

Paraprofessional Consortium Meeting Minutes

April 10, 2008

The mission of the Utah Paraprofessional Consortium is to promote training and support for paraprofessionals, leading to improved outcomes for children, youth and families.

Attending: Pat Fender, Marilyn Likins, Lois Oestreich, Gail Johnson, Melina Alexander, Jan Harris, Connie Nink, Diana Fillmore

Mission Statement and Objectives: Gail Johnson will present them to USOE, allowing the USOE to be informed and to raise awareness of what we are working towards. We need to also include additional information on the history of the Para Consortium, highlight objectives achieved, and include statistics on the number of paraeducators we estimate are employed throughout the state.

The **National Para Conference** is being held soon in Hartford, CT. It is estimated that 41 states will be represented, along with attendees from Canada, Bermuda, and Great Britain. Next year, it will be held here in Salt Lake City at the Salt Lake Hilton, April 30 – May 2. It will be blended with our state para conference.

Training Program Updates:

- Weber State: Because of funding from the TAP program (which provides scholarships), many of their students are paraeducators working towards teaching degrees. Next month, Melina will present more information about the TAP program and its future.
- DATC: Providing education for paras through continuing education.
- SLCC: Revamping some pieces, but no major changes.
- Deaf-blind Program: Considering a certification program for interveners.

Paraeducator to Teacher Scholarship Program:

- The financial provisions of the bill provided for \$25,000, allowing scholarships of up to \$5,000 per person. The recipient must be employed as a para, pursuing an associates or bachelor's degree to become a teacher and the money must be spent on tuition.
- Nan Gray will attend our next meeting to give more details. She is part of a task force which has been created to create the rules for administering the monies and screening applicants.
- Discussion took place on how to increase funding during the next legislative session. The education of legislators needs to take place during the summer, long before the legislators reach Capitol Hill. Ideas for this included:
 - Organizing a phone tree
 - Creating a packet with information about paras. Statistics from the various teacher education programs need to be included. For example, Bob Morgan from USU has the results of a study showing that paras got better grades and had a higher completion rate than other students. Other institutions may have similar information. We can also include the Standards for Instructional Paraeducators.

- Pat Fender said that many legislators were impressed with the “out of the box” thinking shown by this legislation to address the teacher shortage issue.
- We will look at forming a group to work on promoting more funding for these scholarships.
- The bill (along with HB 67 and HB 68) will be signed in Logan, tomorrow at 4:45 pm at the USU College of Education and Human Services.

House Bill 484: Pat Fender shared this bill – a boxcar bill – with us. Nothing was known of the intent of this bill. Lois Oestreich will contact the sponsor to learn more of his intent. The bill’s title was “Certification by Paraeducators”.

Future Meeting Dates: all at UPDC with polycom available

- May 13 2-4 pm (Nan Gray will be with us to talk about the scholarship)
- June 4 1-3 pm (Focus will be to build support for the scholarship)

Attendees are asked to bring their calendars so we can plan meeting dates for next school year. Email requests are also appreciated.