

Information Update relating to Paraeducator Notification Letter

All paraeducators who have not submitted documentation of achieving HQ status with the Human Resource Services Division either have already received, or will receive in the next few days, notice of changes that may require them to become Highly Qualified if they are employed as instructional Paraeducators in the Polk County School District. This notification was sent to both instructional and exempt paraeducators.

An instructional para as defined by NCLB is “a paraprofessional who provides instructional support and includes those who:

- provide one-on-one tutoring if such tutoring is scheduled at a time when a student would not otherwise receive instruction from a teacher
- assist with classroom management, such as by organizing instructional materials
- provide instructional assistance in a computer laboratory
- provide instructional support in a library or media center
- provide instructional support services under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher”

Listed below are the approved options for achieving Highly Qualified status as a paraeducator:

- Complete two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- Obtain an associate’s (or higher) degree; or
- Meet 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).

Current exempt paraeducators received the notification to (1) keep them informed of the change, (2) give them an opportunity to be included in the offer for reimbursement of a passing score on the ParaPro test, and (3) provide them with an option to achieve a credential which will increase their future job marketability within the school district.

We plan to offer free tutoring sessions preceding upcoming test dates for the ETS ParaPro Assessment. Although ETS has not published the 2009-10 testing calendar yet, we anticipate probable dates will include the following Saturdays: September 12, 2009; January 9, 2010; March 13, 2010; and June 12, 2010. We welcome the opportunity to assist our paraeducators as they polish their reading, writing, and math skills. Not only will this benefit the paras as they prepare to take the ParaPro Exam, it will also benefit the students they assist academically every day!

Current paraeducators who attend the tutoring program will also receive an official ParaPro Assessment study guide at no cost. Those who pass the test will be eligible for reimbursement of the exam fee.

For more information about the test, please visit the ETS website at <http://www.ets.org/parapro>.

In the meantime, the Human Resource Services/Office of Certification is exploring other means to assist the paras, including the feasibility of a local test site and offering more frequent test dates. Information updates will be released via email during the summer.