



A Union of Professionals

The American Federation of Teachers **strongly supports maintaining the paraprofessional qualification requirements** as part of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.



> **Maintain the paraprofessional qualification requirements of No Child Left Behind:**

- Of all the things NCLB got wrong, it got this right: It gave our nation's schools more well-qualified paraprofessionals.
- NCLB put in place qualification requirements for paraprofessionals working in high-poverty schools. Those requirements helped stop school districts from hiring paraprofessionals with little experience in education and providing no professional training for them. Before those requirements became law, paraprofessionals often were assigned classroom tasks for which, through no fault of their own, they were neither prepared nor equipped.
- Today, paraprofessionals are qualified to provide much-needed instructional support.
- Maintaining the requirements would be budget neutral and would pose no new burden on states, since all states have been meeting these requirements since 2006.

> **Qualified paraprofessionals in every state help level the playing field for all students:**

- Paraprofessionals work in our neediest schools to reinforce curriculum and instruction with students who need the most support.
- Paraprofessionals are teammates with classroom teachers, and they have direct and meaningful contact with students every day.
- Paraprofessionals often live in the community in which they work, enhancing our ability to connect to our students. They are rooted and invested in the schools in their community.
- Minimum qualification standards for paraprofessionals ensure that kids in different districts, schools and classrooms have same high level of support.

- Highly qualified paraprofessionals support the education and learning of our students. These critical school staff members have achieved their certification by earning academic credit and obtaining a range of relevant practical experience. In addition, they regularly seek high-quality professional development and training in order to provide a high level of support to their students.
- By removing the federal qualification requirements, we run the risk of defaulting to low or nonexistent standards for para-professionals at the state or local level. This would decrease our chances of maintaining a highly qualified workforce of paraprofessionals who are dedicated to supporting the education of our children.

> **Groups supporting maintaining the paraprofessional qualification requirements:**

- American Federation of Teachers
- AFSCME
- Association of University Centers on Disabilities
- Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
- Council for Exceptional Children
- Council for Learning Disabilities
- Easter Seals
- Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- Learning Disabilities Association of America
- National Association of State Directors of Special Education
- National Education Association
- National Center for Learning Disabilities

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