



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

July 22, 2016

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction

SUBJECT: Title I Paraprofessional Qualifications: Transition from the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)* to the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)*

On December 10, 2015, President Obama signed the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA)*, which reauthorizes the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)* and replaces the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*. ESSA contains several provisions which impact “highly qualified teacher” (HQT) and “highly qualified paraprofessional” requirements beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. On April 1, 2016, the Department released [Superintendent's Memo #076-16](#) outlining key provisions known at that time related to teacher and paraprofessional requirements.

On June 29, 2016, the United States Department of Education released a revised [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document, which included information about additional requirements for instructional paraprofessionals working in schools receiving Title I funding.

According to this guidance, while the term “highly qualified” is being eliminated, paraprofessionals working in an instructional capacity within a school receiving Title I funds still must satisfy certain requirements. These paraprofessionals must have a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and also must:

- Complete two years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- Obtain an associate (or higher) degree; or
- Meet 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).

A specified course of study is not required to fulfill the requirements of the first two options above.

The Board of Education has approved the Parapro assessment as the formal state academic paraprofessional assessment. The established qualifying score for the test approved by the Board is 455. School boards also have the option of approving a local assessment.

Questions about ESSA implementation should be directed to the Office of Program Administration and Accountability at ESSA@doe.virginia.gov.

SRS/LS/ccs

Links:

[Superintendent's Memo 076-16: Highly Qualified Teachers: Transition from the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 \(NCLB\)* to the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 \(ESSA\)*](#) (Revised July 22, 2016)

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essafaqstransition62916.pdf>

