

## **Evidence for the Use of the ETS ParaPro Assessment in Nevada to Fulfill One of the Requirements under NCLB**

Passage of No Child Left Behind in January, 2002, put requirements on instructional paraprofessionals whose salaries are paid with Title I funds in Targeted Assistance programs, and all instructional paraprofessionals in schoolwide Title I program schools, regardless of the source of funding for their positions. The only exceptions to these requirements continue to be those paraprofessionals who work solely on parent involvement activities or primarily as translators. Every Title I instructional paraprofessional who is employed under the above conditions and hired after January 8, 2002, must meet one of the following requirements upon hiring:

1. completed at least two years of study at an accredited institution of higher education; OR
2. obtained an associate's (or higher) degree; OR
3. passed a formal state or local assessment of knowledge of and ability to assist in instructing reading, writing, and math.

Instructional paraprofessionals hired prior to January 8, 2002, have until January 8, 2006, to meet one of the above requirements.

NDE has looked at several options to meet the third requirement: ETS ParaPro Assessment, ACT WorkKeys, and ERI Higher Education Learning Profile (HELP). After examining each assessment and talking to states implementing them, NDE has determined that WorkKeys, as it currently exists, does not meet the content knowledge level required by NCLB in the area of writing, and neither WorkKeys nor HELP assess the ability to assist in instruction, a requirement of NCLB.

The following document has two purposes: the first is in response to questions regarding whether the ETS's ParaPro Assessment tests an examinee's ability to assist instruction in the areas of reading, math, and writing, or whether the assessment only tests content knowledge in these same subjects. The second purpose is to address the test's rigor and equivalency to 2-year's of study at an accredited institution of higher education.

### **Assessing content knowledge vs. the ability to assist in instruction:**

Dr. Richard Tannenbaum, Director of Technical Analysis in the Teaching and Learning Division of Educational Testing Service that developed the ParaPro Assessment, noted that the assessment developers recognized the distinction between the ability to instruct (pedagogy) and the ability to assist in instruction, the former being an expectation of a teacher, but not of an instructional assistant. The ParaPro Assessment, therefore, includes no questions that rely on formal knowledge of pedagogical or other specialized instructional training, but rather, includes questions that address paraprofessionals' understanding of reading, writing, and math content, and questions for which paraprofessionals must apply this knowledge in ways that demonstrate connections to the support of student learning.

Two-thirds of the Assessment's 90 questions cover the subject knowledge of reading, writing, and mathematics, while approximately one-third of the questions test the application of these same skills to classroom instruction. This second type of question

EXHIBIT <u>N</u>	Education	Document consists of <u>3</u> pages
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entire document provided.		
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A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775-684-6827 or e-mail library@lcb.state.nv.us)		
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looks slightly different because it presents an actual classroom situation or activity, but to answer this question type the examinee needs only to apply the respective subject knowledge and skills. The examinee does not need special knowledge of pedagogy, that is, the philosophies or approaches to teaching specific subject matter.

For example, while a Reading Skills question might measure the understanding of a reading passage by asking to identify the main idea of a passage, a Reading Application question might ask to identify which question would be the best one to pose to a student to find out whether the student understands the main idea. The Reading application questions also test skills and knowledge important to assisting in classroom instruction, including the ability to understand directions, alphabetize words, and help students use a dictionary. Some of the questions concern *foundations of reading*: the knowledge and skills that students need when they are learning the basic features of words and written text, such as breaking down words into parts, or decoding words or phrases using context clues. Other Reading Application questions concern *tools of the reading process*: the common strategies used in a classroom before, during, and after reading to aid students' reading skills, including helping students use prereading strategies, such as skimming or making predictions, or helping students interpret written directions and use a dictionary.

Writing Application questions are based on classroom scenarios in which students are planning, composing, revising, or editing documents written for a variety of purposes. Examinees must be able to identify errors in grammar, punctuation, and word choice, as well as draw on other knowledge and skills related to writing, such as using outlines, developing main ideas for paragraphs, and revising sentences for clarity and correctness. Some Writing Application questions concern aspects of the *writing process*, such as using prewriting techniques to generate and organize ideas, and identifying and using appropriate reference materials. Other questions are concerned with *writing applications* for different purposes, such as narratives, letters, and expository text.

Mathematics Application questions are typically based on classroom scenarios in which students are involved in math-related tasks that draw upon concepts of arithmetic, geometry, measurement, algebra, and data organization and interpretation, but do not require knowledge of advanced-level math vocabulary. Questions ask the examinee to assist students with both word problems and number problems, help students work through the individual steps to solve a problem, or confirm that a student's answer is correct.

**The rigor and 2-year equivalency of ETS ParaPro Assessment:**

The test development procedures that ETS followed in the development of the ETS ParaPro Assessment included national input from paraprofessionals and their supervising teachers in developing question content and phrasing for the pilot test administered in September, 2002, further input compiled from a national online survey of paraprofessionals and supervising teachers, and additional input on each test item's ability to assess what a beginning paraprofessional would know from paraprofessionals and supervising teachers during Standard Setting panels held in November, 2002. Nevada paraprofessionals and supervising teachers were involved in all three aspects of

this test development and refinement procedure. The next step will be an evaluation of the linkages between the assessment's content and the level of reading, writing, and math skills of 2-year programs for paraprofessionals at accredited institutions of higher education through an "audit" of instructional artifacts from 2-year programs across the country that includes a content analysis and a linkage analysis of the extent to which there is a substantiated connection between the content of the ParaPro Assessment and the knowledge and skills addressed by the artifacts collected. The collection of artifacts has already begun, and the analyses audit is scheduled to be held April, 2003.