

# IS A CAREER AS A PARAPROFESSIONAL RIGHT FOR YOU?

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## WHAT IS A SPECIAL EDUCATION PARAPROFESSIONAL?

Paraprofessionals provide instructional supports and services for students within a school setting. A special education paraprofessional is a person who works with one or more students with disabilities under the direction of a teacher. Paraprofessionals may be known by various titles, including a teacher's aide, teacher assistant, paraeducator, one-to-one aide, instructional assistant, or job coach.

In Pennsylvania, there are two types of paraprofessionals that work with students with disabilities: **instructional paraprofessionals** and **personal care assistants (PCAs)**.



### Instructional Paraprofessionals

- Work under the guidance of both general and special education teachers
- Lead activities during individual or small group time
- Collaborate with related service personnel to support the carryover of academic skills to other areas of the student's life
- Assist the teacher in observing, recording and charting behavior



### Personal Care Assistants (PCAs)

- Provide one-to-one, noninstructional support to individual students in the classroom, hallways, cafeteria, and recreational areas
- Assist students with therapy programs designed by speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, or physical therapists
- Monitor the student's safety, redirect behavior, and assist in the use and care of equipment

## YOU MIGHT ENJOY THIS WORK IF YOU LIKE TO:

- Be a part of an instructional team
- Work closely with students and help them during their daily routines
- Assist students in building independent skills
- Coach students through academic and behavioral tasks
- Help students make friends
- Positively impact future generations of citizens

## A FEW VOICES FROM THE FIELD: MEET PARAPROFESSIONALS

“It is truly amazing . . . to see [my students] grow and flourish within the years we spend with them.”

Teara Moon  
Paraprofessional  
Pittsburgh Public Schools, Grandview PK-5

Scan the QR codes to watch the interviews.



Kristin Suter  
Paraprofessional  
The Learning Lamp



Teara Moon  
Paraprofessional  
Pittsburgh Public Schools  
Grandview PK-5



Vicky DePuis  
Paraprofessional  
Selinsgrove Area School District  
Selinsgrove Elementary School

## HOW TO BECOME A PARAPROFESSIONAL IN PENNSYLVANIA:

In Pennsylvania, there are three options to become a paraprofessional:

### OPTION 1

Complete 2 years of postsecondary education (48 college/university credits).

### OPTION 2

Possess an associate degree or higher.

### OPTION 3

Successfully complete a state or locally developed assessment. The Credential of Competency for Special Education Paraeducators in Pennsylvania is one way to meet this requirement through the use of the *Pennsylvania Credential of Competency Checklist*, which ensures competence in ten performance-based standard areas.

<https://www.pattan.net/Supports/Paraprofessionals/Credential-of-Competency>

