

Report on the Needs Assessment of Title I Paraprofessionals

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Data Summary

Paraprofessional Needs Assessment Results

The Paraprofessional Needs Assessment administered during **January and February 2003** showed the following:

Total number of instruments sent to schools	2,243
Total number of instruments returned	2,015
Number of paraprofessionals	16,504
Number of Title I paraprofessionals	5,659
Number of IDEA paraprofessionals	7,984
Number of other paraprofessionals	2,868
Number of paraprofessionals with associate degree or higher or completed 48 semester hours	5,371
Number of paraprofessionals who need training to take the test	7,499
Number of paraprofessionals who prefer assessment versus course work	8,021
Number of paraprofessionals who anticipate having problems meeting the requirements	2,973
Number of paraprofessionals who need help preparing for assessment	6,906
Number of paraprofessionals who are taking courses towards 2 nd year	786
Number of paraprofessionals with 3 credit-course in reading	2,351
Number of paraprofessionals with 3 credit-course in mathematics	2,239
Number of paraprofessionals with 3 credit-course in early childhood	2,656
Number of paraprofessionals with 3 credit-course in child assessment and psychology	2,516
Number of paraprofessionals who were assessed after 1/8/02	4,597
Number of paraprofessionals at the elementary level	11,883
Number of paraprofessionals at the middle school level	3,631
Number of paraprofessionals at the high school level	990

Introduction

This report summarizes information collected during the months of February and March 2003 on the qualifications and needs of paraprofessionals in the State of Wisconsin. The report covers all paraprofessionals funded by the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) also known as the No Child Left behind Act (NCLB)-Title I, under Individual Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), or through other local, state, or federal programs.

A needs assessment instrument (survey) was developed to assess the needs of paraprofessionals in Wisconsin public schools. Surveys were sent to the building principals in Wisconsin to identify the evaluation practices and technical assistance needs, especially as they related to the Title I paraprofessionals. The survey was announced and sent out during the month of January 2003. The principals were asked to complete the surveys and return them to the Department of Public Instruction, whether they employ paraprofessionals or not. During the months of February and March, surveys were returned. A copy of the survey is shown in Appendix A.

The study was conducted prior to the development and release of the DPI Paraprofessional Assessment System, and at a time when the underlying assumption was that it could be rather difficult to attain the status of "highly qualified" for ESEA purposes. Now that the Paraprofessional Assessment Guidelines are in place, fewer paraprofessionals may actually require assistance and support to prepare for the assessment. The paraprofessional standards, currently under development, will indeed set high goals, and this will surely open many opportunities to provide training and course work.

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to assess the needs of paraprofessionals in the State of Wisconsin and to plan programs to address these needs.

Under ESEA, a paraprofessional is an individual with instructional support duties working under the supervision of a highly qualified teacher. Individuals who work solely in non-education roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground supervision, clerical, personal care services, and non-regular education computer assistance are not considered to be paraprofessionals for Title I and IDEA purposes.

Legislation

Title I paraprofessionals hired after the date of the ESEA enactment, January 8, 2002, must have at the time of hiring:

- At least two years of higher education, or
- Obtained an Associate (or higher) degree, or
- Meet a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal assessment: Knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics.

Existing paraprofessionals must meet these requirements by January 8, 2006.

IDEA legislation provides funds to support the appropriate special education and related services to children with disabilities. This includes professional development for IDEA paraprofessionals to meet the requirements in IDEA. With the reauthorization of IDEA, it is anticipated that paraprofessionals requirements will be similar to those specified in NCLB.

Data Collection and Limitations

The surveys were sent and collected within two months. The collection method included hard copy via U.S. mail, fax, or electronic submission. When data was missing or incorrectly entered, the schools were contacted. A common source of error resulted from the entry of the number of paraprofessionals who were funded partially by many programs.

As a result of the close examination of the data from different sources, entries were audited for accuracy. Most of the schools returned the survey with complete entries.

Report Structure

Demographics

The balance of this report summarizes the complete 2002/03 data from the paraprofessional survey. The total number of surveys that were sent to schools is 2256, and the number of the returned surveys was 2015. The total number of unreturned surveys is 241. This makes a response rate of 89%.

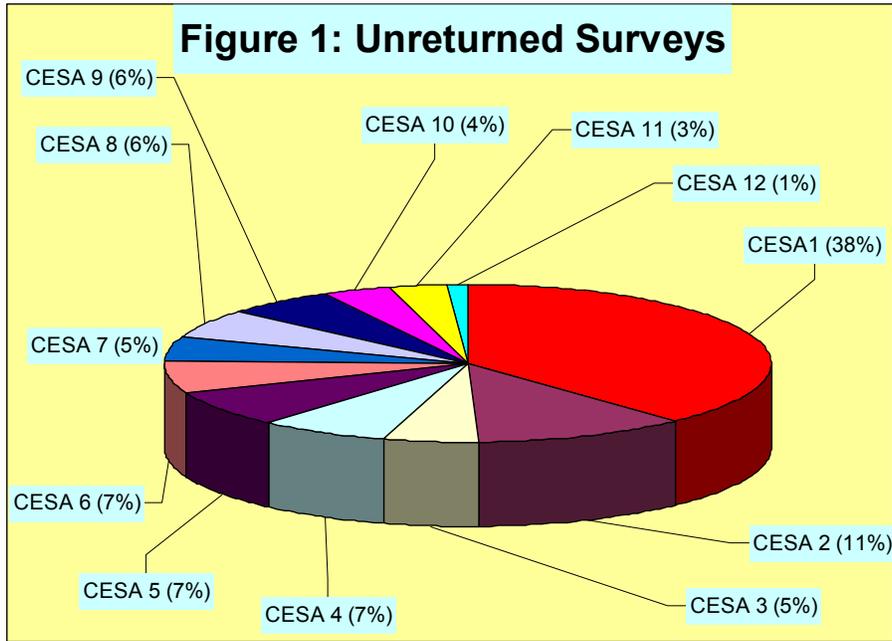
Initially, 147 schools located within the boundaries of CESA 1 did not respond to the survey. Contacts were made electronically and via the phone to these schools at least twice during the month of March, reducing the number of unresponding schools to 98. Of those not responding, 73 schools were from Milwaukee Public Schools. This number includes most of the high schools along with some elementary and middle schools.

The unreturned surveys were disaggregated by CESA and are reported on [Table 1 and Figure 1](#).

Table 1: Unreturned Surveys

CESA 1	CESA 2	CESA 3	CESA 4	CESA 5	CESA 6
98	27	21	17	18	16
CESA 7	CESA 8	CESA 9	CESA 10	CESA 11	CESA 12
12	14	14	9	7	3

Figure 1: Unreturned Surveys



The total number of paraprofessionals according to this study is 16,504. This includes 5659 Title I paraprofessionals, 7984 IDEA paraprofessionals, and 2868 other paraprofessionals, **Table 2 and Figure 2**. About 49% of paraprofessionals are under IDEA, 34% are Title I, and 17% are funded under different programs.

Table 2: Paraprofessional by Program

Total Number	Title I	IDEA	Others
16,504	5659	7984	2868

The survey showed that most of the paraprofessionals are elementary school based. The number of elementary school based paraprofessionals is 11,883 (72%), the total number of middle school based paraprofessionals is 3631 (22%), and the number of high school based paraprofessionals is 990 (6%), **Table 3 and Figure 3**.

Table 3: School Level Paraprofessionals

Elementary	Middle	High
11,883	3631	990

Training and Qualifications

The total number of paraprofessionals who have a least 48 semester hours from an institution of higher education, hold an associate degree or higher degrees is 5371. This represents 33% of the paraprofessionals. About 5% of paraprofessionals indicated that they are working towards completing their second year of higher education by obtaining additional credits from institutes of higher education. The remaining number of paraprofessionals who are not highly qualified, according to the ESEA is 11,133. Most of these are at the elementary school level. The data show that 67% of paraprofessionals indicated that they need training to meet the ESEA requirements. 27% of paraprofessionals are expected to encounter some difficulties in meeting the requirements by January 8, 2006. 72% of paraprofessionals preferred to take assessment rather than participating in coursework in order to comply with the new requirements. However, 62% indicated that they will need training before they can take the assessment option, **Table 4 and Figure 4**.

Table 4: Paraprofessional Training

Highly Qualified	Need Training	Anticipate Problems	Prefer Assessment	Need Help with Assessment	Working Towards 2nd Year of Higher Education
5371	7497	2973	8020	6906	786

**Figure 2: WI Paraprofessionals
2003**

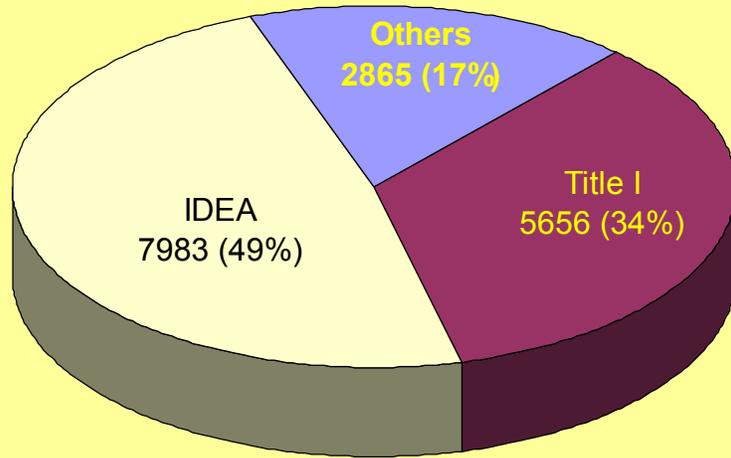


Figure 3: Level Distribution of Paraprofessionals

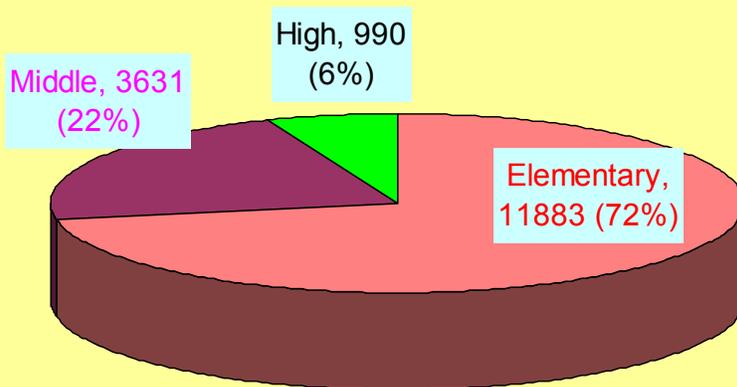
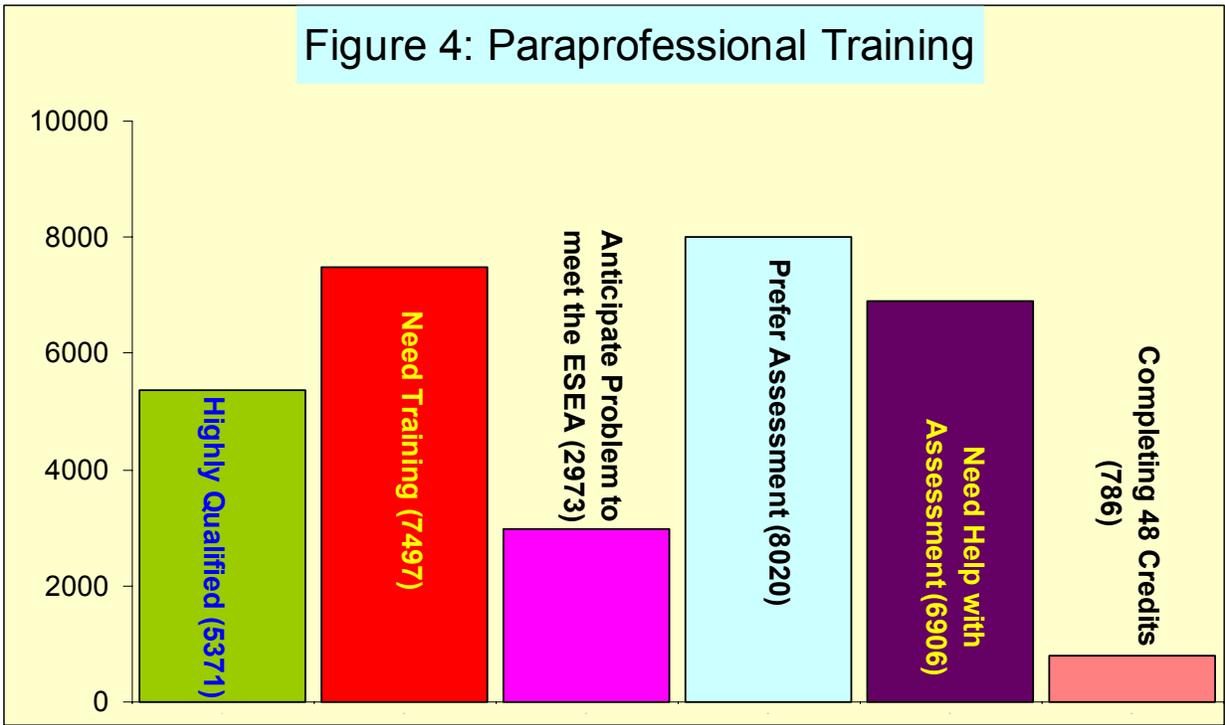


Figure 4: Paraprofessional Training



Some paraprofessionals participated in training or had courses in mathematics, reading, writing, assessment and psychology, or early childhood education. The data show that between 14% - 16% of paraprofessionals had such training. Slightly more paraprofessionals participated in early childhood education as compared to the training in reading, writing, or mathematics, **Table 5 and Figure 5**.

Table 5: Courses and Training

Reading	Language Arts	Mathematics	Childhood	Assess/Psychology
2351	2345	2239	2656	2516

The results revealed that most paraprofessionals are comfortable with communication and organizational skills. For example, 93% of paraprofessionals indicated that they do not need any assistance in following directions, dealing with differences among students and staff, or managing students in small-group activities. Between 80% - 90% of paraprofessionals also indicated that they do not need training in communicating with students, dealing with classroom stress, organizing and managing work, managing student behavior, or understanding district and/or school policies.

Between 48% - 72% of paraprofessionals indicated that they have a high need for training and help with knowledge of reading process and skills; knowledge of writing process and skills; assisting students with reading, writing, mathematics; and other academic core areas, **Table 6**. Combining responses for “high need” and “some need” leads to 86% of paraprofessionals indicating a need for knowledge of reading process and skills, 90% indicating a need for knowledge of mathematics process and skills, and 95% indicating a need for knowledge in writing process and skills. Clearly, paraprofessionals whether meeting NCLB requirements or not, indicate that more knowledge and skills are needed to better serve students.

The data were also disaggregated by CESAs. The percentage of paraprofessionals who hold associate degrees or have completed 48 semester hours varies greatly among CESAs. CESA 1 has 54% of paraprofessionals with associate degrees or has completed 48 credits from an institution of higher education. CESA 8 has about 18% of the paraprofessionals with associate degrees or have completed 48 credits from an institute of higher education, **Table 7**.

Between 50% - 90% of paraprofessionals from CESAs, other than CESA 5, indicated that they prefer to take assessment rather than completing course work to comply with the ESEA requirements. In addition, between 74% - 94% of these paraprofessionals indicated that they need training, assistance, and help preparing to take paraprofessional assessments. Paraprofessionals from CESA 7 indicated the highest need for training. The highest percentage of paraprofessionals who are taking courses to complete 48 semester hours are from CESA 1 with a percentage of 18%. Paraprofessionals from CESA 1 also had the highest percentage of training in reading, writing, and mathematics with a percentage of 27%. The statewide average is 14%, **Table 8**.

Summary

Results of needs assessment clearly showed that about two-thirds of the paraprofessionals in Wisconsin do not meet the definition of highly qualified under NCLB. About 75% of non-highly qualified paraprofessionals prefer to take assessment to verify their quality rather than completing any higher education coursework. About 95% of non-highly qualified paraprofessionals who prefer to take assessment will need training and help to take any type of assessment for the verification of the quality of paraprofessionals.

Most important, however, 86% - 95% of all paraprofessionals indicate a need for greater knowledge and skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. If the goal of all students achieving at proficient or above levels is to be achieved, then a greater investment in paraprofessionals is required.

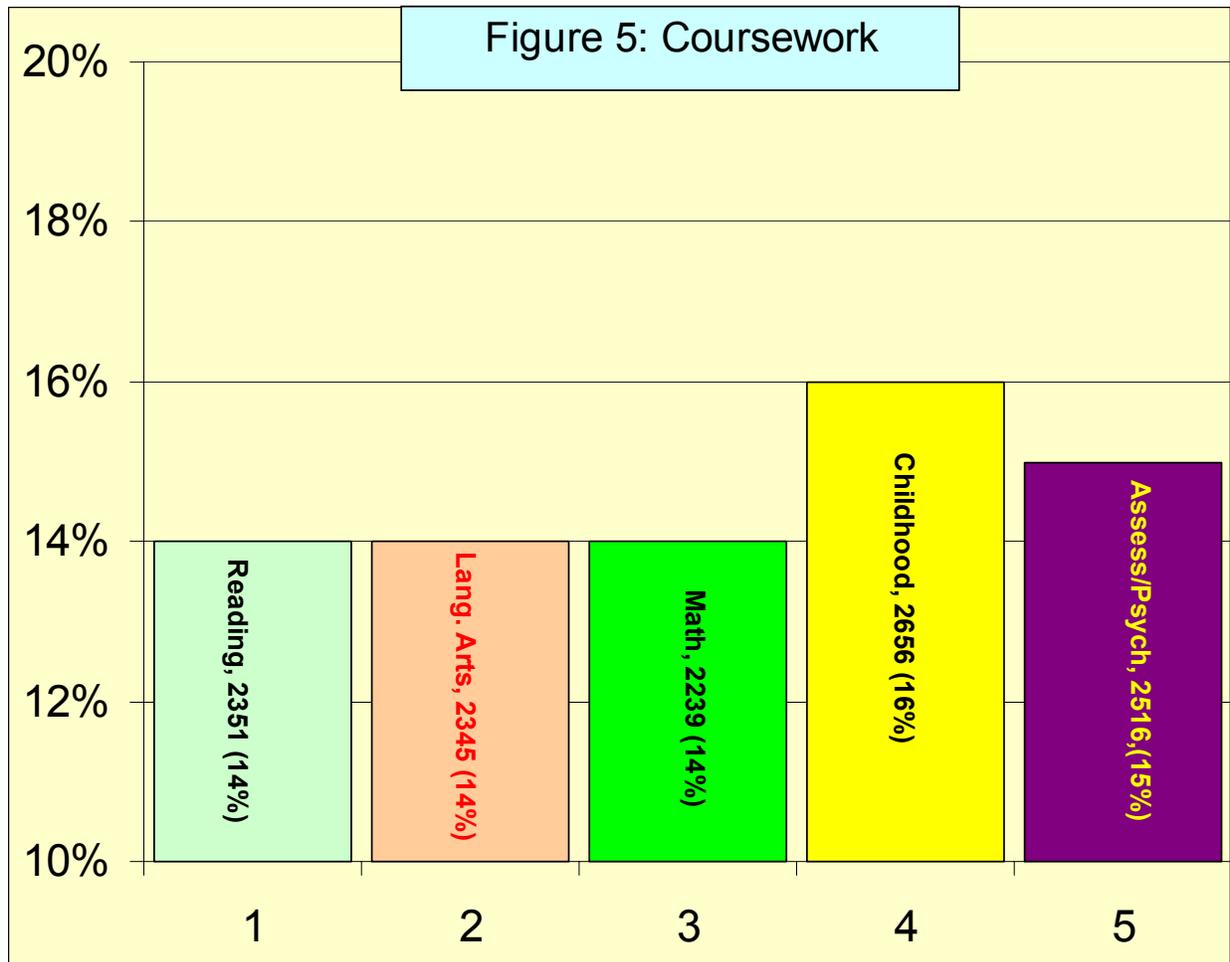


Table 6: Level of Assistance Needed

Assistance Needs of Paraprofessionals	Do Not Need	Need Some	High Need
a. Knowledge of reading process and skills	14%	23%	63%
b. Knowledge of mathematics process and skills	10%	18%	72%
c. Knowledge of writing process and skills	5%	47%	48%
d. Assisting students in reading, writing, mathematics and other academic core areas	7%	33%	60%
e. Communicating with teachers and/or supervisor	74%	18%	8%
f. Communicating with students	80%	13%	7%
g. Communicating with parents	74%	14%	12%
h. Dealing with classroom stress	80%	16%	4%
i. Organizing and managing work	90%	6%	4%
j. Managing time at work and home	76%	6%	18%
k. Managing student behavior	86%	9%	5%
l. Following directions	93%	3%	4%
m. Dealing with differences among students and staff	93%	5%	2%
n. Managing students in small-group activities	93%	5%	2%
o. Assisting in assessing student needs in a specific subject	70%	12%	18%
p. Using office equipment to enhance the job	64%	18%	18%
q. Using computers and other technology	41%	31%	28%
r. Helping students with special needs	53%	23%	24%
s. Motivating students	65%	19%	16%
t. Completing clerical work	79%	18%	3%
u. Understanding district and/or school policies	86%	12%	2%

Table 7: Paraprofessionals Qualifications by CESAs

CESA	Total Paraprofessionals	Title 1	IDEA	Others	Para with Associate Degree/Higher
1	2861	855	1511	495	1540
2	3820	1458	1859	503	1038
3	536	223	199	114	163
4	1121	348	556	217	403
5	937	213	480	244	190
6	2196	859	1093	244	665
7	1649	424	903	322	370
8	493	180	240	73	88
9	752	260	275	217	273
10	910	330	338	242	230
11	884	365	464	55	268
12	345	144	66	135	143
Total	16,504	5659	7984	2861	5371
Percent	100%	34%	48%	17%	33%

Table 8: Paraprofessionals Training by CESAs

CESA	Need Training	Para with Anticipated Problems	Assess vs. Crsewrk	Help Prep for Assessment	Courses Toward 2 Year	60 hrs/ 3 credits Reading	60 hrs/ 3 credits Lang Arts	60 hrs/ 3 credits Math	6 hrs/ 3 credits Child	60 hrs/ 3 credits Assess/ Psy/Mgmt
1	1061	430	1200	1009	240	763	658	608	698	700
2	1479	758	1469	1351	140	460	490	468	533	510
3	245	120	293	268	33	70	65	65	93	73
4	309	75	538	498	38	145	155	133	160	168
5	411	125	348	275	15	45	43	43	43	38
6	1031	463	1215	1016	90	228	275	285	370	343
7	1055	165	1048	980	63	203	193	170	238	203
8	303	178	303	250	28	63	60	48	68	58
9	425	135	455	378	43	125	140	155	140	135
10	490	218	520	383	28	118	113	113	130	115
11	503	258	503	393	63	73	83	88	118	100
12	185	48	128	105	5	58	70	63	65	73
Total	7497	2973	8020	6906	786	2351	2345	2239	2656	2516
Percent	45%	18%	49%	42%	5%	14%	14%	14%	16%	15%

Appendix A

Paraprofessional Needs Assessment



**WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
 DIVISION FOR READING AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
 ATTN: ABDALLAH BENDADA
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 MADISON, WI 53707-7841**

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 abdallah.bendada@dpi.state.wi.us

Collection of this information is a **requirement of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).**

Audience: Building Principals

Purpose:

The purpose of this survey is to determine training and support needs of Title I paraprofessionals in the State of Wisconsin, and to plan programs and directions to address these needs.

Definition:

Under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a paraprofessional is an individual with education duties working under the supervision of a highly qualified teacher. Individuals who work solely in non-regular education roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground supervision, clerical, personal care services, and non-regular education computer assistance are not considered to be paraprofessionals for Title I and IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) purposes.

Legislation:

Title I paraprofessionals hired after the date of enactment, January 8, 2002, of the ESEA must have at the time of hiring:

- At least two years of higher education, or
- Obtained an Associate (or higher) degree, or
- Meet a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal assessment: Knowledge of, and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics.

Existing paraprofessionals must meet these requirements by January 8, 2006.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): This legislation provides funds to support the provision of appropriate special education and related services to children with disabilities. This includes professional development for IDEA paraprofessionals to meet the requirements in IDEA. Similar requirements in the ESEA for Title I paraprofessionals are anticipated to be included in IDEA reauthorization.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

School Name	School Code	School District	LEA Code
-------------	-------------	-----------------	----------

II. EDUCATION ATTRIBUTES OF PARAPROFESSIONALS

1. Indicate the **unduplicated** total number of:

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| a. Paraprofessionals employed in your school* | b. Title I partially or fully funded paraprofessionals | c. IDEA funded paraprofessionals only |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|

2. Indicate the minimum educational level your school **currently** requires of employed paraprofessionals:

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. High school diploma | <input type="checkbox"/> b. Associate degree | <input type="checkbox"/> c. Two years higher education | <input type="checkbox"/> d. Undergraduate degree or higher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> e. None | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Other <i>Specify</i> | | |

3. Indicate the number of paraprofessionals:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| a. Who hold an associate degree or higher or have at least 48 semester hours from an institute of higher education. | b. Who will need training to meet ESEA requirements. | c. Who you anticipate will have problems meeting ESEA requirements by January 8, 2006. |
|---|--|--|

4. If a local or state assessment were available, what is the number of paraprofessionals:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a. Who would prefer to take an assessment rather than complete coursework? | b. Who will need help preparing for the assessment? |
|--|---|

5. Does the district currently provide financial support for regular education and special education paraprofessional training?

- Yes No

6. Will the district provide financial support for regular education and special education paraprofessional training in the future?

- Yes No

*If none, discontinue and return survey to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction at the address above.

II. EDUCATION ATTRIBUTES OF PARAPROFESSIONALS (cont.)

7. *The number of paraprofessionals:*

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>a. Who are currently taking courses toward completing at least two years of higher education.</p> | <p>b. Who have at least 60 contact hours of training or attended 3 credit course(s) or the combination thereof, in reading or teaching reading.</p> | <p>c. Who have at least 60 contact hours of training or attended 3 credit course(s) or the combination thereof, in language arts or teaching language arts.</p> |
| <p>d. Who have at least 60 contact hours of training or attended 3 credit course(s) or the combination thereof, in mathematics or teaching mathematics.</p> | <p>e. Who have at least 60 contact hours of training or attended 3 credit course(s) or the combination thereof, in human child development and/or early childhood education.</p> | <p>f. Who have at least 60 contact hours of training or attended 3 credit course(s) or the combination thereof, in other educational areas such as assessment, learning psychology, and/or classroom management.</p> |

III. SCHOOL/DISTRICT PARAPROFESSIONAL DATA

8. Which best describes your school type: *Check one.*

- Title I Schoolwide
 Title I Targeted Assistance
 Not Title I School

9. Which best describes your school: *Check all that apply.*

- a. Elementary School
 b. Middle School
 c. High School
 d. Charter Elementary
 e. Alternative School
 f. Early Childhood Center
 g. Special Needs School
 h. Other *Specify*

10. Has your district developed district-wide standards for paraprofessionals?

- Yes
 No

11. *If your district assesses paraprofessionals, what type of assessment instrument has your district used to assess the paraprofessional competencies and/or standards that were developed locally, during the last five years?*

12. Indicate the number of paraprofessionals assessed by the school after January 8, 2002.

IV. PARAPROFESSIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

13. Assistance Needs of Paraprofessionals

Indicate (in your opinion) level of assistance needed by paraprofessionals.
Check one response for each item.

Category	Do Not Need Assistance	Need Some Assistance	Need Substantial Assistance
a. Knowledge of reading process and skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Knowledge of mathematics process and skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Knowledge of writing process and skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Assisting students in reading, writing, mathematics and other academic core areas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Communicating with teachers and/or supervisor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Communicating with students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Communicating with parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Dealing with classroom stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Organizing and managing work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Managing time at work and home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Managing student behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. Following directions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Dealing with differences among students and staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. Managing students in small-group activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Assisting in assessing student needs in a specific subject	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IV. PARAPROFESSIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT (cont)

13. Assistance Needs of Paraprofessionals

Indicate (in your opinion) level of assistance needed by paraprofessionals.
 Check one response for each Item.

Category	Do Not Need Assistance	Need Some Assistance	Need Substantial Assistance
p. Using office equipment to enhance the job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Using computers and other technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. Helping students with special needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. Motivating students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. Completing clerical work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
u. Understanding district and/or school policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

V. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

14. Suggested ways in which the Department of Public Instruction and other educational organizations (e.g., CESAs, WEAC, Technical Colleges, Colleges, Universities, and LEAs) can help in preparing, training, and/or assessing paraprofessionals.