Special Education Professional Development Series: Paraeducators in the Life of the School Community

DESE-sponsored blended face-to-face and online learning

Paraeducators are key school personnel who support students across all environments, including classrooms, small group settings and in the life of the school and community.

Learning to implement effective instructional, behavioral and social strategies allows paraeducators to better assist students in the day to day activities of school, increasing student success. This course will review the Massachusetts Curriculum Standards and provide an overview and orientation to the job description and role of a paraeducator.

Participants will be provided to provide a 30 minute workshop to their colleagues at the conclusion of the course about key aspects of effective practice of a paraprofessional.

Learning Outcomes/ Objectives

Participants will learn to:

• Understand the role and responsibilities of a paraeducator and have tools and resources to navigate their specific school employment context
• Be familiar with the history of IDEA and other relevant state and federal laws and advisories
• Become familiar with the characteristics and needs of students with disabilities including co-morbid disabilities
• Gain an awareness of the foundational importance of social emotional skill development
• Appreciate the importance of facilitating student independence
• Gain an appreciation of the importance of working with families: roles, boundaries, communication
• Gain skill in the collection and tracking of data to support students and monitor progress
• Understand the differences between accommodations and modifications
• Become familiar with the key components of a strengths-based positive behavior support model and the implementation of behavior support plans in inclusive settings
• Gain comfort in accessing assistive technology to provide students with greater independence
• Manage stress and increase collaboration with members of a multi-disciplinary team

Program Goals

• Demonstrate substantial knowledge of all topics covered in the Institute
• Effective implementation of a project having application in a participant’s school/district
• Apply skills and knowledge of the Institute to meet the needs of diverse learners in a school/district setting through equitable and inclusive instructional strategies

Cost:
There is no cost for the program

Earn:
67.5 PDPs or 3 graduate credits from Worcester State University for a fee of $375 (optional)

Eligibility & Application:
Personnel currently employed in Massachusetts public schools, including but not limited to personnel in the following roles: Administrators, Behavior Consultant Behavior Analysts (BCBA), Early Childhood Directors, Early Childhood Educators, ELL Teachers, General Educators, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Paraeducators, Related Service providers, School Nurses, Special Education Directors, Special Educators, Superintendents, Teachers of Students with Severe Disabilities, Teachers of Students with Visual Impairment, and Vocational Technical Teachers. Participation will be opened to personnel in educational collaboratives if seats are available following initial recruitment.