

THE COMPASS NEWSLETTER



Helping Paraprofessionals Navigate the Profession

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WELCOME

Welcome to the first issue of **THE COMPASS NEWSLETTER**. Published by the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC), Division of Technical Assistance and Brokering Services, **THE COMPASS NEWSLETTER** will strive to provide paraprofessionals with timely, useful information to support their role as an integral part of an educational team. To subscribe visit us online at www.crec.org/paraprofessional.

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Connecticut State Department of Education Paraprofessional News

Iris White is a new Associate Education Consultant, Bureau of School and District Improvement, at the CT State Department of Education. Iris was formerly the Professional Development Coordinator for AFT Connecticut. Her focus will be on developing training modules and curricula for professional development for paraprofessionals, assisting boards of education in the effective use of paraprofessionals and the development of strategies to improve communications between teachers and paraprofessionals in the provision of effective student instruction.

Please contact Iris at 860-713-6564 or by email: iris.white@ct.gov if you have any questions regarding paraprofessional training or responsibilities.

The CT State Department of Education and the Connecticut Association of Schools will hold its Annual Connecticut School Data Showcase Evening Session, May 13, 2008, 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m., Crowne Plaza, Cromwell. This special session, "What Teachers and Paraprofessionals Can Do to Create a Positive School Climate and Support High Academic Achievement," will feature a panel of teachers and

paraprofessionals who will share strategies for creating positive relationships that support achievement. This event is free of charge to the first 300 people who register. Dinner will be provided. Registration is available at www.sdecali.net. Please contact Michelle Rosado (860)713-6748, with any questions.

The last ParaPro Assessment Date for the 2007-08 School Year is June 14, 2008. ETS must receive registration by May 15, 2008. Test information, including registration forms and study materials are available on the ETS website: www.ets.org/parapro.

SOCIAL STORIES: Teaching Children with Developmental Disabilities Appropriate Social Interactions



Social stories are an effective tool to help students with Autism or other developmental disabilities understand appropriate social interactions. A Social Story is a short description of a social situation written from the student's perspective with emphasis on social cues, reactions the student might expect, and actions that might be expected of him. With the goal of increasing the student's understanding and making him/her more comfortable in a given

situation, social stories can be written about any event that a student finds challenging.

After determining which specific activity the student needs to understand, social stories use four types of sentences that define and describe the activity from various perspectives. This social story describes what will happen at the end of recess:

Descriptive Sentence: The bell rings

for the children to come in from recess. The children go to their classroom where the teacher reads a story.

Directive Sentence: I am playing during recess. The bell rings for me to come in. I stop playing and line up to come in. I follow the other children and quietly go to the classroom.

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THE COMPASS CORNER



THE COMPASS is a comprehensive series of professional development modules designed specifically for paraprofessionals. Developed by CREC's own knowledgeable consultants, modules present information and strategies for paraprofessionals to be more effective in working with their students.

THE COMPASS contains both Basic and Advanced Modules. The Basic Modules, which are sold as a unit, cover topics such as:

- Roles & Responsibilities
- Communication
- Managing Behaviors
- Ethics and Legal Issues
- Instructional Strategies

For a complete description of **THE COMPASS** and presentation options for your district, please go to www.crec.org/paraprofessional.

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When we get to the classroom, I go to my desk and sit down. I listen as my teacher reads a story.

Perspective Sentence: When the bell rings for recess to end, the teacher is happy to see all the children line up quietly and walk to their classroom. Many children are excited that they get to hear a story. The teacher likes to see the children listen. The teacher likes it when children are quiet during the story.

Control Sentence: I remember that the bell means it's time for recess to end by thinking of a teapot. I know that when it whistles, the water is done. The bell is like the whistle; when it rings, recess is done.

Social stories are reviewed with the student frequently. The story should be shared with the entire educational team who works with the student. As the student masters the skill, stories can be faded or modified to incorporate new skills. Try this effective tool for teaching appropriate social interactions today.

To subscribe to **THE COMPASS NEWSLETTER**, please visit www.crec.org/paraprofessional. For questions or assistance with the content of this newsletter, please contact Tricia Silva at 860.524.4085.

TRANSITION TO PARAPROFESSIONAL



*Elizabeth Berry -
Graduate of
2008 Transition
to Employment as
a Paraprofessional
Training Program*

Elizabeth Berry, a paraprofessional and a recent graduate of Transition to Employment as a Paraprofessional training program, was excited to know that by participating in this program she could have a positive impact on the lives of children.

The Transition to Employment as a Paraprofessional training program is a partnership between CREC and Workforce Alliance to prepare adult learners to become educational paraprofessionals. Selected students attend a 14 week training program where they receive academic instruction in math, reading, and writing in order to build their skills to help them pass the Parapro exam. Additionally, **THE COMPASS** curriculum is presented to students to provide a strong base for their 120+ hour classroom internship. Assisting teachers in all aspects of the school day, from academics to lesson

implementation, gives students practical, real-world experience for work as a paraprofessional.

During her training, Elizabeth often stated that the skills she was learning would be useful not only in the classroom but with her own daughter as well. Her internship supervisor, CREC consultant Jan Tirinzone, received only positive feedback on her skills and job performance.

Putting forth her best effort in all aspects of the training program enabled Elizabeth to pass the Parapro exam. As a result of her dedication and hard work, Elizabeth was recently hired as a paraprofessional at Cedarhurst School in Hamden, CT.

Elizabeth expressed her gratitude to the program staff. "I can't thank CREC and Workforce Alliance enough for all they have done for me. I would not have had an opportunity to work at such a prestigious school."

