

Title: Paraeducator training and student outcomes

Date: October 2015

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Question: >> Could you provide research on the relationship between paraeducator training and student outcomes?

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### Response:

We have prepared the following memo with 1) references on paraeducator training and student outcomes and 2) additional resources addressing outcomes for specific populations, such as students with disabilities or students at risk.

Citations include a link to a free online version, when available. Citations are accompanied by an abstract, excerpt, or summary written by the author or publisher of the document. We have not done an evaluation of the methodological rigor of these resources, but provide them for your information only.

### References

Gerber, S. B., Finn, J. D., Achilles, C. M., & Boyd-Zaharias, J. (2001). Teacher aides and students' academic achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(2), 123–143.

*Abstract:* Despite more than 600,000 teacher aides in American schools today, research provides little information about their classroom activities, their qualifications for carrying out their duties, or their impact on student achievement and behavior. This investigation asked whether the presence of a teacher aide in the classroom has any noticeable impact on pupils' learning. Three primary questions were addressed: (1) In grades K through 3, does the presence of a full-time teacher aide in the classroom affect students' academic achievement? (2) If teacher aides have a positive effect on students' performance, does the effect depend on the number of years the student attends classes with a teacher aide? (3) Do some functions of aides (i.e., clerical tasks, instructional tasks, noninstructional tasks) have a greater impact on student achievement than others? This investigation showed that the teacher aide movement in the United States has created a state of affairs that requires many aides to perform tasks for which they are ill-prepared. In addition, teacher aide data were analyzed from Tennessee's Project STAR, a longitudinal experiment in which students were assigned at random to small classes, regular-size classes without an aide, or regular-size classes with a full-time teacher aide. The analyses reported here extend previous investigations, examining the functions and effects of teacher aides in depth. The results showed that teacher aides have little, if any, positive effect on students' academic achievement. The only positive effect was an improvement in reading scores for students who attended a class with a teacher aide for two or three years. These results were the only exceptions to a plethora of negative findings. The study also showed that the types of duties aides performed had no bearing on student achievement. Because teacher aides are called upon increasingly to provide instruction to pupils, policies and research must help us select and prepare aides to perform effectively.

Mikulecky, M. T., & Baber, A. (2005). From highly qualified to highly competent paraprofessionals: How NCLB requirements can catalyze effective program and policy development guidelines from the ECS Paraprofessional Expert Panel. Denver, CO: Education Commission of the States. Retrieved on October 16, 2015, from [http://134869d4a8f4944f884f-ec3919f20fb869450364fb41b92201ed.r29.cf1.rackcdn.com/ECS\\_Paraprofessional\\_Policy\\_Brief-final.pdf](http://134869d4a8f4944f884f-ec3919f20fb869450364fb41b92201ed.r29.cf1.rackcdn.com/ECS_Paraprofessional_Policy_Brief-final.pdf)

*Abstract:* This brief presents a wealth of information on the subject of paraprofessionals, including a statement of NCLB requirements, a discussion and recommendations about the need to define paraprofessional roles, an outline of the knowledge and skills required for these roles, and the importance of providing professional development and a career ladder. This brief is intended to help policymakers understand the issues states face in helping paraprofessionals not only meet NCLB requirements and become highly qualified, but highly competent as well.

Nievar, M. A., Jacobson, A., Chen, Q., Johnson, U., & Dier, S. (2011). Impact of HIPPY on home learning environments of Latino families. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 26*(3), 268–277. [Free full-text .PDF file is not available. Can be purchased at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/08852006>]

*Abstract:* This study investigated effects of Home Instruction of Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), a paraprofessional home visiting program, on parents and children. The program site served low-income, Spanish-speaking families. On average, mothers were 31 years old (SD = 4.78) and children were 3 or 4 years old (M = 3.92, SD = .92). Participants (n = 54) had more parenting self-efficacy and more enriched home environments than families on a waiting list (n = 54). In a regression on home environment, participation in the intervention was a stronger predictor than maternal education, depression, and stress. A third-grade follow-up of children in the program showed significantly higher math achievement when compared to low-income Latino third graders in the same school district. These findings appear to validate the HIPPY model, which suggests that parents gain confidence as their children's teachers through their experiences in the program. HIPPY successfully addresses the need for culturally sensitive programming aimed at improving educational achievement among minority children.

Vadasy, P. F., Sanders, E. A., & Peyton, J. A. (2006). Code-oriented instruction for kindergarten students at risk for reading difficulties: A randomized field trial with paraeducator implementers. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 98*, 508–528.

*Abstract:* The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of code-oriented supplemental instruction for kindergarten students at risk for reading difficulties. Paraeducators were trained to provide 18 weeks of explicit instruction in phonemic skills and the alphabetic code. Students identified by their teachers [as] meeting study eligibility criteria were randomly assigned to 2 groups: individual supplemental instruction and control. Students were pretested in December, midtested, and posttested in May–June of kindergarten. At posttest, treatment students significantly outperformed controls on measures of reading accuracy, reading efficiency, oral reading fluency, and developmental spelling. Treatment students had significantly higher linear growth rates in phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge during the kindergarten treatment. At a 1-year follow-up, significant group differences remained in reading accuracy and efficiency. Ethical challenges of longitudinal intervention research are discussed. Findings have policy implications for making supplemental instruction in critical early reading skills available.

Vadasy, P. F., Sanders, E. A., & Tudor, S. (2007). Effectiveness of paraeducator-supplemented individual instruction: Beyond basic decoding skills. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 40*(6), 508–525.

*Abstract:* A total of 46 children in Grades 2 and 3 with low word-level skills were randomly assigned to 1 of 2 groups that received supplemental phonics-based reading instruction. One group received intervention October through March (21.5 hours), and one group served as a control from October through March and later received intervention March through May (17.5 hours). Paraeducators trained in a standard treatment protocol provided individual instruction for 30 min per day, 4 days per week. At the March posttest, the early treatment (ET; n = 23) group outperformed the controls (late treatment, LT; n = 20) on reading accuracy and passage fluency. Across both groups, second graders outperformed third graders on these same measures. At the 3-month follow-up, the ET group showed no evidence of decline in reading accuracy, passage fluency, or words spelled; however, 3rd-grade ET students had significantly higher spelling skills compared to 2nd graders. The LT group demonstrated significant growth during their intervention in reading accuracy and spelling, but not passage fluency. When we compared the ET and LT groups on their gains per instructional hour, we found that the ET group made significantly greater gains than the LT group across all 3 measures. The results support the value of paraeducator-supplemented reading instruction for students below grade level in word identification and reading fluency.

## **Additional Resources:**

Below is a list of references addressing outcomes for specific populations, such as students with disabilities or students at risk.

- Fisher, M., & Pleasants, S. L. (2012). Roles, responsibilities, and concerns of paraeducators: Findings from a statewide survey. *Remedial & Special Education, 33*(5), 287–297.
- Gest, S. D., & Gest, J. M. (2005). Reading tutoring for students at academic and behavioral risk: Effects on time-on-task in the classroom. *Education and Treatment of Children, 28*(1), 25–47.
- Giangreco, M. F., Edelman, S. W., Broer, S. M., & Doyle, M. B. (2001). Paraprofessional support of students with disabilities: Literature from the past decade. *Exceptional Children, 68*, 45–63.
- Giangreco, M. F., Edelman, S., Luiselli, T. E., & MacFarland, S. Z. C. (1997). Helping or hovering? Effects of instructional assistant proximity on students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 64*, 7–18.
- Kotkin, R. (1998). The Irvine paraprofessional program: Promising practice for serving students with ADHD. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 31*(6), 556–564.
- Rashotte, C. A., MacPhee, K., & Torgesen, J. K. (2001). The effectiveness of a group reading instruction program with poor readers in multiple grades. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 24*, 119–134.
- Reinoehl, R. B., & Halle, J. W. (1994). Increasing the assessment probe performance of teacher aides through written prompts. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps, 19*, 32–42.
- Russel, C. S., Allday, R. A., & Duhon, G. J. (2015). Effects of increasing distance of a one-on-one paraprofessional on student engagement. *Education & Treatment of Children, 38*(2), 193–210.
- Stockall, N. S. (2014). When an aide really becomes an aid: Providing professional development for special education paraprofessionals. *Exceptional Children, 46*(6), 197–205.
- Vadasy, P. F., Jenkins, J. R., Antil, L. R., Wayne, S. K., & O'Connor, R. E. (1997). The effectiveness of one-to-one tutoring by community tutors for at-risk beginning readers. *Learning Disabilities Quarterly, 20*, 126–139.
- Vadasy, P. F., Sanders, E. A., & Peyton, J. A. (2006). Paraeducator supplemented instruction in structural analysis with text reading practice for second and third graders at risk for reading problems. *Remedial and Special Education, 27*(6), 365–378.
- Vadasy, P. F., Nelson, J. R., & Sanders, E. A. (2013). Longer term effects of a Tier 2 kindergarten vocabulary intervention for English learners. *Remedial & Special Education, 34*(2), 91–101.
- Wasik, B. A., & Slavin, R. E. (1993). Preventing early reading failure with one-to-one tutoring: A review of five programs. *Reading Research Quarterly, 28*(2), 178–200.

Welch, M., Richards, G., Okada, T., Richards, J., & Prescott, S. (1995). A consultation and paraprofessional pull-in system of service delivery: A report on student outcomes and teacher satisfaction. *Remedial and Special Education, 16*(1), 16–2.

Whitburn, B. (2013). The dissection of paraprofessional support in inclusive education: ‘You’re in mainstream with a chaperone.’ *Australasian Journal of Special Education, 37*(2), 147–161.

## Methods

### Keywords and Search Strings Used in the Search

(“Paraeducator” OR “paraprofessional” OR “teacher aide” OR “instructional aide”) AND (“student learning” OR “student outcome” OR “student engagement”)

### Search of Databases

EBSCO Host, ERIC, PsychInfo, PsychArticle, Google, and Google Scholar

### Criteria for Inclusion

When REL West staff review resources, they consider—among other things—four factors:

- **Date of the Publication:** The most current information is included, except in the case of nationally known seminal resources.
- **Source and Funder of the Report/Study/Brief/Article:** Priority is given to IES, nationally funded, and certain other vetted sources known for strict attention to research protocols.
- **Methodology:** Sources include randomized controlled trial studies, surveys, self-assessments, literature reviews, and policy briefs. Priority for inclusion generally is given to randomized controlled trial study findings, but the reader should note at least the following factors when basing decisions on these resources: numbers of participants (Just a few? Thousands?); selection (Did the participants volunteer for the study or were they chosen?); representation (Were findings generalized from a homogeneous or a diverse pool of participants? Was the study sample representative of the population as a whole?).
- **Existing Knowledge Base:** Although we strive to include vetted resources, there are times when the research base is limited or nonexistent. In these cases, we have included the best resources we could find, which may include newspaper articles, interviews with content specialists, organization websites, and other sources.

This memorandum is one in a series of quick-turnaround responses to specific questions posed by educators and policymakers in the Western region (Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah), which is served by the Regional Educational Laboratory West (REL West) at WestEd. This memorandum was prepared by REL West under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), Contract ED-IES-12-C-0002, administered by WestEd. Its content does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of IES or the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.