



teacher assistants

**RI Department of Education
Policy and Professional Development Infrastructure
For Teacher Assistants
2005-06**

★About Us

The RI Department of Education (RIDE) has established a policy and professional development infrastructure related to teacher assistants. This infrastructure is built on a philosophy recognizing the important role of teacher assistants working with teachers to help students succeed in educational settings. This philosophy is depicted in our logo that shows the teacher as being responsible for the "big picture" (the box) including providing direction and supervision for teacher assistants. The teacher assistant is a reflection of the teacher, with a role different from and complementary to the teacher. Working as an instructional team, the star of their focus is the student whom they support in achieving at high levels.

Beginning in the mid-1990's, RIDE began a multi-faceted approach to raising teacher assistant quality. RIDE's approach has focused on these goals:

- Ensuring that teacher assistants are effective partners on the instructional team and are recognized as valued professional colleagues as RI strives to ensure high levels of learning and performance for ALL students.
- Forging partnerships with teacher assistants, unions, administrators, higher education, teachers, teacher assistant training programs, families and other key stakeholders
- Establishing a teacher assistant policy and professional development infrastructure perceived as effective and attainable.

RIDE has supported the development of this infrastructure with IDEA, State, Title I and Title II funds. These resources support a part-time staff through the RI Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) at RI College as well as various activities such as those described in this document. Within RIDE, primary responsibility for teacher assistants rests with the Office of Educator Quality and Certification. A team of staff from this office, the Office of Special Populations, Title I and RITAP coordinates RIDE policy and support activities to ensure consistency and comprehensiveness applicable to a broad audience. RIDE solicits input on infrastructure issues through stakeholder task forces on various topics, meetings with key groups, and Listservs.

This infrastructure is supporting districts and related agencies in employing qualified teacher assistants and using them appropriately. The infrastructure includes multiple components, support materials for which are located on the teacher assistant website at www.ritap.org/ta. These components that correspond to website "menu items/webpages" include:

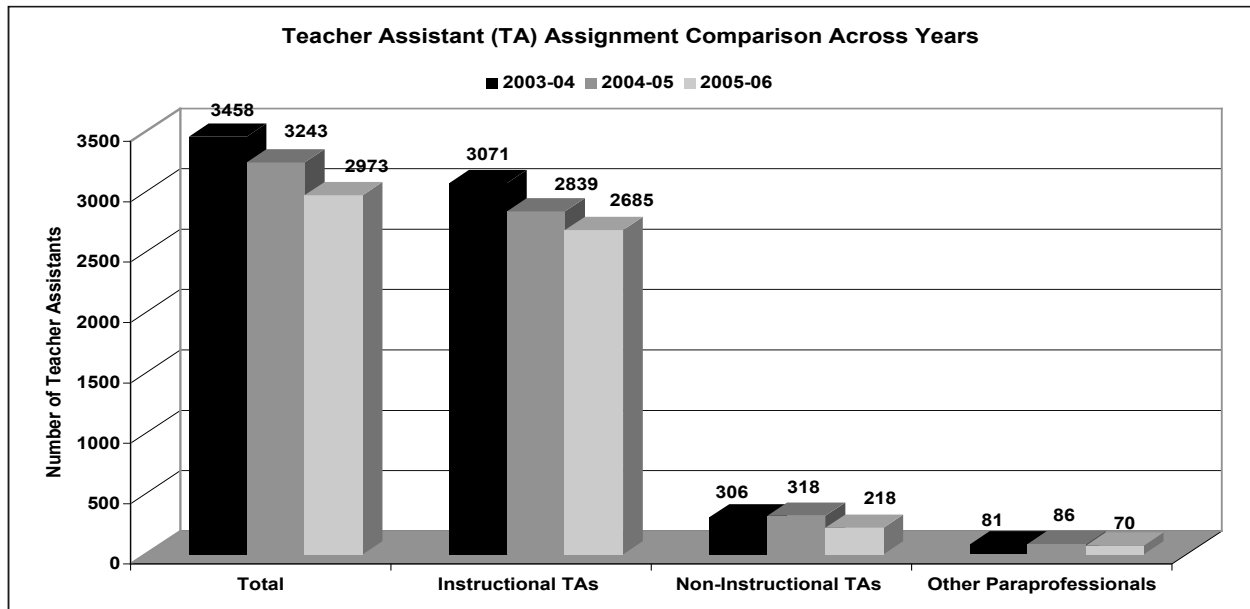
- About Us – This webpage on the teacher assistant website includes the RIDE study described below. It also includes this document and an accompanying PowerPoint.
- Legal Requirements
- ParaPro Assessment
- Training Opportunities
- Resources
- Networking

RIDE Annual Teacher Assistant (TA) Survey - During 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06, RIDE surveyed districts and related agencies (educational collaboratives, state operated programs and charter schools) to collect data on the number, assignment and qualifications of all TAs and to gather information on district policy and practice related to: guidelines for TA assignment, job descriptions, TA orientation, supporting teachers regarding effective TA use, instructional team supports, TA performance evaluation, professional development, ParaPro preparation and testing supports, career ladder and, since 2005, TA recruitment, retention and substitutes. There has been a 100% response rate all three years. Aggregate data is used to determine the current level of these practices in the state and needs for further infrastructure development. Findings are as follows.

1. **Respondents:** Survey respondents were Teacher Assistant (TA) Contacts that RIDE has asked each district/agency to identify. The TA Contact is RIDE’s primary communication contact. In many instances, RIDE requests that the TA Contact copy and share information with TA and related district personnel, e.g., quarterly TA Newsletter, workshop registrations, etc. The staff/position assigned as TA Contact varies. The most common positions of TA contacts are Human Resources Personnel; Director/Assistant Director of Pupil Personnel/Student Services/Director of Special Education; Director of Administration/Finance/ Business Manager; and Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent.

2. Data on TA Assignments (Percentages Rounded)

TA Assignment FTEs	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005
Instructional TAs	3,070.6 - 89% of all TAs/paraprofessionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2148.5 or 70% serve children with disabilities. • Rest in general education, Title I or other roles. 	2,838.6 - 88% of all TAs/paraprofessionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2124 or 75% serve children with disabilities. • Rest in general education, Title I or other roles. 	2,685.4 – 91% of all TAs/paraprofessionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2062.5 or 77% serve children with disabilities • Rest in general education, Title 1 or other roles
Non-Instructional TAs	306 (9% of all TAs/paraprofessionals)	318 (10% of all TAs/paraprofessionals)	218.05 (7% of all TAs/paraprofessionals) – In prior years, Bus Aides and Clerical Aides were included in this category. In 2005, they were not. This appears to be the major reason for the decline.
Other Paraprofessionals, e.g., therapy assistants	81 (2% of all TAs/paraprofessionals)	86.2 (2% of all TAs/paraprofessionals)	69.5 (2% of all TAs/paraprofessionals)
TOTAL	3,457.6 Total TA/Paraprofessional FTE positions	3,242.8 Total TA/Paraprofessional FTE positions	2,972.95 Total TA/Paraprofessional FTE positions*

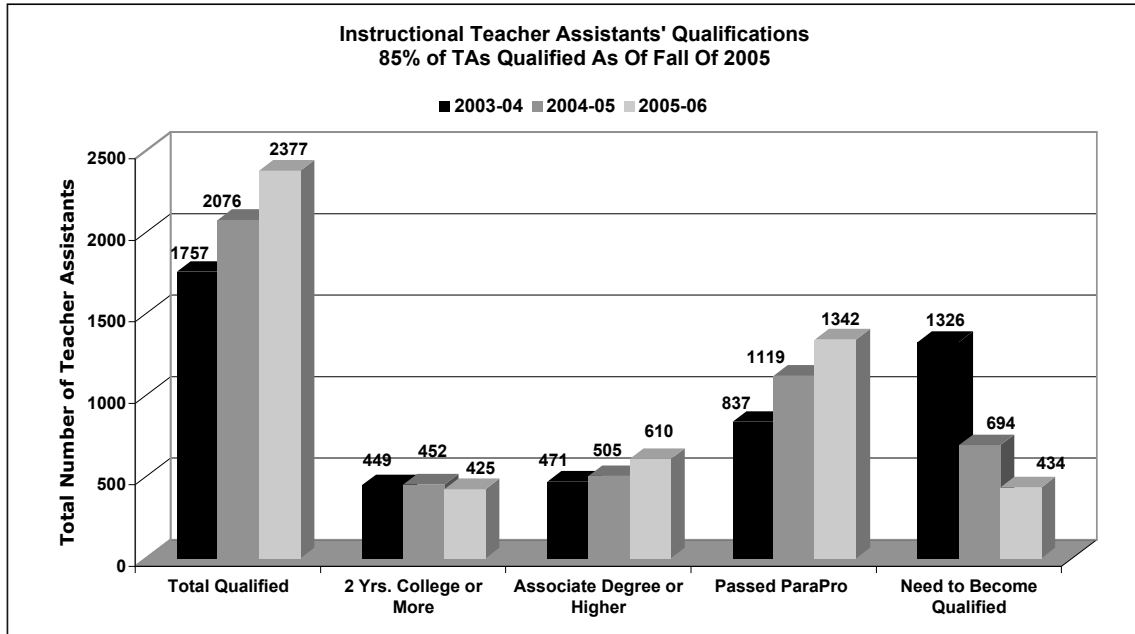


3. **Data on Instructional TA Qualifications** (Data on qualifications of non-instructional TAs and other paraprofessionals not requested)

TA Qualifications*	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005
2 years (48 credit hours) or more college**	449	452	425**
Associates degree or higher (including bachelors & masters)**	471	505	610**
Have passed ParaPro Assessment	837	1,119	1,342
TOTAL QUALIFIED	1,757 – 57% Qualified	2,076 – 75% Qualified	2,377 – 85% Qualified
Still need to meet legally required qualifications by 2006.	1,326 Of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 782 (59%) TAs in districts that offer ParaPro training plus Internet-Based ParaPro test in-district or through arrangements with their union. • 544 (41%) remaining TAs can access ParaPro assessment from another district or collaborative. 	694 Of these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 332 (48%) TAs in districts that offer ParaPro training plus Internet-Based ParaPro test in-district or through arrangements with their union. • 362 (52%) remaining TAs can access ParaPro assessment from another district or collaborative. 	434 Districts have various strategies in place to ensure all TAs are qualified by 2006 – many often including collaboration with their respective unions. Strategies include: thorough review of TA qualifications and documentation; notifying TAs of these qualifications, timelines and consequences of not being qualified by the deadline; provision of training, tutoring, study groups, study materials, etc.; support in taking the ParaPro, e.g., providing in district or through arrangements with another testing source, covering the cost of test administration (<i>State law requires, “The employer shall pay for up to two (2) test administration fees for all teacher assistants hired prior to July 1, 2003.”</i>)

* This is a partial listing of TA qualifications. A complete listing of the qualifications appears in this document under Legal Requirements.

** Two districts require all of their instructional TAs to have 2 years+ of college or an associates degree or higher. In 2003-04 and 2004-05, these two districts reported all of their TAs as a combined grouping under 2 years+ of college. In 2005-06, one of these districts broke the data out into these 2 sets of qualifications and, in fact, most of their TAs hold associates degree or higher.



4. Policy and Practice Supports for TAs and the Instructional Teams with Which TAs Work – The survey asks for information on local TA related policy and practice organized into broad categories as listed below. In the first year of the survey (2003-04), these categories appeared as open-ended questions. 2003 survey responses, RIDE Guidelines and best practice research were used in 2004-05 to establish a variety of policies and practices that respondents could check along with “other”. This same format was used in 2005-06 so that 2004-05 and 2005-06 could be compared.

The following provides summary data across the broad policy and practice categories. Data are reported here for 2004-05 and 2005-06 only given it was not possible to compare these data with 2003-04 data due to survey design. Under each of these broad categories, respondents were asked to check one or more specific items that applied to them. It was not an expectation that respondents check all items in a category. In fact, in some categories, some items were mutually exclusive. In other categories, a respondent might have legitimately checked all items as applicable locally. Each respondent was recorded as having policies and practices in each category if they checked one or more items in a category. Over these two years, data show an increase in every category related to the establishment of TA related policy and practice. The full report appearing on the About Us webpage at www.ritap.org/ta includes comprehensive findings on all policies and practice items under each category.

TA Policy and Practice Categories	2004-05 51 Respondents	2005-06 52 Respondents
<u>Guidelines For TA Assignment:</u> Have local guidelines for deciding when a TA is needed for a child or class	44 (86%)	51 (98%)
<u>Job Descriptions:</u> Have TA job descriptions of some type	30 (59%)	51 (98%)
<u>TA Orientation:</u> Use some type of process for orientating TAs in new assignments	28 (55%)	50 (96%)
<u>Training Teachers On Effective TA Use:</u> Have training/other strategies to help teachers know how to work effectively with TAs including teachers' providing adequate supervision and support to TAs in implementing instruction under their direction.	22 (43%)	28 (53%)

TA Policy and Practice Categories	2004-05 51 Respondents	2005-06 52 Respondents
<u>Instructional Team Supports</u> : Have strategies to support teachers and TAs in working as instructional teams (including provisions for planning time and ongoing communication)	31 (61%)	49 (94%)
<u>TA Performance Evaluation</u> : Have some type of process to evaluate TAs in a way that supports their professional growth	30 (59%)	42 (81%)
<u>Professional Development</u> : Have some type of professional development supports available for TAs	37 (73%)	52 (100%)
<u>ParaPro</u> : Provide some type of supports for TAs related to the ParaPro Assessment	32 (63%)	44 (85%)
<u>Career Ladder</u> : Have some type of career ladder or related supports for TAs	18 (35%)	41 (79%)
<u>TA Recruitment</u> : Have effective strategies for recruiting qualified TAs.	NA in 2004-05	22 (42%)
<u>TA Retention</u> : Have effective strategies for retaining qualified TAs.	NA in 2004-05	18 (35%)
<u>TA Substitute Use</u> : Have effective strategies for finding qualified substitute TAs. (<i>RIGL 16-11.2-6 requires that substitute TAs who substitute as a TA for more than twenty (20) days during any school year meet all pre-employment TA qualifications.</i>)	NA in 2004-05	7 (14%)

★ Legal Requirements

RI law (RIGL 16-11.2) establishes requirements for the employment, training and use of teacher assistants. In July 2003, the RI General Assembly amended state law to establish a uniform state standard for the qualifications of all instructional teacher assistants regardless of position title or funding source. Instructional teacher assistants are persons employed to provide instructional or other direct services related to the school’s curriculum to students (and/or their parents/legal guardians) under the supervision and direction of the classroom teacher or other appropriately certified staff. Instructional teacher assistant employment qualifications are:

- Be of good character
- High school diploma OR general equivalency
- For those hired after January 1, 1999, successful completion of a RIDE approved Teacher Assistant Training Program. Exceptions: (1) teacher assistant certification in another state or (2) associate’s or bachelor’s degree and completion of coursework or other training consistent with RI state standards.
- Meet one of the following 3 requirements:
 1. Completed at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education; OR
 2. Obtained an associate’s or higher degree; OR
 3. Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate, through a formal State or local academic assessment: knowledge and ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics; OR reading, writing, and mathematics readiness.

Non-instructional teacher assistants are persons employed as translators, solely involved in parental involvement activities, solely in non-instructional roles, e.g., cafeteria and playground supervision, personal care services, non-instructional computer assistance or other non-instructional direct services to students (and/or their parents/legal guardians) under the supervision and direction of the classroom teacher or other appropriately certified staff. Qualifications are:

- Be of good character
- High school diploma OR general equivalency
- For those hired after January 1, 1999, successful completion of a RIDE approved Teacher Assistant Training Program. Exceptions: (1) teacher assistant certification in another state or (2) associate’s or bachelor’s degree and completion of coursework or other training consistent with RI state standards.
- Proficiency in English and a language other than English for individuals serving as translators to enhance the participation of limited English proficient students.

Paraprofessionals other than teacher assistants (e.g., assistants to Physical Therapists, Speech/Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, etc.) must meet those qualifications recognized by RIDE for the particular position.

RIDE state standards identify entry-level competencies for teacher assistants that must be taught in RIDE approved Teacher Assistant Training Programs. Teacher assistants hired since January 1, 1999 must have completed one of these programs. State standards identify knowledge and skills in the following 4 areas:

- Professionalism in communication and collaboration among members of the school community, including colleagues, families, and related agencies
- Instructional opportunities
- Learning environment that encourages appropriate standards of behavior, positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation
- Health, safety, and emergency procedures

RIDE has also developed state guidelines that address:

- Teacher Assistants Working with Students Who have English as a Second Language
- Teacher Assistants Working under the Supervision of a Classroom Teacher with Students with Speech/Language Impairments
- Teacher Assistants Who Support Students with Behaviors that Interfere with Learning and/or Relationships
- Instructional Teams, Supervision and Performance Evaluation related to Teacher Assistants
- In Spring 2006, RIDE is working through a task force to develop guidelines for Teacher Assistants Assisting with Community-Based Instruction.

Under state law, school districts have the obligation to identify job specific competencies needed for teacher assistant assignments and to articulate these in job descriptions. They are to provide teacher assistants with ongoing professional development related to those job specific duties and local policies and procedures governing those duties. School districts must also include teacher assistants in a meaningful way in school district plans related to the RI's Comprehensive Education Strategy, including school improvement plans and professional development plans.

The Legal Requirements webpage of the teacher assistant website include:

- Checklists for Reviewing Teacher Assistant Qualifications
- Summary of State and Federal Requirements for Teacher Assistant Qualifications RI
- RIDE Program Standards for Teacher Assistants and Guidelines Related to Teacher Assistants: Professional Development, Instructional Teams, Supervision and Performance Evaluation
- Q & A Related to State and Federal Requirements for Teacher Assistant Qualifications and Use, RI Department of Education
- A Q & A developed by the U.S. Department of Education, *Title I Paraprofessionals: Non-Regulatory Guidance, March 1, 2004*
- Linkage to the federal regulations for Title I (No Child Left Behind – NCLB)
- Qualifications for Paraprofessionals Other Than Instructional and Non-Instructional Teacher Assistants

★ParaPro Assessment

One option for meeting state qualifications for instructional teacher assistants is demonstrating, through a formal state or local academic assessment: knowledge and ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics; OR reading, writing, and mathematics readiness. RIDE recognizes a passing score of 461 on the ParaPro Assessment developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) as the state academic assessment. The test is offered in two versions: Paper and Pencil Version offered by ETS six times a year (on Saturdays) and an Internet-Based assessment offered by some school districts. The teacher assistant website provides:

- ParaPro Assessment Fact Sheet
- ParaPro Awareness Training Module including Module Overview and Process Agenda, Overheads and Handouts

- Handout regarding ParaPro Assessment and Training Availability Through RI School Districts and Related Agencies
- Linkage to the ETS/ParaPro website
- ParaPro Knowledge & Skill Areas, a handout that lists knowledge & skills tested on the ParaPro Assessment.
- ParaPro Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities or Whose Primary Language is Not English

★ Training Opportunities

Pre-Employment Training Programs - RI has approximately 20 RIDE Approved Teacher Assistant Training Programs that provide training consistent with state standards for persons interested in being employed as a teacher assistant. Programs are provided by a number of entities: community college, school districts, educational collaboratives, career/technical programs, adult education, high schools, private schools and agencies, and individual consultants. Some programs are exclusively for “in-house” staff or for high school students. However, most are post-secondary programs available to any qualified applicant. A “typical” training program is 30-40 hours over multiple weeks, most involving classes and practica/field placement, with an increasing number requiring portfolios. The average cost is generally in the \$150-\$270 range. Program participants generally pay this fee. Some are offered free or at reduced cost to employees of the entity operating the program. RIDE supports and facilitates communication among these programs through mailings, a listserv, annual networking session and professional development materials available on loan to them. The RIDE Teacher Assistant Training Program Approval Process includes submission of an application and interview with RIDE staff. Programs are required to annually update program profiles. Program approval is good for 3 years after which programs may submit an application for program renewal. This renewal process requires them to update their initial application and program profile and to submit data on program participation and information related to evaluation of program effectiveness. The teacher assistant website includes a directory of profiles of approved programs along with a description of the RIDE process for training program approval and required forms.

Regional Teacher Assistant Networks - RIDE sponsors regional networks to provide teacher assistants the opportunity for professional development and the chance to network with teacher assistants from other districts. Networks meet three (3) times each school year (fall, winter and spring) reaching 200+ teacher assistants each “season”. Sessions are held in 5 locations throughout the state. Training topics are based on annual needs assessment. Sessions are 4:00-6:00 with light refreshments. Participants receive a certificate of attendance at each session and are encouraged to place a copy in their personnel records. Participation requires registration using a flyer that is circulated with the RIDE quarterly Teacher Assistant Newsletter and that is available on the teacher assistant website where on-line registration is available.

Training on Working under the Supervision of a Classroom Teacher with Students with Speech/Language Impairments - RIDE sponsors training on competencies articulated in state guidelines on this issue. This training is available at no cost to the participants.

- *Speech/Language Training I for Teacher Assistants: Core Competencies* - This course of 5 weekly workshops of 3 hours each trains teacher assistants in competencies specified in State Guidelines. The 5 workshop topics are (a) speech/language development/ disorders, (b) roles and responsibilities of collaboration, (c) use of assistive technology/ positioning concerns, (d) strategies and modifications to enhance learning and (e) effects on social and academic performance.
- *Speech/Language Training II for Teacher Assistants: Articulation/Voice, Fluency and Multicultural Considerations* - This 3 week course of 2 hours per week uses a format of lecture and hands-on group discussion. The 3 workshop topics are: (1) Articulation/Voice, (2) Fluency and (3) Multicultural Considerations.

Training on Supporting Students with Behaviors that Interfere with Learning and/or Relationships - RIDE sponsors training on competencies articulated in state guidelines on this issue. This training is available at no cost to the participants. Session 1 compares team models throughout the state, look at cultural diversity and its implications for classroom behaviors, and discuss approaches to improving communication and advocacy. Session 2 focuses on instructional strategies for select behavioral disorders, the referral process and the Functional Behavior Assessment, the design and management of

individualized behavior programs, and working effectively with teachers to promote an orderly and safe learning environment. Session 3 examines the function of behavior with further reference to the Functional Behavior Assessment, documentation and record keeping tools, social skills programs, and strategies for teaching replacement behaviors. Session 4 includes components of the cycle of escalation and de-escalation, medications and their side effects, resources for restraint training, documentation and reporting, and crisis intervention.

Training For Teachers on Effective TA Use – Free for Districts and Tailored to Their Needs - Many teachers are confused about the changes in requirements for TAs, as well as their own responsibilities for providing TA supervision and direction as required by law. For many teachers, using TAs in a supportive and efficient way is a new area. They may be confused about how to clarify with their TA respective roles and responsibilities. Teachers may want strategies on how teachers and TAs plan and communicate with each other as an effective instructional team. Teachers may wonder about TAs and their interactions with families, how to encourage confidentiality, and how to provide job-specific support so that TAs know how to implement direction that the teacher provides to them.

RIDE is pleased to make presenters available to train teachers and/or teacher/teacher assistant teams on the Effective Use of TAs in both regular education and special education classrooms. The presenters are available, within grant limitations, to come to your district at no cost and tailor the training to meet your needs. RIDE Professional Development Credits (PDCs) are available. Interested persons should contact the presenters through www.ritap.org/ta on the Training Opportunities webpage.

Training for Perspective Teachers on Effective TA Use – Free for Teacher Preparation Higher Education Programs and Tailored to Their Needs - RIDE is pleased to continue to make it possible for Dr. Debbie Goessling, Providence College, to support teacher education programs in training perspective teachers on how to work with TAs in both regular education and special education classrooms. Her support consists of a presentation to the class, leaving handouts, articles, teaching activities, and overheads for the instructor that he/she can use for follow-up or for use with other classes. Dr. Goessling addresses college courses for a wide audience: early childhood educators, elementary and secondary teachers, special educators and administrators. Examples of classes at which she has presented this material over the last 2 years include:

- Secondary Methods Class at Providence College
- Elementary Student Teaching Seminar at RI College
- Early Childhood Student Teaching Seminar at RI College
- 2 Special Education Methods classes at Salve Regina
- CCRI Child Development Program
- Session with Providence College student teachers at undergraduate & graduate levels in regular & special education, elementary & secondary assignments

Interested persons should contact Debbie through www.ritap.org/ta on the Training Opportunities webpage or at dgoesslg@providence.edu or 401-865-1963.

Other Training Opportunities - The teacher assistant website provides information on the training described above as well as information on training opportunities such as:

- National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals
- Free and Low Cost Training Opportunities for Teacher Assistants in RI

Career Advancement - The teacher assistant website provides information on:

- Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) Supports for TAs Pursuing Associate Degrees including
 1. Field Placements for Persons Working in the Field
 2. Portfolio Assessment to Get Credit for Prior Learning
 3. Credit for RI Department of Education (RIDE) Affiliated Training
 4. Flexible Course Offerings including varied locations, work-friendly schedules, facilitated online courses, and courses over TV
- Teacher Assistant Career Advancement Opportunities in Special Education - *The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities* at RI College (RIC) can help teacher assistants and others interested in becoming special education teachers. Visit the website at <http://www.RISpecialEdCareers.net>.

Online Professional Development (PD) for TAs - Online PD is an effective way to access training in a way to fit your schedule as it is generally available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week using *any* Internet connection: school, home, community library, etc. The TA website provides links to a variety of online PD appropriate for TAs & those who work with them – some at no cost & some at low cost.

★Resources

Teacher Assistant Newsletter – RIDE publishes a quarterly newsletter. Its purpose: to provide up-to-date information on policy, practice and personnel development activities. The newsletter is available on the teacher assistant website and is emailed to: School District Superintendents, Principals, Human Resources Directors, Special Education Directors, Title I Directors, and Staff identified as Teacher Assistant Contacts; State and Local Union Representatives; Teacher Preparation Programs; Approved Teacher Assistant Training Programs; Education Collaboratives; and Others Who Request to Be on the Teacher Assistant Mailing List (This list numbers over 1600, the majority of which are teacher assistants).

Annotated Bibliography of Teacher Assistant Resources – This listing includes books, training modules, on-line training and related resources compiled by RITAP. Resources intended to support school districts and other entities in developing effective policy and practice and in providing professional development for teacher assistants and persons working with them. RIDE has purchased many of the resources listed in this bibliography and makes them available on loan for through 6 locations throughout the state.

Worksheets Teachers and Teacher Assistants Can Use to Improve Teamwork – The teacher assistant website includes worksheets to support the implementation of State Guidelines related to Instructional Teams, Supervision and Performance Evaluation related to Teacher Assistants. Dr. Nancy French developed these worksheets in conjunction with a RIDE-sponsored statewide session in October 1999 for school district teams on preparing teachers to work with teacher assistants as effective instructional teams. Worksheets include:

- Professional/Program/Student Needs Inventory
- Personalized Job Description for Paraeducator
- Paraeducator Skills/Confidence Inventory
- Paraeducator Growth and Development Plan
- Paraeducator Performance Rating
- Paraeducator's Work Style
- Professional's Work Style
- Work Style Score Sheet

Training Module for Teacher Assistants Who Work with Students Who Have English As a Second Language – Available on the teacher assistant website, this module trains teacher assistants in competencies specified in RI State Guidelines on this topic. It has easy-to-follow scripts for the trainer with lecture notes and step-by-step activities, handouts and overhead masters. The module is divided into 7 parts, all available in PDF for downloading. Some components are appropriate for use with both teachers and TAs. Some components can be modified for use with any type of teacher assistant, not just teacher assistants working with students who have English as a second language.

Substitute Folder for Teachers and Teacher Assistants – This portfolio provides resources that school personnel can adapt to their individual situations to facilitate: communication and teamwork among teachers and teacher assistants and continuity of instruction when teachers or teacher assistants are absent. These resources include: Helpful Forms, School Specific Information, Special Education Resources, Professional Information and RIDE and District Information.

Effective Use of Teacher Assistants – A Module for Policy and Practice Development – This module is targeted for persons in a leadership capacity related to TAs. It includes:

- Module document
- PowerPoint presentation
- Web-based component
- Checklist for Policies & Practices on Effective TA Use that districts can use as a self-assessment & basis for making improvements.

The module can be used as an auto-instructional resource by individuals or groups wishing to do research, program self-assessment & program improvement related to TA legal requirements, policy & practice. It can also be used as a training tool. Module sections include:

- How to Use this Module
- Research Related To Teacher Assistants
- Legal Requirements Related To Teacher Assistants And Other Paraprofessionals
- Instructional Team Model
- Job Descriptions For Teacher Assistants
- Considerations For Assigning Teacher Assistants
- Orientation Of Teacher Assistants
- Professional Development For Instructional Team Members
- Supervision Of Teacher Assistants
- Performance Evaluation Of Teacher Assistants
- Orientation Exercise for Effective Use of Teacher Assistants Module
- Guided Discussion
- Bibliography

Most of the module sections are organized as follows:

- Applicable Legal Requirements and State Guidelines
- Implementation Strategies Reported in the Literature and/or Reported by RI Districts and Related Agencies in the 2003-04 RIDE Survey
- Resources on or through the Teacher Assistant Website

Additional resources on the Resources Webpage of the Teacher Assistant Website include:

- TA Job Descriptions - Access a variety of materials designed to assist districts & related programs in developing effective job descriptions for TAs including information on TA job description requirements & state guidelines, examples of TA job descriptions in RI districts & related agencies, a job description format & supports for job description development.
- National Skill Standards - The Education & Training Voluntary Partnership (ETVP) under the Nat'l Skill Standards Board has developed Skill Standards for Frontline Workers in Education & Training: Paraprofessionals, Paraeducators, TAs, Education Assistants, & Child Care Workers Working in General Education, Special Education & Early Childhood Care & Education.
- Decision-Making Model for Natural Supports &/or Supplementary Aides or Services – This model & form have been developed by RIDE as a support in determining a student's need for natural supports &/or supplementary aides or services that may or may not include TA assignment.
- Student Contract - Research shows that TA use, particularly 1:1 TAs, can sometimes cause a student with special needs to become dependent on the TA. A student contract is one way to support a student in making personal decisions about his/her education & encourage self-determination.
- Training Module for TAs Who Work with Students Who Have English As a Second Language – This module trains TAs in competencies specified in RI State Guidelines for TAs Working Students who Have English as a Second Language.
- Sharing District-Developed Resources – Provides access to TA-related forms, handbooks, etc. from various RI districts & related programs & instructions for submitting products to share.

★Networking

Teacher Assistant Contacts in School Districts and Related Agencies – RIDE has identified a person who is the lead contact for teacher assistants in each RI school district, education collaboratives and related agencies. A document providing this contact information is available on the teacher assistant website.

Professional Development Networks – These networks in RI address various topics, e.g., Autism, IEPs. Each network is open to a variety of personnel, including teacher assistants.

Other Networking – As noted above, RIDE makes it possible for networking among a variety of persons on a routine basis, e.g., Teacher Assistant Networks, RIDE Approved Teacher Assistant Training Programs. The teacher assistant website also makes it possible for interested persons to link to a variety of teacher assistant related websites

★ Contact Us

This infrastructure has been put in place over time. It continues to grow commiserate with the growth in recognition and respect for the important role teacher assistants play in supporting teaching and learning. The impact of this infrastructure is reflected in the comment of a teacher assistant participating in the Teacher Assistant Networks. She commented that she has come to realize “that assistants throughout the state share the same concerns and issues perhaps resulting from transitions taking place in the role as assistants. (This is) one more step in the process of my building background and experience to be as effective in my job as I can. It is satisfying to know that all of these things are recognized by professional educators and that positive steps are being taken” to support teacher assistants, students, teachers and other professionals, and parents with whom assistants work.

For more information, contact:

Charlotte Diffendale; Office of Educator Quality and Certification; RI Department of Education; 255 Westminster Street, Room 410; Providence, RI 02903; Phone: 401/222-8808; Fax: 401/222-2048; email: Charlotte.Diffendale@ride.ri.gov

Peggy Hayden; RI Technical Assistance Project at RI College; 34 Sea Breeze Lane; Bristol, RI 02809; Phone: 401/253-3275; email: phayden@fctvplus.net.