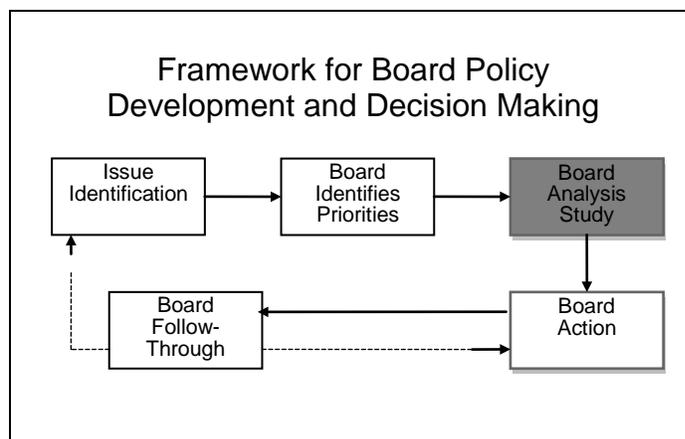


# Iowa State Board of Education

## Executive Summary

September 26, 2013



**Agenda Item:** Work Session - Paraeducator Preparation Program Approval Review Overview

**Iowa Goal:** Goal 1: All children will enter school ready to learn.  
Goal 2: All PK-12 students will achieve at a high level.

**State Board Role/Authority:** Iowa Administrative Code section 281—80 grants authority to the State Board of Education to set standards and procedures for the approval of programs for individuals who seek a paraeducator certification issued by the Board of Educational Examiners.

**Presenter:** Marietta Rives, Consultant  
Bureau of Educator Quality

**Attachments:** 6

**Recommendation:** It is recommended that the Iowa State Board of Education become familiar with the current paraeducator preparation program standards and approval process and identify possible steps for improvement.

**Background:** Legislation originally passed in 1998 and revised in 2000 created a voluntary paraeducator certification. The legislation was prompted by the need to have well-trained paraeducators providing assistance to students and teachers. The State Board has asked for the opportunity to review and possibly revise the program standards and approval process.

## Overview of the Paraeducator Program Approval

1. Board of Educational Examiners establishes Standards and Competencies via rules



2. Interested institutions (LEA, AEA, IHE, CC) develop a program to meet the Department of Education's program standards to include coursework that addresses the competencies



3. Institutions submit documentation of their program to the Department of Education for initial approval



4. Interaction between the Department of Education, Board of Educational Examiners and the institution until the program satisfactorily meets the standards



5. The director of the Department of Education will make a recommendation to the State Board of Education for approval of the paraeducator program



6. Interested individuals will complete an approved program and the certifying official from the institution will be responsible for verifying that all program requirements are met



7. The certifying official will recommend the individual to the Board of Educational Examiners for certification

### ***Highly Qualified Paraeducator Requirements Under NCLB***

The highly qualified paraeducator requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) call for paraeducator (paraprofessional) competencies for paraeducators whose work is supported by Title I funds.

Title I funded paraeducators include those who work in “targeted” assistance programs or any instructional paraeducator who works in a school building that has a school wide Title I program. The following guidance on meeting NCLB paraeducator standards was developed by the Iowa Department of Education for Iowa schools and area education agencies.

#### *Definition of paraprofessional*

For the purposes of Title I, Part A, a paraprofessional is an employee who provides instructional support in a program supported with Title I, Part A funds. This includes paraprofessionals who

- (1) provide one-to-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher,
- (2) assist with classroom management, such as organizing instructional and other materials,
- (3) provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory,
- (4) conduct parental involvement activities,
- (5) provide support in a library or media center,
- (6) act as a translator, or
- (7) provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a teacher [Title I, section 1119(g)(2)].

Individuals who work in food services, cafeteria or playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance, and similar positions are **not** considered paraprofessionals under Title I.

#### *Requirements*

Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support and who were hired after January 8, 2002, must have

- (1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- (2) obtained an associate’s (or higher) degree; or
- (3) obtain voluntary certification through the Board of Educational Examiners; or
- (4) met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal state or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness).

\*All Title I paraprofessionals must have a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent. This includes paraprofessionals who serve as translators or who conduct parental involvement activities.

#### *Paraprofessional Assessment*

LEAs should carefully choose an assessment that will measure the knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness). The criterion established for approval as a paraprofessional under No Child Left Behind Act must be rigorous and defensible. **Examples of measures available to LEAs include Work Keys (which has been normed for paraprofessionals), Parapro Assessment from ETS, and COMPASS from ACT.** The assessment chosen must ensure that more than just basic skills are being assessed.

#### *Recommendation*

All LEAs should encourage their paraeducators to acquire Iowa’s voluntary paraeducator certification offered through the Board of Educational Examiners, even those who have already been approved using an assessment. Federal funds, including Title I funds, can be used to assist paraeducators to complete this coursework.

## ***Paraeducator Certification***

Iowa's voluntary certification system for paraeducators is based on competencies that reflect the skills necessary for multiple paraeducator assignments. Although the certificates are not mandatory, the Iowa Department of Education strongly recommends that districts, area education agencies, and community colleges provide supports and opportunities to encourage paraeducators to obtain certificates appropriate to their roles. Paraeducators can earn certificates in the following categories:

- Level I Generalist PK-12
- Level II areas of concentration
  - Early Childhood PK-3
  - Special Needs PK-12
  - English as a Second Language PK-12
  - Career and Transition Programs: Grades 5-12
  - School Library Media PK-12
  - Speech Language Pathology PK-12
  - Vision Impairments PK-12
  - Advanced Generalist PK-12

Additionally, paraeducators who work in special education settings and who hold a generalist certificate may complete coursework to serve as an authorized substitute for the teacher in their middle or high school special education assignment. The substitute option is not available for paraeducators serving in elementary special education assignments.

The specific requirements and competencies for each certification can be found at <http://www.state.ia.us/boee/para.html> .

### ***Resources on where to go and what to do***

Programs for paraeducator certificates are available throughout Iowa at institutions whose programs have been approved by the State Board of Education. A list of the certification institutions can be found at <http://www.state.ia.us/boee/para.html> . Forms to apply for a paraeducator certificate or substitute authorization upon completion of the appropriate coursework can be found at <http://www.boee.iowa.gov/licensure/apply.html> under the category of "Apply for a new or additional license."

### ***Process and Certificates***

In order to receive a paraeducator certificate, an individual must obtain a recommendation from the institution where the approved paraeducator program was completed. The recommendations are signed and forwarded to the State Board of Educational Examiners by the certifying official of the institution once the paraeducator candidate has demonstrated the competencies required for each certificate. Paraeducator certificates must be renewed every five years through completion of additional coursework. Paraeducators are encouraged to contact the Board of Educational Examiners for information on associated costs such as fees for application and background checks.

**Chapter 80 of Iowa Administrative Code 281 of the**

**Iowa Department of Education  
Standards for paraeducator preparation programs**

281—80.1(272) General statement. Programs of preparation leading to certification of paraeducators in Iowa are subject to approval by the state board of education.

281—80.2(272) Definitions. The following definitions are used throughout this chapter:

*“Department”* means the department of education.

*“Director”* means director of the department of education.

*“Institution”* means a public school district, area education agency, community college, institution of higher education under the state board of regents or an accredited private institution as defined in Iowa Code section 261.9(1) offering paraeducator preparation program(s).

*“Paraeducator candidate”* means an individual who is enrolled in a paraeducator preparation program leading to certification as a generalist, generalist with area(s) of concentration, or advanced paraeducator.

*“Paraeducator preparation program”* means the program of paraeducator preparation leading to certification of paraeducators.

*“State board”* means Iowa state board of education.

*“Unit”* means the organizational entity within an institution with the responsibility of administering the paraeducator preparation program(s).

281—80.3(272) Institutions affected. All institutions engaged in preparation of paraeducators and seeking state board approval of their paraeducator preparation programs shall meet the standards contained in this chapter.

281—80.4(272) Criteria for Iowa paraeducator preparation programs. Each institution seeking approval of its paraeducator preparation program(s) shall file evidence of the extent to which it meets the standards contained in this chapter. After the state board has approved an institution’s paraeducator preparation program(s), students who complete the program(s) may be recommended by the authorized official of that institution for issuance of the appropriate certificate.

281—80.5(272) Approval of programs. Approval of paraeducator preparation programs by the state board shall be based on the recommendation of the director after study of the factual and evaluative evidence on record about each program in terms of the standards contained in this chapter.

Approval, if granted, shall be for a term of five years; however, approval for a lesser term may be granted by the state board if it determines conditions so warrant.

If approval is not granted, the applicant institution will be advised concerning the areas in which improvement or changes appear to be essential for approval. In this case, the institution shall be given the opportunity to present factual information concerning its programs at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the state board. The institution may also reapply at its discretion to show what actions have been taken toward suggested improvement.

281—80.6(272) Periodic reports. Institutions placed on the approved programs list may be asked to make periodic reports upon request of the department which shall provide basic information necessary to keep records of each paraeducator preparation program up-to-date, and to provide information necessary to carry out research studies relating to paraeducator preparation.

281—80.7(272) Reevaluation of paraeducator preparation programs. Every five years, or at any time deemed necessary by the director, an institution shall file a self-evaluation of its paraeducator preparation programs.

281—80.8(272) Approval of program changes. Upon application by an institution, the director is authorized to approve minor additions to, or changes within, the institution's approved paraeducator preparation program. When an institution proposes revisions that exceed the primary scope of its programs, the revisions shall become operative only after having been approved by the state board.

**80.9(272) Organizational and resources standards.**

80.9(1) Unit faculty shall collaborate with members of the professional community, including the unit's advisory committee comprised of practitioners, to design, deliver, and evaluate programs to prepare paraeducators.

80.9(2) Unit faculty shall maintain ongoing actual involvement in settings where paraeducators are employed.

80.9(3) The unit's planning and evaluation system shall support paraeducator candidate performance and shall use assessment data to evaluate the effectiveness of the unit and its program.

**281—80.10(272) Diversity.**

80.10(1) Efforts toward racial, ethnic, and gender diversity among paraeducator candidates and unit faculty shall be documented. In addition, diversity efforts shall include persons with disabilities, persons from different language and socioeconomic backgrounds, and persons from different regions of the country and world.

80.10(2) Unit efforts in increasing or maintaining diversity shall be reflected in plans, monitoring of plans, and results.

**281—80.11(272) Paraeducator candidate performance standards. Paraeducator candidate assessment and unit planning and evaluation shall include the following:**

80.11(1) Performance of paraeducator candidates shall be measured against state certification standards adopted by the board of educational examiners under Iowa Code section 272.12 and the unit's learning outcomes.

80.11(2) Information on performance of paraeducator candidates shall be drawn from multiple assessments, including but not limited to unit assessment of content knowledge and its application as candidates work with students, teachers, parents, and other professional colleagues in school settings, and follow-up studies of certified paraeducators.

80.11(3) The unit's assessment system shall:

- a. Provide paraeducator candidates with ongoing feedback about what elements of performance are being assessed and how performance is being assessed.
- b. Demonstrate how the information gathered via the individual, paraeducator-candidate assessment system is utilized to refine and revise the unit's framework and program goals, content, and delivery strategies. Explain the process for reviewing and revising the assessment system.

80.11(4) An annual report including a composite of evaluative data collected by the unit shall be submitted to the department by September 30 of each year.

## ***Appropriate Paraeducator Services Matrix***

The *Appropriate Paraeducator Services Matrix* is intended to provide guidance regarding paraeducator roles to Iowa educational practitioners (administrators, teachers, paraeducators, etc.) who provide services to PK-12 students in general and special education programs. The matrix outlines appropriate services for paraeducators in classrooms in which they are the only assistant to a teacher, in classrooms in which they are among multiple assistants to a teacher, in behavior settings, in community-based settings, or in assignments in which they travel among classrooms to assist a student or groups of students. This document does not include guidance for paraeducators in support and related services such as Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTA), Speech-Language Pathologist Assistants (SLPA), Physical Therapy Assistants (PTA), and other such roles. The *Appropriate Paraeducator Services Matrix* is intended to supplement information found in the *Guide to Effective Paraeducator Practices II* that can be found at the following web site: [http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=773&Itemid=1297](http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=773&Itemid=1297).

### ***Important Notes***

All paraeducators need to be provided training that results in the skills necessary to carry out their primary assignment. For example, as the chart below indicates, paraeducators can implement student behavior plans IF they are appropriately trained to do so. If not, it is inappropriate to give paraeducators that duty.

Key supports that are needed from administrators and teachers in order to ensure that paraeducators are providing appropriate services are outlined in the chart below. Additional information regarding these supports can be found in the *Guide to Effective Paraeducator Practices II* referenced above.

<b>Administrator and Teacher Supports To Ensure Appropriate Paraeducator Services</b>	
<p><b>Administrators</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring training and support for teachers who supervise paraeducators</li> <li>Ensuring paraeducator training and support designed specifically for their assignments</li> <li>Establishing schedules that are designed to ensure appropriate supervision for paraeducators</li> <li>Being knowledgeable about paraeducator roles and duties</li> <li>Communicating clear information to parents regarding roles and duties of paraeducators</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teachers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Providing clear directions, appropriate training, and appropriate supports for paraeducator duties</li> <li>Providing appropriate supervision for paraeducators</li> <li>Communicating regularly with paraeducators regarding teacher and paraeducator roles.</li> <li>Communicating clear information to parents regarding roles and duties of paraeducators</li> </ul>

Appropriate Paraeducator Duties	Inappropriate Paraeducator Duties
<b><i>Instruction</i></b>	
<p><b>Reinforcing application of skills on previously introduced concepts.</b> Paraeducators should be trained in how to follow, but not go beyond, teacher directions in practice and drilling sessions.</p> <p><b>Reinforcing previously provided “specially designed instruction”</b></p> <p><b>Generalizing accommodations in response to immediate needs.</b> Paraeducators can build on skills that have been introduced to students. For example, if a student has been introduced to and trained in the use of a particular strategy, that strategy can be generalized to other subject areas or social settings with the assistance of the paraeducator. Or, if a paraeducator has been trained to verbally model grammatical correctness, that modeling can be generalized to several settings.</p> <p><b>Facilitating teacher instructions in small group activities</b></p> <p><b>Constructing instruction materials:</b> Paraeducators can construct flash cards, games for review, or other review materials under the supervision of a teacher.</p> <p><b>Assisting teacher in modifying or adapting instructional strategies and materials according to the needs of the learner.</b></p> <p><b>Supervising students in work settings.</b> Paraeducators can oversee implementation of a licensed professional’s (work experience coordinator, etc.) program for students in community or work settings, including providing feedback to students as directed by the licensed professional. They can also collect and record assessment data in those settings as directed by the licensed professional, and share that information with the licensed professional who assesses and plans for continuing needs.</p>	<p><b>Introducing new skills and concepts that go beyond teacher directions</b></p> <p><b>Providing “specially designed instruction”</b></p> <p><b>Planning instruction or selecting instructional materials</b></p> <p><b>Setting goals for students and/or classes</b></p> <p><b>Designing instructional materials</b></p> <p><b>Modifying the content of instructional materials</b></p> <p><b>Varying any component of scripted programming or making assessments and instructional decisions regarding student responses in a scripted program</b></p> <p><b>Designing student outcomes and expectations in work settings.</b> Working with employers or other work site supervisors to design student learning outcomes, student expectations, and other developmental components of the student’s work setting program.</p>

Appropriate Paraeducator Duties	Inappropriate Paraeducator Duties
<b><i>Assessment</i></b>	
<p><b>Collecting data.</b> Based on direction from the teacher, a paraeducator can observe and document student social, behavioral or academic performance, if appropriately trained. The data are shared with the teacher who makes decisions on instructional needs.</p> <p><b>Recording and charting data</b></p> <p><b>“Checking” papers.</b> Paraeducators can check student work for which an answer key has been provided.</p> <p><b>Reading tests to students.</b> Paraeducators need to be trained in appropriate test reading procedures. <i>Important note:</i> Districts should consider technology such as text readers or other alternatives to provide support to students who need reading accommodations in tests.</p>	<p><b>Developing assessment materials</b></p> <p><b>Modifying the content of instructional materials</b></p> <p><b>Error analysis</b> (See note on “checking” papers in <i>Appropriate Column</i>)</p> <p><b>Grading</b> (See note on “checking” papers in <i>Appropriate Column</i>)</p> <p><b>Administer standardized, diagnostic assessments</b> such as Basic Reading Inventory</p>
<b><i>Student Behavior</i></b>	
<p><b>Implementing student behavior plans.</b> Paraeducators need to be trained in how to follow, but not go beyond, teacher directions in implementing behavior plans.</p> <p><b>Implementing building-wide or classroom behavioral expectations such as PBS if appropriately trained</b></p> <p><b>Supervising students during recess, bus duty, transportation, lunch duty, study hall, and other such periods of the day in which students have unstructured time.</b> Paraeducators can also supervise hallways and accompany students going to classrooms or other sites in the school building (gymnasium, library, etc.)</p>	<p><b>Developing and evaluating student behavior goals and plans</b></p> <p><b>Developing and evaluating building-wide and classroom behavioral expectations</b></p>

Appropriate Paraeducator Duties	Inappropriate Paraeducator Duties
<b><i>Family and Parent Interactions</i></b>	
<p><b>Interactions with family members.</b> Paraeducators may provide information regarding daily routines and upcoming events. If questions related to progress, instruction or specific student needs arise, the paraeducator should direct the family to the teacher.</p> <p><b>Input into individualized education program planning:</b> Paraeducators may be a source of information regarding student response to instruction and behavior programs by sharing information gathered through observations of the student, if paraeducators have been trained in appropriate observation procedures.</p>	<p><b>Interactions with family members.</b> Paraeducators should not discuss student progress, student needs, and other educational program components with family members.</p>
<b><i>Organizational Duties</i></b>	
<p><b>Maintaining an inventory and ordering supplies as directed by the teacher</b></p> <p><b>Maintaining an orderly, healthy, and safe environment</b></p> <p><b>Setting up and maintaining learning environments, learning centers and adaptive equipment as directed by the teacher</b></p> <p><b>Recording activities for documentation (implementation log) Copying and disseminating instructional/assessment materials Modifying the format of instructional materials (change to larger type, etc.)</b></p>	<p><b>Developing an inventory and making fiscal and organizational decisions on needed supplies</b></p> <p><b>Developing plans and routines for orderly, healthy, and safe environments</b></p> <p><b>Designing learning environments, learning centers, and adaptive equipment</b></p>

Appropriate Paraeducator Duties	Inappropriate Paraeducator Duties
<b>Health Services</b>	
<p><b>Under the direction and monitoring of a health professional or health plan supervisor, a paraeducator with appropriate training may assist with the implementation of a health plan.</b></p>	<p><b>Assist with implementation of health plan without appropriate training</b></p> <p><b>Develop or modify a health plan</b></p>
<p><b><i>Time Unsupervised (i.e., Indirect Supervision)</i></b></p> <p><i>The general guidelines below regarding unsupervised time are intended to be balanced with guidance in the above categories. Decisions regarding unsupervised time need to be based not only on the amount of time, but also on the appropriateness of a paraeducator’s duties during that time.</i></p>	
<p><b>Short Periods.</b> Paraeducators can be left unsupervised by a licensed professional during short periods of time as long as the focus of the unsupervised time is to reinforce lessons that have been designed and introduced by the teacher.</p> <p><b>Periodic and infrequent longer periods.</b> Paraeducators can be left unsupervised by a licensed professional for occasional longer periods of time if the paraeducator has been trained in and can demonstrate the following skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Knowing when and under what circumstances the teacher must be summoned for instructional or behavioral issues</li> <li>○ Knowledge and demonstration of procedures for emergency situations</li> </ul> <p><b>Time and specific duties need to be articulated and documented.</b> Parents need clear information regarding a paraeducator’s specific schedule and duties with their child. That information needs to be provided in a schedule or some other form of documentation.</p>	<p><b>Class periods on a regular basis.</b> Paraeducators should not take the place of a teacher who is out of the classroom for daily or regularly scheduled periods.</p> <p><b>Should not be viewed as a substitute.</b> Paraeducators should not regularly serve as an alternate for a special education teacher when the special education teacher is co-teaching in a general education classroom or some other regularly scheduled occurrence. *</p>

\* A paraeducator who holds a substitute authorization is allowed to substitute during a teacher’s absence only in the special education classroom in which the paraeducator is employed [282—14.143(272)]. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** The substitute authorization is not intended to replace daily or regularly planned instruction.

**Summary of Paraeducator Certification Totals for 2011-12  
& Aggregated Totals for 2000-2011  
October 1, 2012**

<b>July 1, 2011- June 30, 2012</b>	<b>Level I - Generalist</b>	<b>Level II - Early Childhood</b>	<b>Level II - Special Needs</b>	<b>Level II - ESL</b>	<b>Level II - Career &amp; Transition</b>	<b>Level II - School Library Media</b>	<b>Level II - Speech Language Path. Assistant</b>	<b>Level II - Vision Impairment</b>	<b>Level II - Advanced PK - 12</b>
Keystone AEA 1	27	3	2						
AEA 267	25	12	5						
Prairie Lakes AEA 8	18	8	2						
Mississippi Bend AEA 9	28	7							
Grant Wood AEA 10	45								
Heartland AEA 11	109	54	6			1			
Northwest AEA 12	17	15							
Green Hills AEA 13	11	11							1
Great Prairie AEA 15	24	2	13				22		
Dordt College	0								
Eastern IA CC (Muscatine)	6								
Iowa Lakes CC	0								
Iowa Central CC	6								
Kirkwood CC	19	12	12	2	2				8
Northeast IA CC	2								
Western IA Tech	13								
<b>2011-12 Totals</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2010-11 Totals</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>			<b>6</b>
<b>2009-10 Totals</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>			<b>12</b>
<b>2008-09 Totals</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>			<b>5</b>
<b>2007-08 Totals</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>			<b>2</b>
<b>2006-07 Totals</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>51</b>			<b>4</b>
<b>2005-06 Totals</b>	<b>690</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>			<b>10</b>
<b>2004-05 Totals</b>	<b>752</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>13</b>
<b>2003-04 Totals</b>	<b>1450</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>168</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>56</b>			<b>13</b>
<b>2002-03 Totals</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>13</b>
<b>2001-02 Totals</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>6</b>
<b>2000-01 Totals</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>			<b>9</b>
<b>Grand Totals</b>	<b>6590</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>102</b>