

No
Child
Left
Behind

THE REAUTHORIZED ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT

AFT on Paraprofessional Requirements of NCLB

What NCLB Says

The reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act, often called the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), established new educational requirements for paraprofessionals. All paraprofessionals who work in a program that receives Title I funds and who provide instructional support (including support for special-needs students in schoolwide projects) must meet the new requirements. (Paraprofessionals whose only responsibility is the personal care of students, who act primarily as a translator, or whose duties consist solely of conducting parental involvement activities are exempt from these requirements.) To meet the requirements, a paraprofessional must:

- Pass a state or local assessment designed to demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to assist in instruction of reading, writing, and math or reading readiness; or
- Complete the equivalent of two years of study (as defined by the state) at an institution of higher education; or
- Hold a two-year degree (or higher).

Paraprofessionals working at the time the law was enacted (Jan. 8, 2002) had until June 2006 to meet these requirements. Anyone hired after Jan. 8, 2002, should have met the requirements at the time of employment.

Where AFT Stands

The American Federation of Teachers is a leading champion of high standards and certification for paraprofessionals.

There is much in NCLB that promotes those goals.

As a result of the AFT's legislative efforts, NCLB defines the type of work that can be assigned to paraprofessionals, requires the use of Title I funds to assist paraprofessionals in meeting its requirements, and requires the inclusion of paraprofessionals in professional development opportunities.

The AFT is working at the local, state and national levels to help members meet the requirements of NCLB and to ensure that these provisions are fairly applied. The AFT is assisting local unions by:

- Monitoring and disseminating state plans pertaining to paraprofessional requirements. The options, training and assistance available to paraprofessionals vary widely among states.
- Making available the AFT Educational Research and Dissemination (ER&D) training program for paraprofessionals and working with states to ensure that the program satisfies state NCLB requirements.
- Developing a credit program with the George Meany Center for Labor Studies that would enable paraprofessionals to meet the NCLB requirements.
- Conducting an online survey of paraprofessionals to discern areas of strength and weakness in the law.

The AFT also is urging that:

- States and districts provide funds for training to meet the paraprofessional requirements; and
- States accept all three options outlined in the law for how paraprofessionals can meet the law's education requirements.

For more information on the No Child Left Behind Act, visit our Web site at www.aft.org/topics/nclb.



A Union of Professionals

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