

Gallaudet University

Stage 1: New Program: Preliminary Proposal

The New Program Preliminary Proposal is submitted via the Office of Academic Quality to the **New Program Review Committee** (NPRC) consisting of the following members: the Chief Enrollment and Marketing Officer, Provost, University Budget Director, Senate representative, and the appropriate Dean(s).

- I. **Suggested Name of Program:** Education Paraprofessional
- II. **Suggested Program Administrative Home (Department and/or College):** Education
- III. **Program Type**
 - a. **Undergraduate major**
 - b. Undergraduate distinct minor
 - c. Graduate Master's degree
 - d. Graduate certificate
 - e. Graduate/Research Doctoral degree (PhD)
- IV. **Mode of Delivery (check all that apply)**
 - a. **On-campus only**
 - b. Distance Education
 - i. Hybrid (some on-campus; 50% or more through distance education)
 - ii. Fully distance education (typically on-line)
 1. Synchronous
 2. Asynchronous
- V. **Intended Audience (check all that apply)**
 - a. **Students seeking a baccalaureate degree**
 - b. Students seeking a master's degree
 - c. Students currently enrolled in an approved graduate program at Gallaudet
 - d. Students who are seeking PST credit
 - e. Students not enrolled in a graduate program and not intending to enroll in graduate degree program
 - f. Other, please describe _____
- VI. **Degree/Product**
 - a. **Student receives an undergraduate degree**
 - b. Student receives graduate degree
 - c. Student receives a certificate or other product
- VII. **Rationale for Program:**

The Department of Education is proposing a program for preparing Paraprofessionals¹ to work in educational settings with P – 12 Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners. This new program would be offered as a Bachelor of Arts in Education and would incorporate existing and new courses designed to support the needs of Education Paraprofessionals.

There are three primary components of the rationale for developing this program:

- 1) Currently there are no programs in existence at Gallaudet (or anywhere else) that specifically addresses preparing paraprofessionals to work with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners
- 2) The responsibilities of paraprofessionals and the needs of the field are growing
- 3) Federal policy requires highly qualified paraprofessionals to adequately address the educational needs of all learners, and given the lack of training for working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners, this is our focus.

Filling a gap

Gallaudet University's Department of Education currently has a strong and accredited Teacher Preparation Program for General Education (at the BA level) and General and/or Deaf Education (at the MA level). Additionally we have a Doctoral Level Program focused on developing critical researchers and educators. The Department is also in the process of developing a proposal for Educational Leaders (principals, superintendents, etc.).

Currently, however, no program exists to prepare the paraprofessionals that are key to providing a strong education foundation for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners. Previously at Gallaudet University many students who were interested in working in a non-teaching role in an education environment would major in Family Child Studies. However, beginning in 2012 the Family Child Studies major is no longer offered at Gallaudet (there is a minor). Additionally, the Family Child Studies was not focused on educational settings. Currently in the District of Columbia there are Associates degree programs that provide training for paraprofessionals. However, none of these programs focus on working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners.

Additionally the number of highly qualified Deaf and Hard of Hearing paraprofessionals working in the field would be increased. This would result in more young Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners having access to deaf adults as language models, educators, and mentors. This new program will provide a structured path towards preparing highly qualified paraprofessionals to work in a variety of educational settings.

Responding to changes in the field

¹ A Paraprofessional, also referred to as an aide, teaching assistant, or one-to-one, is an employee who works in a school setting under the direction of a qualified general/special education educator (Causton-Theoharis, 2009; Giangreco, Edelman & Broer, 2003). Additionally some Paraprofessionals work in residence/dormitory programs, support after school activities, and support other extracurricular activities. While paraprofessionals are not responsible for planning instruction, they make important contributions to supporting an effective classroom environment and instruction (Causton-Theoharis, 2009).

In recent years with the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), the need for, role of, and qualifications for paraprofessionals have changed. NCLB requires that paraprofessionals meet standards that deem them as "highly qualified;" the first time that paraprofessional training has been addressed in federal policy.

Over the past 20 years, more students with significant disabilities are being included in classrooms across grade levels. This has had an impact on the number of paraprofessionals in public schools (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Patterson, 2006) and residential programs. Additionally more Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners are being placed in mainstream environments with paraprofessional support (Karchmer & Mitchell, 2003) which has also increased the need for paraprofessionals with the abilities needed to work with Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners. According to Pickett, Likins and Wallace (2002) there were 550,000 paraprofessionals who held full time positions in the late 1990's. In 2007, the US Department of Education reported 634,000 paraprofessionals were full time employees (US Department of Education, NCES 2007-008). Ninety-one percent (91%) of public elementary and secondary schools in the 2003-2004 school year had hired instructional paraprofessionals. Additionally, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, reports there will be a 15% increase in the number of paraprofessionals that are employed between 2010 and 2020 (<http://www.bls.gov/ooh/education-training-and-library/teacher-assistants.htm>). As more paraprofessionals are being included in all school settings, the role of the paraprofessionals is changing and becoming more critical to the success of students.

As a result of IDEA and NCLB the roles and responsibilities of paraprofessionals have begun to change (Giangreco & Doyle, 2004; Keller, et al, 2007). Previously, paraprofessionals were regarded as merely an aide (Keller, et al, 2007); making copies and doing limited work directly with learners. NCLB states that the responsibilities of a paraeducator include:

- Providing one-on-one tutoring
- assisting with classroom management
- providing instructional assistance in a computer lab
- conducting parental involvement activities
- providing literacy or media center support
- providing translating/interpreting duties
- providing instructional activities under the supervision of a teacher (U.S. Department of Education, 2002; Likins 2003).

They also supervise students in the playground, perform bus duty, serve as a job coach, work in early childhood programs and provide support for English Language Learner (ELL).

More and more paraprofessionals are assuming increasing responsibility for the experiences and education of learners in the class. In a study conducted by Patterson (2006) 86% of paraprofessionals indicated their work day included some form of instruction to the students. Paraprofessionals play a more active role in providing accommodations for students with disabilities in all academic areas and providing support to small groups in reading, writing and math (Giangreco & Doyle, 2004; Keller, et al, 2007; Likins, 2003; Patterson, 2006) and offer critical support to students to whom they are

assigned or to the teachers they work with (Causton-Theoharis, 2009). Since a fundamental responsibility of educators is to teach students how to read, paraprofessionals are often used to support literacy instruction (Causton-Theoharis, et al, 2007). However, it is imperative for paraprofessionals to be trained to use literacy intervention and support literacy instruction. Studies have shown that untrained paraprofessionals can have a detrimental effect on students' interaction with their peers as well as well as teachers' academic expectations (Causton-Theoharis, et al 2007).

In addition to the training paraprofessionals working in schools need, paraprofessionals working with the deaf population require additional foundational knowledge in language, literacy and working with diverse populations to prepare them. In addition to understanding how learners learn, they also need specific knowledge related to the needs of Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners such as how to support linguistic competence, using strategies for bilingual learners, working with students with special needs, understanding cultural identity and applying visual learning strategies.

The need for highly qualified paraprofessionals

This change in role had an impact on the qualifications of paraprofessionals. NCLB requires paraprofessionals with instructional duties to meet specific criteria in order to be considered "highly qualified" and able to provide instruction to students in general or special education. IDEA 2004 goes one step further and mandates that paraprofessionals who work with students with disabilities receive appropriate training and skill development (Causton-Theoharis, et al, 2007; Giangreco & Doyle, 2004; Keller, et al, 2007; Likins, 2003).

Prior to the passing of NCLB, paraprofessionals with a high school diploma were common. Now with the increased emphasis on reading and mathematics, the need for students who do not satisfy the state assessments get additional support, and the need for paraprofessionals to understand how to support literacy and mathematical skill development the minimum qualifications have changed for paraprofessionals. In fact NCLB has mandated that an instructional paraprofessional must satisfy one of the following requirements:

- Complete a minimum of two years of study in higher education
- Obtain an associate's degree (or higher)
- Complete a formal assessment to indicate the knowledge of and ability to assist in Reading, writing or mathematic instruction or the knowledge of or ability to assist in reading, writing or Math readiness (District of Columbia Register, 2009)

Although NCLB requires two years of study in higher education, NCLB's primary focus is on the general education population, and the requirements for a paraprofessional are for working with those students not the more specific needs of paraprofessionals working with Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners. Additionally it is the norm for teachers of Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners to attain a Masters Degree prior to teaching, this parallels the program design which would provide Bachelor level preparation to work as a paraprofessional with Deaf and Hard of Hearing Learners.

Studies indicate that paraprofessionals lack the training and qualifications necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. (Patterson, 2006), despite the requirements of NCLB and IDEA 2004. This lack of training merits a systematic program of preparation for paraprofessionals to gain knowledge and skills in order to support student achievement more effectively. Paraprofessionals require training in learner characteristics, roles and responsibilities, cultural diversity, data collection, behavioral and instructional strategies and health related issues and practices (Keller, et al, 2007).

The newly proposed program will provide majors with a program of study designed to meet these minimum requirements as well as providing additional support, coursework and practical experience to enable them to work with all students of diverse backgrounds and needs. The new program will include coursework that will adequately prepare undergraduate candidates to acquire knowledge of students, classroom environment and basic content related to reading, writing and math including ASL/English bilingual strategies. Undergraduate candidates will also be prepared on how to communicate with other professionals, family and community members with an understanding of confidentiality.

VIII. Goals of the Program:

The program goals have been aligned with InTASC: Model Core Teaching Standards (2011 –a complete copy of the INTASC standards are available for review)

The new program will prepare undergraduate candidates to:

1. Understand how diverse learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive linguistic, social emotional and physical areas.
2. Understand learners' individual differences, diverse cultures and communities.
3. Understand and support the creation of learning environments that support individual and collaborative learning encourage positive social interaction
4. Understand the central concepts of content and how to facilitate concepts to promote students' learning.
5. Understand the functions and applications of multiple methods of assessment.
6. Understand how to support instruction of all learners with an emphasis on use of ASL and English bilingual strategies.
7. Understand a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deeper understanding of content.
8. Engage in ethical practice and self evaluation of the effects of actions on others (learners, families, other professionals and the community)
9. Understand the need for collaboration and seek opportunities to collaborate with classroom teachers, learners, families, colleagues and other professionals to ensure learner growth.
10. Provide support in classroom managements.

The program goals are aligned and support the following goals from the Gallaudet Strategic Plan GSP goals indicated below

Goal A: Grow Gallaudet's enrollment of full-time undergrads, full- and part-time graduate students, and continuing education students to 3,000 by 2015.

The program will fill a gap that currently exists with the dissolution of the FCS major and provide an entry into the field of education for those who cannot (due to an inability to pass the teacher certification basic skills assessments) or do not want to become teachers.

Goal D: By 2015, refine a core set of undergraduate and graduate programs that are aligned with the institutional mission and vision, leverage Gallaudet's many strengths, and best position students for career success

The need for paraprofessionals is a growing field. The Department of Labor predicts 15% growth over the next decade. The need for schools to meet the expectations of No Child Left Behind requires the addition of paraprofessionals to support the development of all students and assist the school in meeting their Annual Yearly performance requirements on statewide and district assessments.

Goal E Establish Gallaudet as the epicenter of research, development and outreach leading to advancements in knowledge and practice for deaf & hard of hearing people and all humanity

Currently there is no program like this in the country; this would provide a unique opportunity to study the impact of highly qualified paraprofessionals on the achievement of Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners. It would also provide Deaf and Hard of Hearing undergraduate students with the opportunity to become highly qualified paraprofessionals who can work with Deaf, Hard of Hearing and hearing learners in a variety of environments across the spectrum of educational settings. This will support the advancement of Deaf and Hard of Hearing learners and the advancement of pedagogical knowledge and practice for use with Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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