P7K2 | Roles and responsibilities of the paraeducator related to instruction, intervention, and direct service |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P7S1 | Follow written plans, seeking clarification as needed |
| P7S2 | Prepare and organize materials to support teaching and learning as determined by the instructional team |
| P7S3 | Use instructional time effectively |
| P7S4 | Make responsive adjustments to instruction consistent with Professional Development Guidelines as determined by the instructional team |
| P7S5 | Use age and ability appropriate instructional strategies, technology, and materials for individuals with exceptionalities as determined by the instructional team |

## Professional Development Guideline 8 Assessment

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P8K1 | Purposes of assessment |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P8S1 | Record information in various formats as determined by the instructional team |
| P8S2 | Assist in collecting and providing objective, accurate information for the instructional team |

## Professional Development Guideline 9 Professional and Ethical Practice

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P9K1 | Principles that guide ethical practice |
| P9K2 | Personal and cultural biases and differences that affect one's practice |
| P9K3 | Importance of the paraeducator serving as a positive model for individuals with exceptionalities |
| P9K4 | Professional growth opportunities for continued learning |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P9S1 | Conduct activities in compliance with applicable laws and policies |
| P9S2 | Maintain the dignity, privacy, and confidentiality of all individuals with exceptionalities, families, and school employees |
| P9S3 | Protect the health and safety of individuals with exceptionalities |
| P9S4 | Provide accurate and timely information about individuals with exceptionalities to individuals who have the need and the right to know as determined by the instructional team |
| P9S5 | Report suspected child abuse, suicidal ideation, and /or dangerous behaviors as required by law, policies and local procedures |
| P9S6 | Practice within the limits of the defined paraeducator role |
| P9S7 | Respect role differences of teachers, paraeducators, and other professional practitioners |
| P9S8 | Recognize the role of the teacher as a leader instructional team |
| P9S9 | Follow chain of command to address policy questions, system issues, and personnel practices |
| P9S10 | Practice within one's skill limits and obtain assistance as needed |
| P9S11 | Practice with competence, integrity, and sound judgment |
| P9S12 | Request and use feedback from supervising professionals |
| P9S13 | Reflect on one's performance to improve practice |

## Professional Development Guideline 10 Collaboration

| Knowledge | |
|---|---|
| P10K1 | Purposes of collaborative teams |
| P10K2 | Common concerns of families of individuals with exceptionalities |
| P10K3 | Roles and relationships of paraeducators and other stakeholders on the instructional team |

| Skills | |
|---|---|
| P10S1 | Use local policies for confidential communication about team practices |
| P10S2 | Forge respectful relationships with teachers, colleagues and family members |
| P10S3 | Communicate effectively with stakeholders as determined by the instructional team |
| P10S4 | Participate actively in conferences and team meetings |
| P10S5 | Support individuals with exceptionalities by modeling and facilitating the use of collaborative problem solving and conflict management |