

Connecticut PARAPROFESSIONALS' Guide to Data Collection

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STATE DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

When a paraprofessional is knowledgeable about the process of collecting data, has been trained in the observation techniques, and has a clear understanding of the behavior being observed, her or she can perform behavioral observations (Pickett, p. 97).

Although planning instruction is the teacher's role, paraprofessionals can assist teachers by documenting information that enables teachers to plan or modify lessons and adapt instructional methods to accommodate the learning and language needs of individual children and youth. Data collection is an important component of a comprehensive plan to support student achievement. The data collection system should be created by the teacher, and the paraprofessional should be knowledgeable about this process and how to implement it. This brief will provide paraprofessionals with an overview of data collection and explain their role in assisting teachers by documenting information regarding learner performance and behavior.

We welcome your comments and suggestions regarding this publication. Comments should be directed to Iris White, Turnaround Office, at iris.white@ct.gov.

A PARAPROFESSIONALS' GUIDE TO DATA COLLECTION BASICS

The purpose of assessment is to plan learning prior to instruction, support learning during instruction, monitor learning between instruction, and verify learning about instruction. Data can include: district student achievement, state assessment performance, school assessments, graduation or promotion requirements, content-area and grade-level requirements, perception, behavior, attendance, and benchmarks.

When a paraprofessional is knowledgeable about the process of collecting data, has been trained in the observation techniques, and has a clear understanding of the behavior being observed, he or she can perform behavioral observations (Pickett, p. 97).

The following are considerations for implementing a data collection system:

1. Data collection procedures should not cause a distraction from instruction.
2. Data collection procedures should not take excessive amounts of time away from instruction.
3. Results of data collection should lead to modifications and improvements in instructional programming.
4. The observer should respect the privacy and dignity of learners (Pickett, p. 96).

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Data Collection Basics

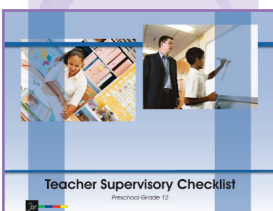
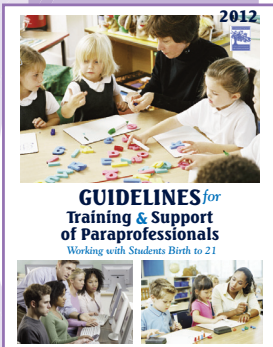
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PARAPROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE WITH PROVIDING OBJECTIVE DOCUMENTATION FOR OBSERVATIONS AND FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENTS

One method for assessing student behavior is the use of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA). An FBA is a problem-solving process for addressing challenging student behavior by looking beyond the behaviors to assess the purpose that it serves. The assessment involves teacher, student, and family interviews as well as direct observations of student behavior.

The data must be organized into at least three areas (“ABC”):

- (1) events before the behavior occurs (antecedents);
- (2) the conduct itself (behavior); and
- (3) events after the behavior (consequences).

(For more information regarding FBAs, please refer to the *Paraprofessionals’ Guide to Challenging Behaviors*.)

ABC isn’t the only type of observation method. The most commonly used are **frequency** and **duration**.

FREQUENCY is the number of times a behavior occurs within a specific period of time. It is better to use this method when it is easy to identify when the behavior starts and stops.

For example: “*During the 5 minutes that Mary was waiting for the principal, she cursed at me four times.*”

DURATION is the amount of time a behavior occurs from beginning to end.

For example: “*It took Sal 6 minutes to line up to leave the library when asked to do so.*”

When observing students, the teachers will let you know the target behaviors. They should also provide you with a data collection form and demonstrate how to collect the data.

An operational definition defines behavior as an observable, definable, countable, and measurable action:

- (1) **Observable:** must be able to see or hear the behavior.
- (2) **Definable:** two or more persons agree on the occurrence or nonoccurrence of a behavior.

Carrying out observations and keeping data must be done objectively. It is very important to put down what is seen or heard, and to avoid anything that is stigmatized by personal perceptions of an individual or specific behavior. Objective observation means: watching events without being affected by personal biases/prejudices, watching what is happening without guessing at the reasons that cause the action, watching the activity without judging whether it is good or bad, and producing an objective record that states exactly what an observer sees and hears.

PARAPROFESSIONALS SUPPORTING TEACHERS’ USE OF DATA TO INFORM INSTRUCTION

Instructional Data Teams (IDTs) are groups of teachers working collaboratively in a continuous process to enhance the achievement of the students they teach. IDTs are usually composed of teachers who teach at the same grade level (elementary) or same course, content area, or subject area (secondary). IDTs use student assessment data to inform their work, both prior to instruction and following instruction. If students are not acquiring the skills and knowledge from instruction, the team must determine how its own practice needs to be expanded, improved, or replaced in order to facilitate student learning (Standards for Instructional Data Teams). Teachers may use spreadsheets or grading programs to summarize the data. Paraprofessionals may be asked to enter this assessment data into a management system.

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) is Connecticut’s Framework for Response to Intervention (RTI), a process used to determine if and how students respond to instruction and social-emotional learning. SRBI emphasizes successful instruction for all students through high-quality general education practices, as well as targeted interventions for students experiencing learning, social-emotional, or behavioral difficulties. A child’s progress is assessed and results are used to make decisions about appropriate supports. Teachers need to determine whether an intervention is successful or needs to be changed, a process known as progress monitoring.



Progress monitoring is the process by which teachers can understand a child's needs and demonstrate the growth children are making in a specific area. As a paraprofessional, you can be a valuable part of SRBI teams by assisting teachers with screening, benchmarking, and progress monitoring assessments, recording observations of behavior and learning strategies, and entering assessment data into a management system. Paraprofessionals can also serve as a member of the intervention team. On this team you can collaborate with teachers to provide support for students and implement teacher-planned interventions. It is important that in each of these roles you work under the direct supervision of a certified teacher and complete specialized training and participate in school-wide professional development to enable you to perform these duties.

PARAPROFESSIONAL AND TEACHER COLLABORATION

Collaboration is a general term that describes an interactive process whereby persons with diverse backgrounds and expertise jointly agree to work together to generate creative solutions to mutually defined issues. Mutual trust, respect, and open communication characterize collaboration.

Effective teacher and paraprofessional collaboration can enhance the potential for increased student learning. If all staff is taking responsibility for all students, then all staff (including paraprofessionals) takes part in the collaborative process. All staff must recognize and value the role of the paraprofessional and the input he or she provides related to students. The paraprofessional in the role of collaborator is one who works with interventionists to problem solve on behalf of students who need specialized help to meet their instructional goals. As a participating team member, paraprofessionals can attend meetings and share relevant information with other team members to facilitate problem solving, decision making, program planning, and other team activities.

The Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals includes resources to help facilitate teacher-paraprofessional collaboration:

- sample Teacher Paraeducator Planning Tool 2;
- blank Sample Teacher Paraeducator Planning Tool 3;
- classroom Analysis Worksheet 4; and
- schedule for Paraprofessional Staff.



ONLINE RESOURCES

Connecticut Guidelines for Training and Support of Paraprofessionals:

http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/cali/guidelines_paraprofessionals.pdf

Paraprofessionals and SRBI:

http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/curriculum/cali/paraprofessionals_and_srbi_newsletter_3_15_10.pdf

Connecticut Paraprofessionals' Guide to Challenging Behaviors:

http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/pdf/curriculum/cali/paras_brief_behavior.pdf



Professional Development Resources for PARAPROFESSIONALS

The CSDE professional development for paraprofessionals is coordinated by Iris White, Education Consultant, Turnaround Office. Iris White can be contacted at iris.white@ct.gov or at 860-713-6794.

The **State Education Resource Center (SERC)** provides professional development under a variety of initiatives, including the *Paraprofessionals as Partners* Initiative. Through diverse professional development opportunities from SERC, paraprofessionals working in collaborative partnerships with general and special education teachers and support services professionals can enhance and acquire skills to improve their ability to effectively provide instruction and other direct services to meet the needs of all students. SERC also holds the annual *Paraprofessionals as Partners* conference in the fall.

For more information, contact Anthony Brisson, Consultant with SERC's Paraprofessionals as Partners Initiative, at brisson@ctserc.org or at 860-632-1485, ext. 315. More information can also be found on SERC's Web site: www.ctserc.org.

The **Capitol Region Education Council (CREC)** also offers a variety of professional development and job opportunities for paraprofessionals and aspiring paraprofessionals, including a comprehensive, job-embedded professional development curriculum called *The Compass*. This series of training modules, aligned with the *National Paraprofessional Standards*, has been designed to enhance paraprofessionals' skills in working with students in educational settings. More information can be found on the paraprofessional page of the CREC Web site, www.crec.org/tabs/paraprofessional, or by contacting your local regional educational service center (RESC):

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