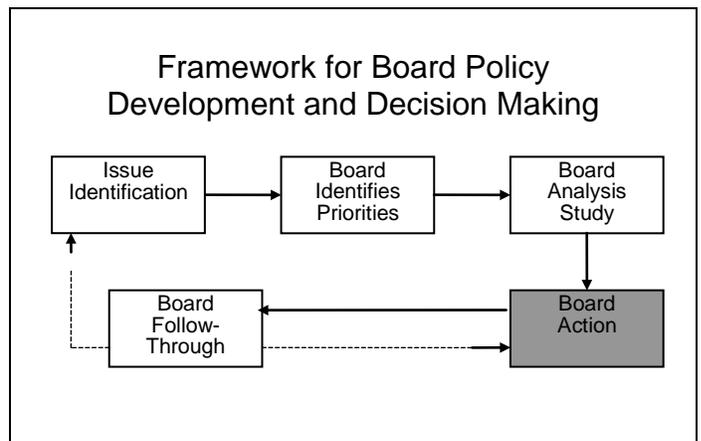


Iowa State Board of Education

Executive Summary

March 6, 2014



Agenda Item: Northwest Area Education Agency Paraeducator Preparation Program Approval

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: 2

Recommendation: Hear and discuss the recommendation to review and revise current paraeducator certification program standards.

It is recommended that the State Board approve the paraeducator preparation programs submitted by Northwest Area Education Agency which includes: prekindergarten through grade 12 paraeducator generalist level 1 and early childhood—prekindergarten through grade 3.

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. Licensure rules were established by the Board of Educational Examiners. The State Board of Education approves the voluntary preparation programs according to standards and procedures contained in Chapter 80 of the Iowa Administrative Code.

A National Perspective: Paraeducator Revisions

March 6, 2014

Paraeducators, in partnership with school leaders, classroom teachers, and other educational staff, support and enhance the education of Iowa's students and are respected and valued members of the educational team. According to the Iowa Department of Education 2013 Condition of Education Report, Iowa public schools employ the full-time equivalent of 11,093.9 paraeducators. Since the inception of Iowa's voluntary certification system for paraeducators in 2000, the 18 programs that offer the coursework have issued nearly 9,000 certificates in the 9 certification categories.

Federal Highly Qualified Paraeducator Requirements	Iowa's Response
<p>The highly qualified paraeducator requirements under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB 2001) call for paraeducator (paraprofessional) competencies for paraeducators whose work is supported by Title I funds.</p> <p>The highly qualified paraeducator requirements under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) call for paraeducator qualifications to be "consistent with any state-approved or state-recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the professional discipline in which those personnel are providing special education or related services." Under IDEA 2004, Iowa paraeducators who provide services to students with disabilities do not have any certification requirements because Iowa's state-approved system for paraeducators certification is voluntary.</p>	<p>Title I paraprofessionals whose duties include instructional support and who were hired after January 8, 2002, must have:</p> <p>(1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; or</p> <p>(2) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or</p> <p>(3) obtain voluntary certification through the Board of Educational Examiners; or</p> <p>(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).</p> <p>*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.</p>

The task in front of Iowa's education system and all stakeholders that provide academic supports is to determine if the certified paraeducators in Iowa's schools are serving the learning needs of students. The system needs to clearly articulate paraeducator program provider expectations and simultaneously monitor and support the approved paraeducator program providers to ensure that certified paraeducators have the knowledge, skills and dispositions that are required. Therefore, it is imperative that the system supports continuous program improvement and that the program standards for Iowa's certifying organizations be reviewed and interpreted in a way that moves Iowa's paraeducators into a position that supports the learning needs of all students.

After researching each of the 50 states in the United States, it is evident that the NCLB and the coinciding IDEA requirements for highly qualified paraeducators have changed little since 2002. Numerous states have reviewed and revised their guidance documents but have made little or no change to their practices for meeting highly qualified requirements. In many of the resources listed below, the Iowa certification requirements and the Iowa paraeducator guidance are still held up as exemplars to follow.

Neighboring State	Highly Qualified Beyond NCLB and IDEA	Notes
Illinois	Beginning July 1, 2013, the state of Illinois no longer offers a state approved paraeducator certification.	The state of Illinois currently adheres only to the NCLB requirements. Reviewed and revised in January 2014.
Nebraska	In partnership with the University of Nebraska Lincoln, the state offers a ProjectPara online training program. Does not lead to a certificate or license.	Rich content specific to Nebraska initiatives; has been used selectively in Iowa for many years. Revised in 2013.
Minnesota	Locally determined training and development.	Reviewed and revised in 2012.
Michigan	Paraprofessional portfolio.	The para portfolio is one example of a locally determined assessment. Revised in 2005.

Resources:

National Clearinghouse for Paraeducator resources:

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/Clearinghouse.html>

Designing State and Local Policies for the Professional Development of Instructional Paraeducators

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/education/CMMR/paraed/ParaPolicies.pdf>

National Resource Center for Paraeducators

<http://www.nrcpara.org>

Programs Recommended for Approval March 6, 2014

Northwest Area Education Agency Paraeducator Programs to include:

- Prekindergarten through grade 12 paraeducator generalist level 1
- Early childhood—prekindergarten through grade 3

Iowa's voluntary paraeducator certification program is one way for paraeducators to meet the requirements set forth in No Child Left Behind. An additional benefit of this program is that certification will establish realistic opportunities for upward mobility through a career ladder pathway for paraeducators.

The institution named above has submitted a request for approval or re-approval of programs to certify paraeducators in each of the listed content areas. Although the paraeducator certification program is voluntary, there are several benefits to having paraeducators certified.

1. All learners will be better served and the quality of education and related services will improve with the availability of a better-prepared paraeducator workforce.
2. Paraeducators have mastered skills that are required to support and supplement teacher/provider programs.

The programs have been reviewed. In reviewing the programs, it was important to look for three major components:

1. Verification that each of the standards included in Iowa Administrative Code Chapter 80 have been met.
2. Verification that all standards and competencies of Chapter 22, Board of Educational Examiners administrative rules were included.
3. Verification that criteria to evaluate performance of the standards were present and appropriate.

Strengths of the programs:

- Program data is collected and utilized to make program changes as recommended by a representative advisory committee.
- Recommendations for program improvement made in May of 2013 have been completed and evidence of implementation has been submitted and reviewed.

Recommendation:

Based upon the review of programs submitted for consideration, approval for the prekindergarten through grade 12 paraeducator generalist level 1 and early childhood—prekindergarten through grade 3 is recommended.