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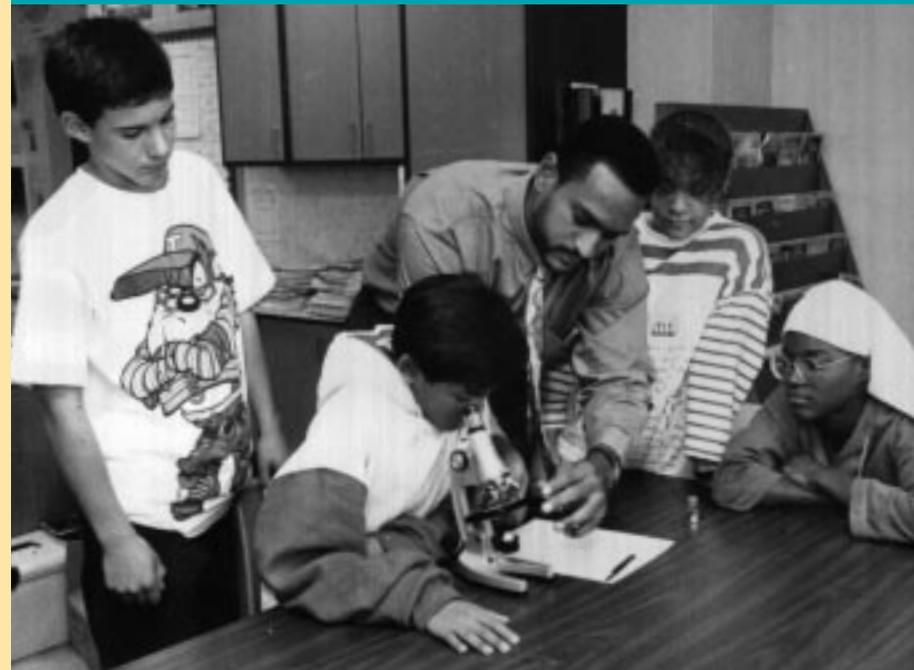
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**A Guide to Developing  
Paraeducator-to-Teacher  
Programs**



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**Please use our Reader Response Form at the end of this guide.**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Potential Barriers for Participants	7
How to Develop an Effective Program	12
How to Build Support for Your Program	20
An In-depth Look at Programs That Work: Questions and Answers	28
A Checklist for Program Development	31
Resources	32

## About RNT

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. is a national nonprofit organization formed in 1986 to raise esteem for teaching, expand the pool of prospective teachers, and improve the nation's teacher recruitment, development, and diversity policies and practices.

For more information about RNT, contact us at (617) 489-6000, 385 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA, 02478; [rnt@rnt.org](mailto:rnt@rnt.org); [www.rnt.org](http://www.rnt.org).

# The Toolkit Guide Series

*A Guide to Developing Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs* is part of RNT’s “Toolkit,” designed to help states and school districts meet their teacher recruitment and retention challenges. Other guides in this Toolkit series include *A Guide to Today’s Teacher Recruitment Challenges*, *A Guide to Developing Teacher Induction Programs*, and *A Guide to Developing High School Teaching Career Academies*. These guides provide an understanding of teacher recruitment and retention issues, strategies for developing innovative approaches to finding and keeping high-quality teachers, and an extensive directory of resources on issues related to building a talented and diverse teacher workforce for our nation’s schools.

Information for this guide was primarily derived from a 1996 report, *Breaking the Class Ceiling: Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching*, by David Haselkorn and Elizabeth Fideler of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. RNT’s national study, funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, examined how paraeducator-to-teacher programs across the country are working to create a more qualified and diverse teaching force for America’s schools. The report includes a directory of programs, profiles of model programs, and valuable funding information.

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. gratefully acknowledges **Metropolitan Life Foundation** for its generous contribution to the development and dissemination of these Toolkit guides. We also want to thank The Lilly Endowment for initial funding for this project, the Carnegie Corporation of New York for support of the Toolkit project, and the Knight Foundation for its contribution to the dissemination of *A Guide to Developing Teacher Induction Programs*.

# A Guide to Developing Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs

## **This guide will help you understand:**

- ▶ The value of paraeducator-to-teacher programs
- ▶ Obstacles paraeducators face in becoming teachers
- ▶ Important elements of effective programs
- ▶ What is involved in staffing and recruiting participants
- ▶ How to build support for your program

## What is a paraeducator?

Para means “alongside of” and, like paralegals and paramedics, paraeducators assist and support teachers in a variety of ways. Whether labeled classroom aides, educational assistants, teacher aides, assistants, instructional aides, educational technicians, computer lab technicians, or media aides, paraprofessionals, paraeducators, or paras can be found assisting and supporting teachers in classrooms across America.

Unfortunately, many paraeducators often are undervalued members of the school community, and are seen largely as “cheap labor.” Many earn low wages in return for performing clerical chores, monitoring playground activities, and serving as lunchroom aides.

Yet, it is also not unusual to find paraeducators filling in for and taking on some of the responsibilities of regular classroom teachers, who are more highly paid. Especially in recent years, paraeducators have assumed central roles in the classroom, such as assisting bilingual students or students with special needs.

Even as the role of paraeducators becomes more critical to the classroom, their professional development and career advancement opportunities often remain limited.

## Why recruit paraeducators to be teachers?

As the nation faces a critical teacher shortage, the nearly 500,000 paraeducators who already are working in schools represent an ideal source of prospective teachers. Paraeducator-to-teacher programs have been developed across the country to assist paraprofessionals in becoming fully licensed teachers.

In 1996, the year RNT conducted a national study of paraeducator-to-teacher programs, there were more than 149 such programs operating nationwide, enrolling more than 9,000 participants.

These programs are part of a burgeoning grassroots movement that has arisen largely in response to persistent shortages of qualified teachers, particularly teachers of color, special educators, and bilingual educators, and the increasing needs of America’s schools today.

These paraeducator-to-teacher programs make higher education more accessible to paraeducators and can promote their career advancement.

*Paraeducators are a major force to help change education. They have the capacity to move beyond their present positions to become professionals. When we transform a para, usually the head of household, who comes here not knowing what she can accomplish and goes on to become a teacher and maybe a principal, we empower not just that individual but her entire family. Her children and her relatives become excited by education.*

**Dr. Edison O. Jackson, President, Medgar Evers College**

## Why paraeducators? A snapshot.

### Experience

- Paras often are veteran school employees who labor in the classroom alongside certified teachers.
- In classrooms nationwide, 30% of all teachers depend on teacher aides for assistance; paraeducator assistance frees regular classroom teachers for instruction.

### Diversity

- The majority of paraeducator-to-teacher program participants are individuals of color.
- Tapping this pool of potential teachers has begun to provide more teacher diversity in America's schools.

### Stability

- Often, paraeducators are fluent in the language and culture of the students in the communities they serve, have years of experience in the classroom, and are less likely to suffer from “reality shock” than other beginning teachers.

*Paraprofessionals are an untapped and underdeveloped resource for the district. They are familiar with the challenges of working in a large urban district. Many come from the neighborhoods in which they work and speak the same languages as their students. Many have provided years of valuable service—tutoring, testing, teaching ESL, translating, dealing with parents, and more. They represent the solution to the LAUSD's teacher shortage.*

**Walter Backstrom, Executive Director of Local 99  
of the Service Employees International Union in Los Angeles**

## Who are program participants?

Most paraeducators in programs RNT identified are between the ages of 31 and 40. For the most part they are women, and a majority comes from ethnic groups underrepresented in the teaching profession.

### Ethnicity of Program Participants

Latinos/Hispanics	33%
African Americans	29%
Whites	23%
Native Americans	10%
Asian-Americans	5%

Typically, programs seem to have little difficulty recruiting participants. In fact, many programs have to turn away qualified applicants. The dropout rate is exceptionally low, despite the long haul to degree completion and licensure for many paraprofessionals.

## P

### Profiles of Paraeducators

#### Helean Glogower

Helean graduated from high school in 1967, dropped out after six months of college to get married, and became a single mom after having two kids. She didn't realize how important education was until she held a series of dead-end jobs with no benefits. She became a school aide, performing clerical duties at East New York High School in order to secure benefits for her family.

After two years, at the suggestion of her principal, Helean obtained some education credits. So, after 23 years away from college, she went to Nassau Community College, paying her own way. While attending a class at Medgar Evers College, she heard about the New York City Career Training Program, obtained vouchers, and attended classes off-site, five minutes from her home and at convenient hours. Helean was on her way to becoming a fully licensed teacher.

#### Steve Taylor

Steve Taylor had years of classroom experience, was working a second job as a night supervisor, and was tutoring students to support his young family. He hadn't had time to go back to school to finish his undergraduate degree.

Steve was working as a paraprofessional in elementary and secondary classrooms in Bridgeport, Connecticut when he learned about the state’s Teaching Opportunities for Paraprofessionals (TOP) program at Sacred Heart University. The TOP program gave him the opportunity he was looking for. “They didn’t just give us the money, they took us step-by-step and gave more support than I could ever have imagined. Many of us hadn’t been to college in six or seven years and had to get back into the college atmosphere,” he says. “They took time to prepare us and make sure we were ready.”

Steve became a sixth-grade teacher in an elementary school in Bridgeport.

## Are all paraeducator-to-teacher recruitment programs similar in design?

There is no one model of a paraeducator-to-teacher program that will be successful in every school district. However, most paraeducator-to-teacher programs recruit paraeducators into “regular” university course-based teacher education programs, and many incorporate nontraditional means to deliver instruction and encourage learning.

When designing your program, you will need to tailor some components to suit local preferences and paraeducators’ needs. You might look to the federal Career Opportunities for Paraprofessionals (COP) program<sup>1</sup> from the late 1960s for guidance; to cross-cultural and bilingual education programs; to various district “grow your own” efforts; to established union-sponsored career ladders for paraprofessionals.

A model you might look at for program design is the Pathways to Teaching Careers program, an exemplary initiative in part based on the Bank Street College of Education teacher training models, and funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund. This model has been used to develop paraeducator-to-teacher programs in colleges and universities across the country. (The Fund is the primary sponsor of 43 Pathways projects, 20 of which serve paraeducators, among others.)

<sup>1</sup> See RNT’s report, *Breaking the Class Ceiling: Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching*, for more information about COP.

*Calls being heard today for better use of paraeducators’ skills echo a similar movement in the 1960s, which led to sizeable (but short-lived) federal support for programs designed to promote their careers. The federal Career Opportunities Program (COP), a large-scale federal effort to train school aides for full certification as teachers, stands as a model for present-day paraeducator-to-teacher programs.*

All Pathways to Teaching Careers programs adapt the model to the needs of the particular group of Pathways participants (“Scholars”) and communities they serve. Following is a summary of the key components of the Pathways program model:

- ▶ **Recruitment/Selection**  
Seek applicants from groups underrepresented in the teaching ranks.
- ▶ **Orientation**  
Familiarize Scholars with expectations; identify strategies; identify strengths of participants; and define support services.
- ▶ **Curriculum**  
Provide a sound and relevant knowledge, skill, and attitudinal base.
- ▶ **Support Services**  
Respond to the academic, personal, and professional needs of Scholars to ensure the highest retention rate possible.
- ▶ **Collaboration**  
Expose Scholars to a wide range of ideas and knowledge and expand the support base by establishing inter- and intra-institutional partnerships.
- ▶ **Assessment/Evaluation**  
Continuously refine the program and assess its effectiveness.
- ▶ **Dissemination**  
Share processes/innovations of the Pathways programs.
- ▶ **Induction**  
Provide solid support during the first critical years of teaching.

## Do Pathways graduates make good teachers?

According to a 1997 evaluation, conducted by the Urban Institute for the DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund, most graduates of the Pathways to Teaching Careers programs become successful teachers.

- University supervisors’ ratings: 4.3 out of possible 5 points
- Principals’ ratings: 4.3 out of possible 5 points
- PRAXIS III<sup>2</sup> direct observations: 2.2 overall score—exceeds 2.0, which defines “competent beginning teachers”

### For a complete description of the Pathways to Teaching Careers program model, contact:

The DeWitt Wallace-Reader’s Digest Fund

Two Park Avenue, 23rd Floor • New York, NY 10016

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<sup>2</sup> The PRAXIS Series: Professional Assessments for Beginning Teachers™ is a teacher testing program developed by the Educational Testing Service. Implemented in 1993, the PRAXIS Series reflects a national trend away from multiple-choice formats toward new performance-based assessments and intellectually challenging demonstrations of teaching ability.

# Potential Barriers for Participants

Many paraeducators have the desire and motivation to become licensed teachers but are overwhelmed by the obstacles. The following are some potential barriers to success for paraeducators that you will need to address in the design of your program.

## Financial Barriers

The toughest obstacle to career advancement for paraprofessionals who want to become fully licensed teachers is the prospect of giving up salary and benefits to attend college full-time and/or fulfill student teaching requirements while having to pay for tuition, fees, books, and related costs. Therefore, many programs allow paraeducators to continue working during the day and take courses on a part-time basis.

Financial incentives can help students succeed in your program. *(You will find suggestions for financial assistance for your students in the Resources section on Pages 34–35.)*

### FYI

*Arizona State University's College of Education coordinates the Urban/East Valley Teacher Corps Program for bilingual instructional aides working toward the B.A. in education and teaching positions in Valley schools. Eight school districts, two community colleges, and the university formed a partnership to assist and mentor Teacher Corps participants. In addition to release time, tuition support, and assistance with books and materials, participants are eligible to apply for low-interest loans to cover their living expenses from a \$600,000 kitty earmarked by American Express and First Interstate Bank. Local "rehabbed" housing may also become available to low-income participants.*

## Basic Skills Testing

Many paraprofessionals have been out of school for years and may need to review basic academic subjects in order to be fully prepared for college-level instruction. Your partner university or college probably will require the paraprofessionals in your program to meet the minimum SAT or ACT requirements for admission into their regular teacher education program.

Most often, the need for review of academic subjects and test preparation can be addressed by providing your entering class with tutoring.

Although tutoring prior to test taking can be helpful, the best strategy is to provide comprehensive, long-term support in test preparation, particularly in areas such as math and science.

### FYI

*In Polk County, Florida, program participants can attend an intensive SAT/ACT test preparation course before they take the test. Instruction is provided by a test preparation service contracted by the school board. In addition, doctoral students from the partner university offer ongoing tutoring to participants to refresh their knowledge of certain subjects.*

### Family Responsibilities

To many paraeducators with children, participation in a program may seem impossible due to commitments at home. Not only do program participants have to spend time away from home while in class, but the possible loss of family income and health benefits during student teaching could force some potentially promising participants to drop out. The remarkable retention rate in paraeducator-to-teacher programs across the country is testament to program creativity in identifying and addressing the needs of participants with children.

### How to support paraeducators who are parents

- Provide child-care assistance.
- Allow paras to continue working and collect all or part of their salary during student teaching.
- If you cannot afford to keep your participants on salary, continue to provide program participants with the benefits package they had while working.
- Create flexible time requirements.
- Hold special evening and weekend family events, such as picnics and luncheons.
- Find occasional volunteer roles for spouses and children.
- Encourage paras learning new skills to utilize the abilities of their children and spouses, e.g., for help with computers, test taking, etc.

### Time Commitment

Generally, paraprofessionals have the option of enrolling either as part-time or full-time students. Research shows that few paraeducators (approximately 13%) enroll in programs full-time. Depending on funding, number of credits needed, testing, personal circumstances, and other factors, full-time students might complete certain programs in one year, while some part-timers could take as long as ten years to finish. The average length of time to complete a program, according to the 1996 RNT study, is three and a half years.

Program participants need to know that their job security will only improve upon completion of the program. A strong commitment to their future success and a little flexibility on your part will go a long way. For example, the time spent may not seem so prohibitive if graduates have a guarantee of a provisional teaching position upon successful completion of the program.

#### FYI

*A program at Kean University in New Jersey, which trains about 100 paraeducators a year, enables them to continue working part-time at their school and pays for books and tuition for evening courses.*

## College Credit

Many paraprofessionals with years of course work and experience find that when they go to enroll in a traditional college program, their past experience and often their course credits do not count. It's important to provide competent college academic advising and design a program flexible enough to assess and allow credit for life experience or prior learning.

### Program Flexibility Encourages Paraeducators to Participate

- Substitute a summer's worth of paraprofessional experience for the 45 hours of classroom observation needed to enter a credential program.
- If school opens before the college term begins, allow student teachers to begin the practicum when school begins.
- Consider favoring paraprofessionals who demonstrate desired outcomes rather than focusing on course credit hours.
- Arrange for paraeducators to alternate semesters of work and student teaching.
- Considering the prior experience of a paraeducator, think about reducing the number of credits required for practice teaching.
- Let paraeducators substitute a six- to eight-week internship for the ten-week student teaching experience.
- Grant administrative leave to paraprofessionals during their time away from school duties so that years of service gained in the classroom will not be interrupted in the calculation of benefits and retirement.

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### Profile of a Paraeducator

#### Brenda Wright

Brenda had a B.S. in home economics and some high school teaching experience when she came to live in rural northeastern North Carolina. No positions were available locally in her field. She worked as a teaching assistant for one year, then became a permanent substitute. After starting a family, she decided to get recertified as an elementary teacher. The North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium was her ticket to success. The professor who reviewed her transcript at North Carolina Wesleyan waived the student teaching requirements. In her mid-40s, Brenda began teaching fourth grade in Roanoke Rapids. She praised the program for giving credit for prior experience.

## Language Skills

Some paraprofessionals' language skills might prevent them from entering and/or completing a college program. You will need to make sure all of your participants are up to par in their English-language skills. Some districts and universities offer a tutoring program or preadmission course; others may require participants to successfully complete an English-as-a-second-language course.

## Institutional Barriers

Institutional inflexibility can be one of the greatest obstacles to the successful development of a paraeducator-to-teacher program. You will need cooperation from institutions that might not be accustomed to making concessions or changing the ways they operate. For instance, universities are unlikely to alter their entrance and graduation requirements, and may not be able to change their curricula or schedule classes to accommodate an older class with extensive instructional experience. It is, therefore, important to provide support to help paraprofessionals meet requirements.

Your school district may not grant administrative leave or pay benefits to participants if they take time off from work to go back to school or student teach, or, the local union may not want to cooperate.

It is important to show potential partner institutions how a collaborative effort will benefit everyone involved. Emphasize how paraeducator-to-teacher programs provide a powerful vehicle for addressing quality and diversity in the teaching profession; develop a teacher workforce better suited to the demands of urban and isolated rural classrooms; and meet critical shortages in teaching.



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### Program Profile

#### San Francisco Unified School District: A Success Story

Talk to Roberta Zadow about her teacher training and recruitment programs in San Francisco's Unified School District and you can hear the excitement in her voice. Since 1987, the school district formed a "trust agreement" with the United Educators of San Francisco, which enabled the union and the school administrators to meet specific needs of their constituents.

Every department within the district supports the paraeducator program by offering tuition, book costs, and a work stipend. The school district provides considerable support over and above its financial contribution. For many paraprofessionals, the program represents a mid-career change fraught with as much stress, insecurity, and confusion as any other adult encounters when making major life changes. In designing the program, the district had to be sensitive to the concerns of program participants and find ways to help them cope even if it meant someone would be on call 24 hours a day.

The challenge of going back to school often is made worse by intimidating standardized tests. To help participants prepare for the tests, the district sponsors free workshops and offers them 12 times a year. The workshops, and a peer mentoring program with former paraeducators who successfully made the transition to full-time teachers, proved to be important resources. Many of the new teachers have been able to share their experiences and offer the kind of encouragement needed to overcome the obstacles.

## How to Help Paraeducators Advance Their Careers

- Assist with registration paperwork.
- Assist with application for credentials.
- Review transcripts.
- Modify admissions requirements.
- Mediate between university and school sites.
- Push for greater university flexibility, e.g., extended-day course scheduling, weekend courses.
- (In rural areas) Locate classes and workshops in areas where participants live or in easily accessible geographical areas; have professors and advisors travel to sites.
- (In urban areas) Hold classes and workshops at school sites or central locations.
- Use interactive TV networks for access without travel.
- Place paraeducators in schools close to the university to reduce travel.
- Allow flexible work schedules and job sharing.
- Start summer programs for student teaching and other required course work.
- Permit leaves of absence from jobs for full-time students.
- Maintain salary and health benefits during practicum.
- Rotate staff or hire substitutes to fill in for paraeducators whose placements or classes take them out of their regular classrooms.
- Orient and acclimate students to the college/university.
- Assess/diagnose skills.
- Tutor (one-to-one or in small groups) for exams and assignments.
- Provide study materials and test-taking strategies.
- Provide models of successful teaching.
- Form cooperative study groups in which students work on assignments together and provide mutual support.
- Provide help in mathematics and writing skills.
- Set up a collection of materials and resources in a central location (lending library).
- Offer ESL classes.
- Recruit retired teachers and program graduates as mentors/tutors.
- Offer financial aid workshops.
- Create strong support systems for nontraditional (adult) students who have family and community commitments.
- Encourage peer group support; build cohort solidarity with regular meetings and networking.
- Offer weekly seminars to build a “learning community.”
- Hold project socials and family support sessions.
- Sponsor cultural activities.
- Visit job sites to help give paraeducators status in their schools as future professionals.
- Invite supervising teachers to selected workshops; honor them for their help.
- Underwrite paraeducators’ attendance at professional conferences, meetings, and presentations.
- Encourage students to produce teaching materials, including those that are culture-specific.

# How to Develop an Effective Program

## A. Program Design

Following are key program elements to consider in designing your program.

**Assemble an advisory committee**, with representation from the local and greater educational communities, to tailor your paraeducator-to-teacher program to meet the needs of paraprofessionals in your district. Members of your committee might be teachers, parents, college/university representatives, school administrators, union members, curriculum specialists, community leaders, and/or others.

**Establish criteria for selecting students for your program** that recognize the special skills of the paraeducator population.

Paraeducators as a group come highly recommended. With years of hands-on experience, paraeducators generally rate very well in comparison with other teacher education students. The work patterns and on-the-job skills of paraeducators are already known.

When selecting students for your program, it is important to keep in mind that many older paraprofessionals may have unimpressive academic credentials or test scores; in many cases, their transcripts are years old. *It is inadvisable to use previous academic performance alone to assess candidate potential.* Still, these candidates must gain admittance to college- and university-based teacher preparation programs in order to become candidates for licensure.

### You can include the following as criteria for program admission:

- State residency
- Employment as a paraeducator (e.g., one to three years)
- High school diploma or GED
- College credits (e.g., 60 credits, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, two years in higher education)
- Academic standing (e.g., some programs set a minimum GPA of anywhere from 2.0 to 3.5)
- Passing score on entrance exam (e.g., preprofessional skills test)
- Recommendations from supervisor, professor, and/or employer
- Interview(s)
- Personal statement
- Commitment to teach in same school/district for a number of years
- Minimum SAT/ACT score
- Bilingual proficiency (if area of greatest need)
- Minority status

**Offer academic advising** to help paraeducators fulfill college/university graduation requirements and state licensure requirements.

Note: Academic advising can prevent unnecessary missteps for paraeducators. It is not uncommon to see program applicants who:

- Present a transcript with as many as 130 credits that lead absolutely nowhere—a legacy of failed advising regarding course selection in the past
- Have years of experience, but enroll in introductory courses they might have waived
- Have unwittingly taken community college courses that universities won't accept for transfer credit

**Assign experienced teachers as mentors to paraeducators** to provide guidance around instructional, academic, or social problems.

**Emphasize cohort building** in order to provide peer emotional support and morale boosting for paraeducators. It is important to weave cohort building into the fabric of your programs and not just tack on a support group after the need for one arises. In this way, you can arrange meeting facilities and identify counselors or mentors who will be able to guide the cohort in its early stages.

**Require courses about other languages and cultures** that emphasize cultural sensitivity, in order to help participants become more effective teachers of a diverse student body.

**Be flexible** by waiving a field course or shortening student teaching in order to take into account the paraeducator's prior experience.

**Build leadership skills** to prepare paraeducators to assume leadership status in their educational community.

*This support system's been great... I remember what it felt like the first day, like tons of stress had been removed by just laughing with everyone and people saying how they felt...*

**Paraeducator-to-teacher program participant from Albuquerque Public Schools/ University of New Mexico's Career Development Program**

**FYI**

*A program in Polk County, Florida assigns mentors with extensive backgrounds in curriculum and supervision to work with paraeducators throughout their academic training period and to the end of their first year in order to transform the paraeducator's self-perception from that of a "helper" to that of a "leader." (See profile, page 22.)*



*I'm a classroom assistant. Before coming here, I thought I knew a lot because I've worked so much with children. My courses helped me to look at our children differently, especially their learning styles. It never occurred to me that children have different learning styles just as teachers have different teaching styles. Now I'm more aware of a child's learning style.*

**Drexel University Pathways Scholar**

**Stress clinical experience, in addition to text-based learning,** since many paraeducators excel in classroom-based teaching and learning.

**Provide collaborative learning activities** to develop a feeling of camaraderie among participants.

**Incorporate formal instruction on learning styles** to give even the most experienced paraeducators insight into student behavior that they may have observed for years, but may have not been able to define.

**Provide activities** such as special lectures, social events, field trips, and newsletters to stimulate new thinking and reinforce the curriculum.

### Publish a Newsletter

Los Angeles Unified School District's Career Ladder office publishes a newsletter with information for and about paraeducators pursuing teaching careers. And, the Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching Careers Program at Lehman College in New York puts out a newsletter that keeps paraeducators informed about issues in bilingual education. *(See Resources, page 36 for information about obtaining copies of these newsletters.)*

**Supervise and assess students** during field experiences and student teaching. Assessment can be performed by cooperating classroom teachers and/or by a member of the college/university faculty. Others who can be involved in supervision and assessment include school district central office staff members, school principals, project directors, field placement coordinators, and/or peers.

**Make evaluation an essential part of your program** because evaluation will help you find out if the program's goals have been met. You also will determine the effectiveness of the program design and will be able to compare it to alternative models. Through evaluation, you can assess the program's outcomes and assess if the program is worthwhile and makes the most of its resources.

**FYI**

*Alverno College's Educational Assistant Degree Completion Program uses a self-evaluation model to allow participants to assess the level of their own teaching skills. One graduate observed: "After I got over thinking it was the professor's job to evaluate me, assessment allowed me to reflect, to know myself. As a teacher now for 28 first graders, I still give myself feedback about what I did right or wrong, and what I could do better."*

**For more information...**

To learn more about program evaluation, order RNT's *Measured Steps: An Evaluation Handbook for Improving Teacher Recruitment Programs*. (See Resources on page 37 for ordering information.)

**A Checklist for Program Success**

- ✓ Strong collaboration between local schools and universities
- ✓ Campus advocate as a leader who is committed to the objectives of the program
- ✓ Standards that begin with a strategic selection process and provide financial, emotional, and academic support
- ✓ Curricular modification that allows for flexible scheduling, includes strategies for teaching urban populations, and builds on cultural strengths

**Source:** Evelyn Dandy, director of Armstrong Atlantic State University's Pathways to Teaching Careers Program, in *Increasing the Number of Minority Teachers: Tapping the Paraprofessional Pool*.

## B. Staffing Considerations

While staffing levels vary by program and district size, most programs operate with a combination of paid full-time and part-time staff and volunteer administrators, faculty, and counselors. While “bare bones” staffing seems to be the norm, program participants report that the actual size of the program staff is of little importance as long as they have at least one contact person on whom they can rely.

Training for staff is very important, as is implementing troubleshooting features, such as regularly scheduled staff meetings. Professional development workshops, orientation meetings, and curriculum development sessions are all effective ways to keep staff informed and well prepared. Some programs provide release time from other school duties for staff members who attend these events.

Awarding a stipend or honorarium for the supplemental work mentor teachers provide is ideal. However, if your budget is tight, there are alternative forms of staff support and compensation to consider, including:

- The opportunity to teach a college-level course
- Partial tuition toward master’s degree programs
- Continuing education course vouchers

## C. Recruiting Participants for Your Program

Applicants usually obtain information about paraeducator-to-teacher programs from their school personnel office or from teachers, school counselors, site administrators, teacher unions, paraprofessional organizations, or college teacher preparation programs. In some cases, paraeducators are identified through recommendations from principals and master teachers, followed by personalized invitations to apply for the program.



### FYI

*Terri Becenti, program advisor of Diné College’s teacher preparation program for Navajo paraeducators, goes on the road for two weeks every summer to recruit participants who have sophomore standing. She makes presentations in Navajo before audiences of up to 300 people at each of 25 schools. The retention rate in the program is between 97% and 98%, a remarkable achievement when compared with a 60%–75% dropout rate among Navajo college students generally.*

### Develop Marketing Materials

Most paraeducator-to-teacher programs do not have large budgets devoted to marketing and must use the resources they have carefully. However, if possible, it's important to have a brochure, flyer, or other materials about your program. A recruitment kit could include:

- Mission statement
- Letter from the superintendent
- Fact sheets about the application process
- Listing of benefits and the district's salary schedule
- Listing of teaching awards and other district benefits for licensed teachers

While paraeducators will be fairly familiar with the district and schools already, it doesn't hurt to highlight cultural attractions and other positive features of becoming a teacher in your district. This could be done in a brochure or even a one-page handout that is inserted into the recruitment kit.

### How to Develop and Distribute Your Brochure

The most effective brochures (and all marketing materials) are readable, attractive, and written in simple, everyday language. When you develop a brochure, make sure it can answer the following questions for potential participants:

- What is the name of the program? Make it catchy, appealing, memorable.
- Who are your partners in this venture?
- What are the program goals?
- What can the program do for them? Outline the advantages.
- How does the program work? Include information about cost, time required, etc.
- Who is eligible to apply? Describe admission requirements.
- How does one apply? Include phone, e-mail address, etc. and information about how to obtain an application.

There are a number of ways to distribute your recruitment brochure and other materials. Following are some suggestions:

- Attach a flyer to paraeducator's monthly paycheck.
- Enlist teachers from the local community to hand out flyers or brochures to paraeducators they know.
- Arrange for a district-wide presentation of the program to all of the district's paraeducators during normal working hours, or at in-service workshops and meetings, making it easier for them to attend.
- Ask teacher preparation programs at local colleges to distribute flyers.
- Hand out brochures to principals and counselors at individual schools.
- Disseminate flyers and information at union events.

## D. Follow-up Support for Graduates

Most paraeducator-to-teacher programs provide some sort of follow-up for their graduates. The most common form of support is assistance with job searches or applications. Graduates of some programs are given preference and even guaranteed job placement after successfully completing program requirements. Some are encouraged to continue attending project meetings and use available support services.

Assigning the paraeducator a mentor with extensive background in curriculum and supervision can provide invaluable guidance, not only during the preparation process, but also through the first year of teaching.

### P

#### Program Profile

##### **Pathways to Teaching Careers Program at Armstrong Atlantic State University, Savannah, Georgia**

*This program depends on the collaboration of representatives from three institutions in Savannah: Armstrong Atlantic State University, Savannah State University, and the Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools. The program is funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.*

##### **Eligibility**

This Pathways to Teaching Careers program's target population includes noncertified school employees, paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, school clerks, bus drivers, secretaries, and cafeteria managers.

##### **Program applicants must:**

- Be employed by the Chatham County Public Schools
- Qualify for regular admission to Armstrong
- Provide copies of performance reviews
- Declare education as their major at Armstrong
- Commit to teaching in inner-city schools in Chatham County
- Teach a minimum of three years in a Chatham County school following program completion

##### **Screening**

- Applicants fill out a preliminary application that includes a 200-word essay on "Why I Want to Become a Teacher."
- A committee made up of faculty from several departments reads the essay. If the essay is not acceptable, the applicant is sent a letter of rejection.
- If the essay passes, the applicant is sent a letter stating that he/she should pick up a Secondary Application packet. This requires that the applicant: fill out a Secondary Application

form which includes a short written paper; submit three recommendations—from his/her supervisor and two other people with whom he/she has worked; have a transcript sent to AASU; and apply for regular AASU admission.

- Once the program office has received the documents, and the applicant has met the regular admission requirements of the university, the Screening/Advisory Committee meets to review the file.
- If invited for an interview, the applicant is required to write another essay and talk with the committee. The committee rates the applicant on commitment, recommendations, essay, GPA, personal presentation, personality, and oral reading to ascertain the potential for academic success in the project. All decisions of the Screening/Advisory Committee are final.
- Applicants who are accepted as Scholars sign a contract that describes the obligations of the program and Scholars.
- When the process is over, participants attend a special orientation workshop (with their spouse, if they are married). The workshop is designed to give the participants a thorough understanding of the project and its goals and objectives.

### Support Services

- PRAXIS workshops
- 80% paid tuition
- Professional development workshops
- Networking among scholars
- Tutors
- Incentive awards for high GPA
- Friday and weekend classes
- Typing support
- Counseling
- Mentors
- Textbook lending library
- Conference attendance
- GPA improvement workshops
- Supportive atmosphere

### Success

Graduates have an average GPA of 3.08, a 95% pass rate on the state certification test, a 93% retention rate as first-year teachers, and ten of the graduates have won Sallie Mae First Class Teacher awards.

As of May 1998, the program had fielded some 800 inquiries, screened 574 applicants, and brought 102 Scholars into the program. Eighty percent of the Scholars have graduated and earned professional certification.

# How to Build Support for Your Program

Since collaboration and cooperation are key ingredients in the successful creation of a paraeducator-to-teacher program, you will need to get the full support of your school district, local universities or college, district and state policymakers, and the unions.

## A. Collaboration

It is important to identify and approach the people in your district who are likely to support your program. Provide them with a broad sketch of your program and highlight the success of other paraeducator-to-teacher programs. Point out that there are currently many funding resources available to support productive partnerships that improve schools.

One of the most important potential partners is the **local university or college**. You will need its participation in order to offer your paraeducators a college-level program that will allow them to become licensed upon completion. It is helpful to develop a strong professional relationship with deans and professors and others in a position to convince the institution to enter into the partnership you propose.

In recent years, many colleges and universities have responded positively to cosponsoring paraeducator-to-teacher programs in an effort to increase their total enrollments. You can ask education departments to arrange special courses, schedules, and degree requirements for paraeducators.

You may want to inquire into the possibility of using **master teachers and school administrators** from your own district as college course instructors. Many have advanced degrees that qualify them to teach as adjunct faculty.

Be sure to spread information about your program within your **local teacher's union**. Negotiating a paraeducator-to-teacher program into a collective bargaining agreement ensures its support and continuity throughout the life of the contract.

Try to identify and involve the key players at the **school board** as early as possible in the process. Building a strong relationship with even one like-minded school board member can help garner support from the district.

Locate potential funding sources. Call **foundations and corporations** to feel them out about their interest in such a project before you start to gather support for your idea. The first question people will ask is, "How will we pay for it?" It is realistic to expect your district to provide at least some of the funding for your paraeducator-to-teacher program, but there are other sources of funding worth pursuing. (*See pages 33–34 for more funding information.*)

For many programs, building **legislative support** is key. You will need to identify legislative committee members who might sponsor legislation to create such a program. Call your local representative and send him/her a convincing rationale for supporting this program.

Once you have the support of some of the important players, you should organize them into an effective team. Your advisory committee, with representation from each partner organization, can develop a detailed plan for your program.

### Making the Case for Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs: Selling Points

Paraeducator-to-teacher programs can:

- Fulfill your district's need for qualified and fully certified teachers, and can become a permanent pipeline to serve your schools' needs well into the future.
- Serve an important role in fulfilling your district's minority staffing needs. They can also fulfill your district's need for special education and bilingual education teachers.
- Provide teachers who have extensive experience in the communities in which they serve.
- Be reasonable in cost.
- Create certified teachers who are committed to their careers and are unlikely to quit.

Get the word out about your program by working with the local media to cover some aspect of your program. Not only can you reach potential candidates and volunteers for your program through positive media coverage, but you also can generate new support from others who believe in the program's mission.

## P

### Program Profiles

#### State Support for a Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program: The California Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP)

California's Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP) was established by statute in 1990 (although funding for the program was not included in the state budget until 1994) to "respond to the teacher shortage, diversify the teaching profession, improve the instructional skills of school paraprofessionals, and establish innovative models for teacher preparation." Later legislation required that the program focus on the recruitment of paraprofessionals to specialize as bilingual and special education teachers.

Because of the success of the program, on July 1, 1999 the PTTP received \$10 million in additional state funding to expand the program from 600 to 3,300 students.

P

**Program Profiles continued**

The program provides academic scholarships to defray the costs of tuition, books, and fees for paraprofessionals to earn college degrees and teaching credentials. Qualified paraprofessionals from eligible public school districts commit to one year of teaching for every year of support they receive during teacher preparation. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) is responsible for program administration and can request in-kind contributions from districts and colleges.

**Program attributes:**

- An extensive, in-depth assessment and selection process for potential participants
- A program administrative staff that consists of stakeholders who also serve as a decision-making body
- Open and continuous communication between participants, program directors, program coordinators, and local education agencies
- Collaboration between local education agencies and institutions of postsecondary education
- Ongoing monitoring of the academic progress of each participant, including a personal needs assessment
- Requirement of a minimum number of units per quarter/semester and a minimum GPA in order to remain in the program
- A billing process, established by local education agencies and postsecondary institutions, administered by each project's administrative staff, and designed to relieve participant anxieties regarding payments
- Extensive support and assistance provided by each project's administrative staff, education agencies and institutions to facilitate each participant's expeditious progress through baccalaureate degree and professional preparation programs

Contact the CTC at: (916) 445-0184; 1900 Capitol Avenue, Sacramento, CA 95814-4213; <http://www.ctc.ca.gov>

**The University of South Florida/Polk County Collaborative**

In the late 1980s, Dr. Catharine Wooley-Brown faced a staffing crisis in her Polk County, Florida 100-school district. Her staffing needs were growing every year, and she was losing special education teachers faster than she could recruit new ones. The district had 130 teachers who were not certified in special education teaching special education classes.

To address this crisis, Dr. Wooley-Brown approached the chairman of the school board about establishing a partnership between the school board and the University of South Florida, aimed at

encouraging paraeducators in the district with special education experience to become fully certified special education teachers. The chairman brought the idea to the dean of the university's special education department, who agreed that such a project would mesh with the university's new commitment to increase faculty outreach into the community and support efforts to create university-sponsored professional development schools in south Florida.

The program admits groups (cohorts) of paraeducators with experience in special education, at least two years of college-level credits, and a demonstrable commitment to working in the district. The school district provides SAT/ACT prep courses to overcome test phobia, guidance through the admissions and registration process, information about obtaining grants and loans, and textbooks and course materials. As part of its commitment to community outreach, the university sends professors to the district as instructors for the cohort. The university pays those professors overtime for their efforts, and has convinced some of them to adopt alternative competency assessment systems to more accurately reflect the achievements of this particular population of prospective teachers, who already have years of experience in the classroom.

The program has been a resounding success and has assured the school district a steady supply of homegrown, qualified, and talented teachers with a commitment to staying in the district.

## B. Funding

### *What types of expenses are involved in developing a paraeducator-to-teacher program?*

- Paraeducators' salaries and benefits during the professional practicum
- Substitutes for paraeducators doing student teaching
- Tuition
- Books and materials
- Child-care tuition assistance
- Low-interest loans
- Paid release time for participants to attend meetings, workshops, or classes
- Stipends for teacher trainers and money to fund other staff development opportunities
- Compensation for staff and mentors
- Emergency funds—grants and small emergency loans

### *How much will it cost?*

The costs of these programs can vary widely and depend on many factors, such as full vs. partial scholarships, in-kind contributions, etc. However, the median budget for programs identified by RNT was about \$100,000 per year, and the median per-participant outlay was about \$3,400.

### ***Where can you look for funding?***

To date, only a few states have designated paraeducator retraining as a teacher development priority, so the best sources of funding remain local school districts, higher education institutions, federal agencies, and foundations.

Approximately one-quarter of paraeducator-to-teacher programs owe their start to private philanthropy. Some foundations say their motive for supporting these programs is to expand the pool of prospective minority teachers. Keep in mind that funding priorities are continually shifting and organizations that funded paraeducator-to-teacher programs in the past may not be supporting them now. However, program officers are usually glad to refer you to other foundations and corporations that might be interested in supporting your program. The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Ford Foundation (two national foundations that were leaders in the paraeducator-to-teacher funding field) are not currently supporting *new* paraeducator-to-teacher programs.

### **College and University Resources**

Many school districts report that in-kind contributions from post-secondary partners were important to the success of their programs. Colleges and universities can provide administrative support, staff development activities, supervision, advisement, and other related services.

### **School District Resources**

Districts usually continue to pay paraeducator salaries and benefits during their professional training, and sometimes cover the cost of substitutes for paraeducators doing student teaching. In addition, they can provide for tuition, books, and materials; paid release time for participants to attend meetings, workshops, or classes; and other kinds of staff support.

### **Federal Government Resources**

Federal funding for paraprofessionals traditionally has focused on training individuals for paraprofessional positions, rather than on developing paraprofessionals into teachers. However, limited federal support for paraeducator-to-teacher programs is available through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSEP/OSERS) and Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA). (*See Resources on page 33 for contact information.*)

### **State Government Resources**

The list of states considering paraeducator-to-teacher programs as vehicles for teacher recruitment remains short. Connecticut, California and North Carolina are three states working to increase recruitment of teachers of color by investing in teacher preparation for paraeducators.

Call your state department of education for information about available funding. Ask about "forgivable" loans for students who are willing to work in certain curricular or geographic areas.

## How To Get Started

Use the following checklist to begin your fundraising efforts.

### Identify Potential Funders

- ✓ Identify potential companies or agencies in your area that might be willing to fund your program.
- ✓ Investigate what types of programs they support.
- ✓ Weed out the funders whose interests do not match yours.
- ✓ Determine how much money your targeted funders typically award.
- ✓ Acquire a copy of the funder's giving guidelines and requirements for submitting a proposal.

### Approach the Funder

- ✓ Draft a letter of inquiry to ascertain the funder's interest.
- ✓ Suggest that you would like to submit a full proposal for the funder's consideration.
- ✓ Follow up within a week to discuss your project with the program officer or director of giving.
- ✓ Be prepared to describe your program in a few simple, compelling sentences.

### Develop a Persuasive Proposal

- ✓ Write clearly and concisely (remember less is often more).
- ✓ Describe your program in adequate detail, noting key program elements.
- ✓ Avoid jargon and acronyms whenever possible.
- ✓ Outline the goals and mission of your program.
- ✓ Paint a picture of the problem(s) your program is designed to address.
- ✓ Demonstrate that the program will have strong leadership and a dedicated, competent staff.
- ✓ Offer clear roles for your staff.
- ✓ Provide a budget with clear costs for staff, materials, and other expenses.
- ✓ Describe how you will evaluate your program.

### Participant Tuition and Fees

Qualified paraeducators may be eligible for financial assistance through federal loans, Pell grants, state aid vouchers, supplementary grants and critical shortage scholarships to help with tuition and other expenses. Still, even an inexpensive training program may represent an enormous sacrifice for low-income aides.

Federal student aid continues to be more in the form of loans than grants. However, in 1997 several provisions were made to expand educational opportunities, including increased Pell grants and generous tax benefits for college students. Prospective program participants can order a *free* copy of the *Student Guide*, a resource on available grants and loans, by contacting the U.S. Department of Education. (*See Resources, page 33.*)

### Teacher Union Resources

With the notable exception of a few large, urban affiliates, teacher unions generally appear to have paid scant attention to recruiting paraeducators into their professional ranks. The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) can point to a limited number of local affiliates with fully realized paraprofessional career ladders. A handful of locals, e.g., Albuquerque, Rochester (NY), New York City, and Cleveland, support and reward paraprofessionals who want to advance all the way into the teacher workforce.

### FYI

#### Union involvement in California

*For a number of years, Los Angeles has experienced a shortage of elementary, bilingual, mathematics, science, and special education teachers, as well as a shortage of teachers who reflect the changing demographics of the city. Yet, there are approximately 1,500 paraeducators working in Los Angeles schools who assist teachers in classrooms throughout the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), many of whom have the desire and ability to meet the district's needs for teachers.*

*In 1994, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), working jointly with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 99, developed a career ladder for paraeducators who have experience working with children and the desire to become teachers, but have faced the obstacles of time, money, family responsibilities, or passing the CBEST exam. The program was designed to support paraeducators pursuing careers in teaching, and to guide them towards shortage fields.*

*Career ladder participants move through five program levels as they increase their proficiency and progress toward a credential. The program is one of support; it does not offer coursework. Participants enroll in the college or university of their choice. The career ladder provides educational advisement, job counseling, support groups, mentoring, test-preparation seminars, and partial tuition reimbursement. In return, when participants receive a credential, they are expected to work for the district for a minimum of two years if offered a position.*

*In July 1996, the Board of Education established the program as part of the general fund budget. The career ladder is now a unit within the Personnel Division, and is an integral part of the district's recruitment strategy.*

*Since July 1995, over 350 program participants have been hired as teachers. These new teachers are 85% minority and 65% bilingual.*

## P

**Program Profile****North Carolina's Funding Approach**

*The North Carolina Model Teacher Education Consortium (NCMTEC)* targets paraeducators for recruitment into teacher preparation and licensure programs. Participating school districts contribute support on a formula basis of \$1 per child enrolled. The total annual budget is \$2,501,567 from the General Assembly and \$203,355 from participating school districts.

NCMTEC is able to defray tuition costs so that participants pay no more than \$40 for undergraduate courses; graduate tuition is reduced by 50%. Textbooks are free to consortium participants. Accounts have been established at all community colleges in the consortium counties to allow paraprofessionals to take the first two years of college transfer courses at the community colleges for \$40 per course. Also, the paraprofessionals receive free textbooks and are exempt from paying activity fees.

During student teaching, the consortium pays a stipend of \$500 per month to compensate for the loss of salary. NCMTEC's flexible course delivery system allows working teaching assistants to take courses off campus at convenient locations and times.

In addition, through the state's *Teacher Assistant Scholarship Loan Program*, TAs who have a bachelor's degree or have already completed the general education courses prerequisite to admission to a degree program are eligible for forgivable loans.

# An In-depth Look at Programs That Work: Questions and Answers

## P

### **Program Profile**

#### **The Teacher Track Project (TTP)**

At California State University/Fullerton (CSUF)

#### ***Why was the program created?***

Almost half of the students in Orange County public schools are of Hispanic, Asian-American, or African-American origin, while 91% of the teacher workforce is white. The project was created in 1989, as part of California's Teacher Diversity Program, to increase the number of underrepresented individuals in the teaching force.

#### ***Where does funding come from?***

Funding comes from the California State University Chancellor's office through state lottery monies.

#### ***Whom does the program target?***

The TTP recruits minority high school students and bilingual instructional aides. It aims to foster their retention in college or university programs as they pursue a degree and teaching credential. The program serves instructional aides and other classified personnel working in three districts that have large minority populations.

#### ***What are the criteria for admission?***

Participants must be employed as paraeducators, have a minimum GPA of 2.0, have recommendations from their supervisors, and submit a personal statement.

#### ***What are the goals of the program?***

The TTP is designed to 1) recruit minority candidates who have demonstrated a commitment to and competence with children, 2) strengthen candidates' basic skills in order to improve their performance on competency tests, 3) ensure that candidates enroll in appropriate courses in the community college and university, and 4) provide support at each stage of their education.

#### ***What makes this program work?***

To increase the number of underrepresented students in teacher education, CSUF approaches teacher development *comprehensively*. The TTP differs from many other programs in that 1) it is a true partnership among the university, community colleges, and school districts, with heightened awareness of and sensitivity to participants' needs, 2) peer group meetings are mandatory and adhere to a regular meeting schedule, and 3) it has put into place precollegiate and collegiate segments of the pipeline that can be linked for the purpose of developing a truly systemic approach to teacher development.

***What special provisions are made for instructional aides?***

While instructional aides are recruited to enter CSUF's regular teacher preparation programs, they may attend classes on a part-time basis, in the evening, on weekends, or during the summer term. Provisions include academic advising; mandatory monthly peer support groups; CBEST (California Basic Education Skills Test) preparation and counseling; financial aid (stipends offset cost of registration, books, and supplies); career advice; and motivational/informational newsletters and pamphlets.

***What do students find to be the greatest benefits of the program?***

Advising and peer support are essential to the survival of first-generation college students who are unaccustomed to navigating administrative details and other aspects of college/university life.



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**Program Profile**

**Milwaukee Pathways to Teaching Careers Program**

At Alverno College and the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee

***Why was the program developed?***

Organized in 1993, this Pathways to Teaching Careers program seeks to increase the number of exemplary teachers in Milwaukee's inner-city schools and targets applicants from under-represented groups. The program also aims to increase access to higher education and promote career ladders for paraeducators.

***How is the program funded?***

This is one of the ten programs for paraeducators who want to become classroom teachers in mideastern and northeastern states funded by the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund.

***What is novel about this program?***

This program enjoys an unusual relationship between Alverno College, a small, all-women Catholic liberal arts college (2,500 mostly "nontraditional" students), and the University of Wisconsin/Milwaukee (UWM), where many of the students are commuters and part-timers.

***Who are the participants?***

Participants may be paraeducators going for the bachelor's degree and licensure or emergency credential teachers with a B.A. who lack education credits and required certification.

***How does the program work?***

Participants enter the regular teacher preparation programs at UWM or Alverno, where they usually have part-time status

P

## **Program Profile continued**

during the fall and spring semesters (attending late afternoon and evening classes) and take a full load in the summer. Two-thirds of tuition costs are covered. Full-time paraeducators and emergency credential teachers continue to draw salaries and benefits while in the program.

### ***What are distinctive features of the program?***

- The program provides individual mentoring and leadership development. Faculty members from UWM and Alverno are assigned to clusters of schools and visit mentees during the semester. The focus is on long-term growth of developing teachers, chosen for their leadership potential.
- Bimonthly meetings of participants and faculty, held at various sites, give students from the two colleges a chance to mix. The program holds special events, including activities such as a mini-institute at which scholars look at themselves as learners, future leaders, and exemplary teachers.
- Basic skills test-preparation workshops and scholarships ease the financial burden.

### ***What have participants found valuable about the program?***

Students report that besides tuition money, they greatly value networking with other future teachers at the bimonthly meetings. These meetings enable them to discuss what is working (or not) and to get support from their peers and from teachers.

# A Checklist for Program Development

Each district is different, and there is no one true prescription for success. However, here are six steps to follow to help you develop a paraeducator-to-teacher program.

- ✓ *Identify your needs* for new teachers by surveying your district and gathering statistics.
- ✓ *Determine paraeducator interest in becoming licensed* by holding an informational meeting or sending a questionnaire.
- ✓ *Develop a strategy* by meeting with key district leaders, principals, and other potential supporters and partners. Help them understand the value of developing a paraeducator-to-teacher program in your district.
- ✓ *Design a program* that attempts to overcome some of the obstacles paraeducators face when considering entering a college program to become a licensed teacher.
- ✓ *Determine program costs*.
- ✓ *Secure funding* by identifying potential funders and making a strong case for implementation.

## In your design, be sure to:

- Identify program leaders.
- Stipulate desired number of participants.
- Develop recruitment approaches that include effective outreach and communications materials.
- Design a carefully thought out selection process with eligibility criteria.
- Plan program staffing.
- Consider program length, content, and approaches.
- Incorporate elements that will assist and help to retain students.
- Arrange for supervision and a student evaluation strategy.
- Plan for follow-up support.
- Incorporate plans for program evaluation.

# Resources

Although there are not many resources available on paraeducator-to-teacher issues, the following should give you a good start in finding information and funding resources. For additional resources, refer to RNT's *A Guide to Today's Teacher Recruitment Challenges*.

## General Information

### National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services

*Addresses policy questions, provides technical assistance, and shares information about management practices, regulatory procedures, and training models that will enable administrators and staff developers to improve the recruitment, deployment, supervision, and career development of paraprofessionals.*

Center for Advanced Study in Education  
The Graduate School and University Center  
of the City University of New York  
365 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3330  
New York, NY 10016  
(212) 817-1832  
<http://web.gc.cuny.edu/dept/case/nrcp/>

### National Clearinghouse for Paraeducator Resources

*Provides a wealth of information and resources pertaining to paraeducators and others involved in the education of linguistically and culturally diverse students.*

University of Southern California  
Rossier School of Education  
USC Center for Multilingual, Multicultural Research  
Waite Phillips Hall, Suite 402  
Los Angeles, CA 90089  
(213) 740-2360  
[www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html](http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html)

### Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.

385 Concord Ave., Suite 103  
Belmont, MA 02478  
(617) 489-6000  
[www.rnt.org](http://www.rnt.org)

## Order these videos!

***The Drive to Teach***, part of a ***School Stories*** TV series produced by the National Education Association (NEA) and The Learning Channel (TLC), illustrates how a school district in Savannah, Georgia, in partnership with local universities, is offering bus drivers, custodians, paraprofessionals, and other school staff the chance to become teachers. To order, contact NEA: (202) 833-4000.

***Supporting Tomorrow's Teachers***, produced by the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1998, describes a paraeducator-to-teacher program through the eyes of one current participant and four former participants who are now teachers. To order, contact the LAUSD Career Ladder Office at (213) 625-4571.

***We Make the Road by Walking...Together***, produced by WestEd (with OERI funding), is the story of the Model Support System for Paraprofessionals (MSSP) in Tulare County, California. In this moving video, program participants describe the development of the model and their success in completing both B.A. degrees and credentials. To order, call (415) 565-3044.

## Paraeducator-to-Teacher Program Funding

### Federal Funding Sources

#### U.S. Department of Education

*Offers information about all ED grant programs and free copies of “What Should I Know About ED Grants.”*

600 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202-0498  
(800) USA-LEARN  
[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

**Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act** supports professional development for instructional aides who help disadvantaged children needing remedial basic skills instruction.

**Title II of the Improving America’s Schools Act**, the new name for the expanded Eisenhower professional development program, provides funds for professional development, with a priority for math and science. Funds may be used to train paraprofessionals and others in ways that build capacity to help students reach rigorous content and performance standards.

**Title II of the Higher Education Act** offers new teacher quality provisions that support state grants for promoting reform activities; partnership grants for improving teacher education; teacher recruitment grants for high-need school districts; and loan forgiveness programs for individuals teaching in high-poverty school districts.

### Specific departments to contact:

#### Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Languages Affairs (OBEMLA)

*Administers programs authorized by Title VII of the Improving America’s Schools Act (the Bilingual Education Act). Title VII programs provide educators with the flexibility to implement and expand programs that build upon the strengths of linguistically and culturally diverse students to help them meet high academic standards.*

U.S. Department of Education  
Office of Bilingual Education and  
Minority Languages Affairs  
600 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202-6510  
(202) 205-5463  
[www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OBEMLA)

#### Office of Postsecondary Education (OPE)

*Offers financial aid information for students, resources for institutions, and postsecondary education policy initiatives.*

Regional Office Building 3 (ROB-3)  
7th and D Streets SW  
Washington, DC 20202  
(202) 708-5547  
[www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/index.html)

#### Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSEP/OSERS)

*Supports programs and institutions that assist in educating children with special needs, provides for the rehabilitation of youth and adults with disabilities, and supports research to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.*

U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202  
(800) USA-LEARN  
[www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP)

## Paraeducator-to-Teacher Program Funding *continued*

### State Funding Sources

Only a few states currently provide support for comprehensive paraeducator-to-teacher programs. Even in cases in which state funding exists, continuing support is by no means guaranteed. Check with your state department of education about paraeducator-to-teacher program funding.

Examples of states that support programs:

In Texas, the 75th Legislature passed House Bill 571, which gives some education aides help with college tuition and fees to pursue certification. In California, the Paraprofessional Teacher Training Program (PTTP) enables bilingual paraprofessionals serving students with limited English proficiency to earn their college degrees and teaching credentials through career ladders in their districts.

To help paraeducators become licensed, some states, in conjunction with the American Federation of Teachers, are considering district funding for full-time study for paraeducators during their final year of teacher preparation.

### Foundation Funding Sources

#### The Foundation Center

*The Center's mission is to foster public understanding of the foundation field by collecting, organizing, analyzing, and disseminating information on foundations, corporate giving, and related subjects.*

79 Fifth Avenue/16th Street  
New York, NY 10003-3076  
(212) 620-4230 or  
(800) 424-9836  
[www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)



*Check out the Foundation Center's online*

*"Proposal Writing Short Course."*

### Financial Aid for Program Participants

#### American Indian College Fund

*Provides scholarships and grants to those of Native American descent attending tribal colleges.*

American Indian College Fund  
111 Osage Street, Building D, Suite 25W  
Denver, CO 80204  
(303) 892-8312  
[www.collegefund.org/main.htm](http://www.collegefund.org/main.htm)

#### Easy Access for Students and Institutions

*Provides easy access, through new technologies, to information and funding for education beyond high school.*

Project EASI  
600 Independence Avenue SW  
ROB-3, Room 4642  
Washington, DC 20202  
(202) 260-1921  
<http://easi.ed.gov>

#### FastWEB

*Offers online searches that match specific individuals' skills to over 400,000 scholarships.*

FastWEB.com, L.L.C.  
2550 Commonwealth Avenue  
North Chicago, IL 60064  
(847) 785-8000  
[www.fastweb.com](http://www.fastweb.com)

#### Federal Student Aid Information Center

*Offers free copy of Student Guide on grants, loans, etc.*

PO Box 84  
Washington, DC 20044  
(800) 4FED-AID  
[www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov)

#### FinAid

*Offers a comprehensive Web-based annotated collection of information about student financial aid.*

[www.finaid.org](http://www.finaid.org)

#### National Hispanic Scholarship Fund

*Provides opportunities for college funding for students of Hispanic origin.*

1 Sansome Street, Suite 1000  
San Francisco, CA 94104  
(415) 445-9930 or (800) 473-4636  
<http://nsf.net>

## Paraeducator-to-Teacher Program Funding *continued*

### Financial Aid for Program Participants

#### Jackie Robinson Foundation

*Offers comprehensive financial support services to persons of color enrolled in institutions of higher education.*

Jackie Robinson Foundation  
3 West 35th Street, 11th Floor  
New York, NY 10001-2204  
(212) 290-8600  
[www.jackierobinson.org/scholars/scholars.html](http://www.jackierobinson.org/scholars/scholars.html)

#### Office of Indian Education Program(OIEP) Bureau of Indian Affairs

*Fosters the further development of the academic and vocational skills of Indian students in the field of postsecondary education.*

Indian Fellowship Program  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202  
(202) 208-6123  
<http://shaman.unm.edu/oiep/home.htm>

#### United Negro College Fund

*Offers many scholarships for minority students pursuing careers in teaching*  
8260 Willow Oaks Corporate Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22031  
(800) 332-UNCF  
<http://www.uncf.org>

#### U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Scholarship

*Awards scholarships to Hispanic students enrolled in an accredited college, university, community college, or vocational school.*  
Scholarship Program at the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce  
1019 19th Street NW, Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20036  
(202) 842-1212  
[www.usbcc.com/index.html](http://www.usbcc.com/index.html)

## Technical Assistance for Paraeducator-to-Teacher Programs

The DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, through the *Pathways to Teaching Careers Program*, supports Leadership Sites, coordinated by Bank Street College and the Southern Education Foundation. Leadership Sites offer technical assistance regarding issues such as recruitment, retention, and mentoring of paraeducators; networking with public schools; funding; creating partnerships with universities; and more.

### Coordinating agencies:

#### Bank Street College

Contact: Y. Nona Weekes  
610 West 112th Street  
New York, NY 10025  
(212) 875-4528  
[Ynweekes@bnk1.bnkst.edu](mailto:Ynweekes@bnk1.bnkst.edu)

#### Southern Education Foundation

Contact: Nathaniel Jackson  
135 Auburn Avenue NE  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
(404) 523-0001  
[Excellence@sefatl.org](mailto:Excellence@sefatl.org)

### Leadership sites:

#### Armstrong Atlantic State University

Contact: Evelyn Dandy  
11935 Abecorn Street  
Savannah, GA 31419  
(912) 921-2342  
[evelyndandy@mailgate.armstrong.edu](mailto:evelyndandy@mailgate.armstrong.edu)

#### Kean University, New Jersey

Contact: Mary Dean Dumais  
School of Education T-130  
1000 Morris Avenue  
Union, NJ 07083  
(908) 527-2555  
[mdumais@turbo.kean.edu](mailto:mdumais@turbo.kean.edu)

#### Harris-Stowe State College

Contact: Armetta G. Whitmore  
Teacher Education Department  
3026 Laclede Avenue  
St. Louis, MO 63103  
(314) 340-3669

#### Norfolk State University

Contact: Denise Littleton  
2401 Corprew Avenue  
Norfolk, VA 23504  
(804) 683-9583  
[d\\_littleton@vger.nsu.edu](mailto:d_littleton@vger.nsu.edu)

## Electronic Media

The Center for Multicultural Research (CMMR) at the University of Southern California offers electronic resources for paraeducators.

### Discussion Forum on Paraeducators

The Paraeducator Electronic Forum is a Listserv that provides a vehicle for discussion of topics such as, but not limited to, paraeducator professional development, paraeducator career pathways to teacher certification, and paraeducator work conditions and job responsibilities. Hosted by CMMR at USC, this forum connects all those who are interested in the many dimensions of paraeducator affairs.

**Moderator:** Michael Genzuk, University of Southern California, genzuk@usc.edu

### Subscribing To The Paraed-L Listserv

- At your mail prompt, send electronic mail to: listproc@usc.edu
- Ignore the “subject” line.
- For the message, type:

Subscribe PARAED-L [your first name and last name]  
(Note: Do not put brackets around your name)

**e.g. Subscribe PARAED-L John Smith**

The list processor will subscribe you automatically. Upon approval, you will receive a return message indicating confirmation of your subscription to the list.

To “unsubscribe” from the PARAED-L list follow the subscription instructions (above) and substitute “unsubscribe” for the word “subscribe”

**e.g. Unsubscribe PARAED-L John Smith**

### Posting to the List

Once you have received confirmation of your subscription, you may proceed to send electronic mail to the list address (PARAED-L@usc.edu). Your mail will automatically be posted. DO NOT send messages for distribution to “listproc”. It does not matter whether you type upper or lower case letters.

### Live Java Chat

This online service allows individuals interested in multilingual, multicultural educational issues to chat with other CMMR visitors from all over the world.

- Visit [www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR](http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR)
- Click on “Live Chat Room” on left-hand scroll bar
- Follow instructions to go to chat rooms

## Newsletters

### The Ladder

*An example of a newsletter with information for and about paraeducators pursuing teaching careers in Los Angeles Unified School District.*

Career Ladder Office  
450 North Grand Avenue, Room P-218  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
(213) 625-4571  
E-mail: sbrand01@lausd.k12.ca.us

### Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching Careers Lehman College

*An example of a newsletter to keep paraeducators informed about important events and educational trends in bilingual education.*

Lehman College  
250 Bedford Park Blvd, West  
Carman Hall 176  
Bronx, NY 10468

**View this newsletter online at:** [www.lehman.cuny.edu/education/center/ara/index.html](http://www.lehman.cuny.edu/education/center/ara/index.html)

## Publications

Clewell, B.C. and Villegas, A.M. (1998). "Increasing the Number of Teachers of Color for Urban Schools: Lessons from the Pathways National Evaluation." *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 31, pp. 3–17.

DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund. (1997). *Recruiting, Preparing and Retaining Teachers for America's Schools, Progress Report: Pathways to Teaching Careers*. New York, NY: Author.

Genzuk, M. (1997). "Diversifying the Teaching Force: Preparing Paraeducators as Teachers." *ERIC Clearinghouse on Teaching and Teacher Education*.

Genzuk, M. and Baca, R. (1998). "The Paraeducator-to-Teacher Pipeline: A 5-Year Retrospective on an Innovative Teacher Preparation Program for Latina (os)." *Education and Urban Society*, Vol. 31, No. 1.

Genzuk, M., Lavadenz, M., and Krashen, S. (Winter 1994). "Para-educators: A source for remedying the shortage of teachers for limited English-proficient students." *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*. Vol. 14, pp. 211–222.

Gordon, J.A. *Preparation for Urban Teaching: Post-B.A. Paraprofessionals*. (1995). Paper presented to the faculty of the University of Washington.

## Publications continued

Hudson, M.J. (1998) "Linking School and Community to Build National Recruitment and Preparation Programs." *Education and Urban Society*. Vol. 31, pp. 62–72.

Ponessa, J. "Promise Seen in Patchwork of Para-to-Teacher Programs." (1996, April 3). *Education Week*.

Simpson, G. (Spring 1996). "The EDIT Project: A partnership to encourage minorities to enter teaching." *Texas Study of Secondary Education*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 14–16.

U.S. Department of Education. (1997). *Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools: An Idea Book*. Washington, D.C: Author.

Villegas, A.M. and Clewell, B.C. (1998). "Increasing Teacher Diversity by Tapping the Paraprofessional Pool. Theory into Practice." Vol. 27, pp. 121–30.

## RNT Publications

Haselkorn, D. and Fideler, E. (1996). *Breaking the Class Ceiling: Paraeducator Pathways to Teaching*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (1998). *Measured Steps: An Evaluation Handbook for Improving Teacher Recruitment Programs*. Belmont, MA: Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.

**To order RNT publications, call (617) 489-6000 or visit our Web site at [www.rnt.org](http://www.rnt.org)**



What you tell us will help to revise and improve the RNT Toolkit guides. Please return your completed form by mail or fax to **Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., 385 Concord Avenue, Suite 103, Belmont, MA 02478.** Fax: 617-489-6005. Thank you!

Position \_\_\_\_\_

*Please check all that apply.*

Which aspect of teacher recruitment, development, and retention are you involved in?

- Recruitment                       Professional development                       Induction programs  
 Providing funding                       Assessment                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

How do you plan to use the guide?

- Distribute it to staff members                       Develop a program  
 Read it to inform my understanding of the issues  
 Share it with my school committee, teachers, and/or legislators  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you have used the guide, in what ways has it been helpful?

- Provided me with new information                       Provided interesting profiles  
 Helped me think about improving recruitment efforts  
 Helped our district improve our recruitment efforts  
 Not helpful                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Which aspects of the guide were most helpful?

- Profiles                       Examples                       Statistics  
 Tips                       Facts                       Other information \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you think might benefit from this guide?

- Superintendents                       Hiring personnel staff                       School committee members  
 Union leaders                       Legislators                       Teachers  
 Principals                       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Is the publication price affordable?                       Yes                       No

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Where do you usually find ideas for buying professional books?

- Word of mouth                       Educational organizations                       Teacher-related magazines  
 Conferences                       Bookstores and/or online

Please rate the following aspects of this Toolkit guide on a scale of 1 to 5

(1 is *excellent* and 5 is *poor*.) Circle one number only.

- a) The purpose and objectives of the guide are clearly presented.                      1   2   3   4   5  
 b) The guide is well organized.                      1   2   3   4   5  
 c) The guide prepared me to apply what I learned.                      1   2   3   4   5

Was there something you had hoped to learn from this guide, but did not? Please explain on the reverse side of this form.

**Optional:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please feel free to provide additional comments on the reverse side of this form. (If you fax this back to Recruiting New Teachers, Inc., please make sure to make a copy of any comments on the reverse side.) You can also e-mail your comments to [rnt@rnt.org](mailto:rnt@rnt.org)

