Chapter 3
How Are Paraprofessional Duties Assigned and Defined?
Study Guide
The Paraprofessional Role-Federal Guidelines

US Dept. of Education’s report *Roles for Education Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools* (1997) noted para roles as:

- Nurture the social and cognitive development of preschoolers
- Support parents in raising healthy and successful children
- Provide academic support in Title I programs
- Mentor at-risk youth
- Advocate in community
- Support migrant/immigrant families
- Contribute to adult education programs in schools

Report recommended paras must have:

- Appropriate training
- Instructional team support
- Supervision

Paras must have

1. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities
2. Appropriate qualifications
3. Ongoing professional development
4. Support and supervision of certified teacher
5. Support for career ladders so paras can go on to become certified teachers
Laws Affecting the Paras Role

- **NCLB Act** specifies responsibilities only for **Title I** programs supporting reading, writing, math
- **IDEA (1997)** identifies role of para to support special education services including:
  - Support of mild learning difficulties in general education classroom
  - One-on-one tutoring in resource room for students with more severe learning issues
  - Interpreting for students with hearing loss
  - Hygiene/grooming support for students with severe physical disabilities
  - Physical therapy sessions under the supervision of a physical therapist
  - Job/training coach for older students with disabilities
  - Facilitating social behaviors for students limited in these abilities
Legal Restrictions of Para Roles

• Para employment is addressed by state laws (flexibility awarded to states—very few standards for paras in 1997)

• Emphasis on “appropriate training/supervision”

• Paratherapists need special training and continuous supervision in states that permit this role for paras
Individual State Requirements

- Each state has its own Department of Education website (for example http://www.state.nj.us/education/)
- Local branches of unions/professional organizations are resources, too

  ✓ American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Paraprofessional and School-Related Personnel website at http://www.aft.org/yourwork/psrp/


*These resources can provide information/resources specific to your individual state
School District Guidelines

• Individual school districts create job descriptions for paraprofessionals

• Examples of a paraprofessional job description
  
  (Link to U3 Para Job Descript 1)
  (Link to U3 Para Job Descript 2)

• What are some of the duties a paraprofessional may be expected to carry out?
Video Case Study-A New Para’s Duties “By the Pop Machine”

• View the video for "Scene A" at
http://wps.ablongman.com/ab_ashbaker_paraprof_1/38/9884/2530401.cw/index.html

• Why does the paraprofessional seem dissatisfied with this meeting?
• Did the teacher present expectations clearly?
• Does the para have an understanding of her role?
• How might this situation be resolved?
• How can the para take the initiative in clarifying roles?
Clarify Details of Para Roles with the Teacher

Request clarification of roles such as:

- Maintaining an order classroom
  - Cleaning the teacher’s desk?
  - Reorganizing closets and drawers?
  - Changing bulletin boards?
  - Redesigning a confusing worksheet?

- Assisting with student reading
  - Determine when to move student on to the next book?
  - Administer tests at the end of the book?
  - Record results of tests in the teacher’s gradebook?
  - Discuss students progress with parents?

- Assist in behavioral management
  - Provide rewards and consequences?
  - Report serious issues to principal?
  - Report issues to parents?
Consult with the Teacher

• Take the initiative and ask for clarification when you are unsure
• Ask for specification of what you can and can not do
• Be aware of regulations for substitute teaching—in some districts paras may serve as subs and in some districts they may not

• The National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals is a professional organization that provides support and resources for paraprofessionals, teachers who supervise paraprofessionals and those that train them. Visit the NRCPara website and watch this video of NRCPara’s founder, Anna Lou Picket, discuss the reasons for founding the organization and the needs of paraprofessionals to do their jobs effective.

(View the video for “Words of Wisdom from Anna Lou Pickett” at http://www.nrcpara.org/paranews/words-wisdom-anna-lou-pickett)