

Proposed Paraprofessional Requirements Public Comments

EXHIBIT #1

Date Received: August 28, 2018
(Richarz, Canton)

I support the removal of a certification fee for special education paraprofessionals. The paraprofessionals are required to have a background check prior to employment. In my opinion the certificate does not serve a beneficial impact in the educational field, rather it would be an additional requirement without need for employees who receive a minimal wage. Therefore, I do not see benefit for such a certificate.

EXHIBIT #2

Date Received: August 28, 2018
(Muckey, Corsica)

I would like to see this certificate renewal removed as this change is proposing. It is very difficult to get para pros and they already have to meet certain requirements to be a para. The certification/permit just appears to be a block. The requirements are already in place if you are a Title School. I support the removal of the permits process for paras.

EXHIBIT #3

Date Received: September 11, 2018
(McCorkle, Pierre)

In the fall of 2014, the SD Commission on Teaching and Learning(CTL) in partnership with the SD DOE began a two-year review of SD's certification rules. CTL's mission is to shape policies and practices that positively impact teaching and learning through a collaborative partnership of education stakeholders. Members are k12educators, administrators, higher education educators, members of TIE, etc. A number of changes in the certification system were recommended at the end of the review, and those changes have since been adopted by the SD BOES. The changes have made the certification process clear and less restrictive all while ensuring that our students have teachers who are well-prepared and will provide the best possible education for the students of South Dakota. As a part of the certification review, CTL and SD DOE also looked at permits for specific limited areas. One of the areas included is the permit for paraprofessional at both the standard and the advanced levels. Those individuals with an advanced level permit meet the requirements for working in a Title I school. The standard permit, as well as the advanced, would be appropriate for any non-Title school. A permit and its minimal requirements (standard requires a HS diploma) begin to treat paras as professionals. It is a small step but an important one. Paraprofessionals work with our students and support the work of teachers. Paraprofessionals are educators. We should all want those who help educate our students to meet certain standards. For years, paras have requested additional training in areas affecting their ability to do their jobs. Any necessary hours for a permit could be provided by involving paras in appropriate in-service training at

the district level. Training could be provided online or through professional organizations such as SDEA. If we do not begin to treat our paras as professionals, we will continue to compete with fast food and other similar employers. If attaining a few hours of training is the thing stopping someone from applying to be a para, is that person best qualified to work with our students? Why would we want someone working with students who isn't willing to receive training? Shouldn't our school districts want standards and training for those who work closely with our students? Our students deserve the best we can provide. Removing para permits does not serve our students well. I urge you to retain the paraprofessional permit.

EXHIBIT #4

Date Received: September 13, 2018
(Sandquist, McLaughlin)

Paraprofessionals, teacher aides, classroom assistants...at our school district located on the South Dakota side and at the heart of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, we often have difficulty filling our vacancies. There are few qualified individuals in the field of education who want to live in rural America. It is difficult to recruit, and retain staff. As a result, our community members, local, home-grown people are our best bet at filling our vacancies, but they do not always meet minimum qualifications. We often employ individuals and place them on plans of intent, providing testing guides and windows, and even working with universities, from paraprofessionals to certified teachers, to assist them in completing any necessary tests/applications in order to obtain the minimum requirements to continue employment.

This Administrative Rule requirement for paraprofessional certification takes away local control in a non-certified position. We will lose the opportunity, and latitude, to employ staff at entry-level. It puts unnecessary fiscal burdens on these staff who may not have the means to pay for the application and certification; this could ultimately become the responsibility of the Districts already working hard to spread their budgets. It hinders employment, and retention, efforts in vacancies we are already experiencing difficulty in filling. While qualified, competent, and reliable individuals are of utmost priority in the classroom and the District has no intention of lowering its expectations, full implementation and enforcement of the paraprofessional certification requirement in Administrative Rule only adds undue burden to the recruitment and retention efforts already in effect. Thank you for your consideration.

EXHIBIT #5

Date Received: September 14, 2018
(Timber Lake School Staff, Timber Lake)

As a paraprofessional we work closely with the classroom teacher, we have at least 48 college hours or have passed a praxis test to obtain the lower level job we hold. We are on a hourly salary which is not a high paid position. I have a family(with a small child) and for me to have to go out of town to attend training or for more schooling is very hard and inconvenient for me. We are in a remote area so no town is within a short distance to commute to. I don't feel the salary we make justifies us having to spend more money out of our pocket because it will not increase our pay. I have been a para for 13+ years, but I may consider my continuing as one, due to my family needs and the travel time involved. I love my job and hope I can continue to help the children in our school system. Thank you Vicki