



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

April 30, 2002

Honorable Edward R. Richardson
Superintendent of Education
Alabama Department of Education
Gordon Persons Office Building
50 North Ripley Street
P.O. Box 302102
Montgomery, AL 36130-2101

Dear Superintendent Richardson:

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB Act) enacted on January 8, 2002, introduced many changes designed to improve student academic achievement. The Department is developing guidance and regulations for Title I requirements, including teacher and paraprofessional qualifications. As we strive to complete this work as quickly as possible, I want to outline a few key paraprofessional requirements that took effect on January 8. There is no time for delay in their implementation.

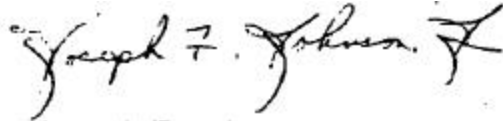
All paraprofessionals hired after January 8 must have (1) completed two years of study at an institution of higher education; (2) obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; or (3) met a rigorous standard of quality and be able to demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment, knowledge of and the ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and mathematics (or, as appropriate, reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness). Paraprofessionals hired before January 8 and working in a program supported with Title I funds must meet these requirements in four years. Our policy is not finalized, but our current thinking is-

- These requirements apply to paraprofessionals with instructional duties in any program supported by Title I funds. For a schoolwide school, this means all paraprofessionals with instructional duties without regard to the source of funding of the positions.
- The above requirements do not apply to paraprofessionals working primarily as translators or solely on parental involvement activities. Individuals who work solely in non-instructional roles, such as food service, cafeteria or playground, supervision, personal care services, and non-instructional computer assistance are not considered to be paraprofessionals for Title I purposes.

- *All* paraprofessionals (regardless of their hiring date) in a program supported with Title I funds must have a secondary school diploma or equivalent. This is a change from the previous statute, which permitted the hiring of paraprofessionals without high school diplomas, or the recognized equivalent, to work as translators.
- Finally, Title I and Title II funds may be used for ongoing training and professional development to help paraprofessionals meet the statutory requirements.

We will post regulations and further guidance at www.ed.gov as we develop them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph F. Johnson, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joseph F. Johnson, Jr.
Director
Compensatory Education Programs

cc: State Title I Director
State Special Education Director.