

# Paraprofessional Consortium Meeting

October 21, 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.*

**In Attendance:** Melina Alexander, Lois Oestrich, Marilyn Likins, Diana Fillmore, Kit Giddings, Pat Fender, Bryan Sprague, Brenda Straley, Connie Nick, Mary Baldwin, Jan Harris, Bob Morgan (via polycom), Larry Alplanalp (via polycom)

**Dates set for future meetings:** to be held at UPDC, polycom available  
November 19 (Wednesday) 1-3 pm  
January 13 (Tuesday) 1-3 pm

## **Pending Legislation for Paraeducators:**

- No known legislation is proposed at this time; however, it is still early in the legislative process.
- Following a discussion, the Consortium decided to write two letters to the legislative Education Committee. Bob Morgan will send Kit Giddings a rough draft and she and Marilyn will edit the letter and send it on behalf of the Utah Consortium.
  - One letter will be sent to the current Education Committee as it is presently constituted. It will express gratitude for previous support for the Paraeducator to Teacher Scholarship bill that passed last year and will include some follow up information such as the number of paraeducators who applied/received the scholarship. It will also acknowledge the current funding short-fall. The intent of the letter is to thank the committee and to maintain a presence with the Education Committee.
  - Following the November election, a second letter will be sent to the new Education Committee. It will be similar in content, but crafted to increase the awareness of the new committee as it relates to paraeducators and the need for training, career pathways, & supervision.
  - It was felt that we needed to express continued interest in this type of legislation. It provides a partial solution to the teacher shortage

while providing support to the growth of paraeducators. At the same time, it is probably unrealistic to ask for or expect increased funding while other agencies are experiencing cutbacks.

- Another question arose concerning the T. H. Bell scholarship and whether or not it was accessible to paraeducators who are in teacher training programs. One option suggested was to amend the wording to include paraeducators as possible scholarship recipients. Pat F. will check on the current language.
- In the meeting, we also learned that legislators have been asking about the skills and qualifications of classified personnel.

### **Training Program Updates**

- A new consortium member, Brenda Straley talked about the "Paraeducator Program" at the Jordan Applied Technology Center, a concurrent enrollment program for high school students who are interested in becoming either a paraeducator or certified teacher. She is the instructor and currently has ten students in her class although she feels it has great potential for much larger cohorts of students. Students who complete the two courses, i.e., PED 1010 Introduction to Paraeducation (Fall) and PED 2150/2160 Introductory Experience and Practicum, can earn up to 7 hrs. of concurrent enrollment with SLCC, as well as complete almost half of the requirements for Paraed. Certification through the SLCC. Articulation agreements with IHE teacher preparation programs are being pursued (e.g., USU, U of U, Weber). Students from other districts are welcome to attend this program. It appears to be a very cost effective way to begin post high school training. She also disseminated a program brochure.
- Discussion began on how to facilitate the articulation between programs such as Jordan ATC, SLCC, Weber State, and Utah State. It was the consensus of the group that a well identified pathway between institutions across the state was desirable. Questions were raised about including other institutions (UVSU, U of U, etc), but without representatives no progress was made in this area. Representatives of institutions in attendance at the meeting decided to continue the discussion on their own to find ways to continue to facilitate this process.
- There is considerable interest on the part of students for online instruction. Discussion items included: The upcoming generation is very comfortable with online learning, in fact is preferred by many. Institutions have a large front end investment in setting up online courses. Once developed, the maintenance is fairly low. Online instruction provides much flexibility for both instructors and students. It can be combined with face to face training and practica when appropriate. A possible source of funding for

developing online training may be IOTI. Bob and Marilyn will check with Marty Blair.

- Excellent curriculum on supervision of paraeducators has been developed for paraeducators and is readily available. Marilyn or Bob are good contacts for those who might be interested.
- Ways of recruiting new students to the paraed. Programs; (especially high school students) were discussed.
- Low enrollment is a common problem in keeping paraeducator programs viable. Major barriers in recruiting new students is the lack of financial rewards to paraprofessionals who obtain training on their own along with low pay given to paraeducators. Only 2 districts in the state (Jordan and Davis) provide paraeducators with formal training any additional compensation.
- Connie Nink, who assists with the SASSIE newsletter requested that consortium members write an article which would discuss the training programs available to paraeducators and possible career pathways.

**Mission Statement:** We anticipate the presentation of our mission statement and objectives to the State Board of Education. Gail Johnson is facilitating this and will let us know how we can help.

**Newsletter:** The Utah PARAGraph has been printed and will be distributed shortly.

### **National Paraeducator Conference: April 29 - May 2nd**

- The conference is in Salt Lake City this year and is a combined state/national conference.
- Call for papers is still open - close date is Nov. 14
- Registration and call for papers is done online at the following website:
  - [www.nrcpara.org](http://www.nrcpara.org)
- Attendees may sign up for several different registration options:
  - 1, 2, or 3 day options
  - Teacher/Para team rates
  - Early Bird specials
- This year, we will have someone from CHINA attending. Training programs for paraeducators are now being developed in that country.

**For future meetings:**

- If you are aware of any one (including paraeducators) who should or has the desire to be part of the consortium, please let us know:
  - Marilyn Likins ([marilyn@nrcpara.org](mailto:marilyn@nrcpara.org))
  - Diana Fillmore ([diana.fillmore@graniteschools.org](mailto:diana.fillmore@graniteschools.org))
- If more than 3 people wish to attend the meeting via polycom, we need advanced notice to ensure the proper technology can be in place. So, please let Marilyn know well ahead of time. (That means 2 or 3 days.)
- Please let us know of good things that are happening in your districts/programs, etc. Sharing this information may provide beneficial ideas to others. For example:
  - Logan City and Cache School Districts are sponsoring an appreciation night for paraeducators. Some of the paraeducators will have their hard work acknowledged and awards will be given. Personal initiations to the event are being issued. Information on teacher education programs and scholarships will be shared. Babysitting and food will be provided. This will be help on October 29<sup>th</sup>.