

Professional Development for Teacher Assistants: Requirements & Resources – August 2009

It is critical that all educators engage in ongoing professional development (PD) to ensure they have up-to-date knowledge & skills to help students achieve at high levels. The following reviews TA PD requirements & resources. For more information, visit the [TA website at www.ritap.org/ta](http://www.ritap.org/ta).

★**Pre-Employment Training** – All instructional & non-instructional TAs hired after 1/1/99 must complete a RI Department of Education (RIDE) Approved TA Training Program (as well as meeting other qualifications) prior to employment. The TA website Training Opportunities webpage has a TA Training Program Directory & profiles of each training program. The Legal Requirement webpage has information on State & Federal Requirements for TA Qualifications & Use.

★**TA PD Requirements** – Once on the job, state law requires, “(a) As a condition of continued employment every person employed as a TA shall participate in ongoing PD.”

- This means that the TA must engage in PD each year.
- State law does not identify a minimum # of TA PD hours each year but most districts do have annual minimums.
- PD needs to be related to the TA’s work assignment – as determined locally by the district/employer. RIDE Guidelines identify competencies to support districts in providing PD for TAs in various specific work assignments. Access RIDE Standards & Guidelines on the Legal Requirements webpage on the TA website.
- PD that the TA takes can include both RIDE approved PD & PD that is not RIDE approved, e.g., training that they may take outside the district, online PD, etc. (see listing of PD options below). Although TA PD does NOT need to be RIDE approved, if the PD is RIDE approved (with a RIDE PD Credit Report Code #), it is easier to enter TA PD data into the RICERT TA system (see “Documenting TA PD” below).
- TA PD can include:
 1. College & university coursework - Successful completion of individual undergraduate or graduate level courses from accredited two or four year colleges or universities.
 2. Conference/workshops & training sessions - Attending professional institutes, training series, audited courses, or workshops provided by the district, a collaborative, RIDE or other state agencies, professional associations, or other PD providers.
 3. District sponsored training
 4. Teacher assistant networks - Offered by RIDE or other substantive learning activities provided through professional, education-focused networks at the local, state, or national level.
 5. Improvement Processes - Participation in a variety of education-related, ongoing groups, such as school improvement teams, advisory boards, committees, school site visit teams, e.g., SALT Visiting Teams, etc.
 6. Professional Leadership - Completion of an accepted national certification process or authoring publications in a professional journal or doing presentations at education-related conferences.
 7. On-Line Training/PD - Some resources for this are identified on the Training Opportunities webpage of the TA website at <http://www.ritap.org/ta>

★**Documenting TA PD** - State law requires districts/programs to “maintain records on TA’s completion of: (1) Training for the work assignment; (2) Continuing education & relevant coursework...” Instituted in 2006-07, RIDE’s RICERT TA system is a computer-based system for districts/programs to use in maintaining records on TA qualifications, assignments & PD. Access information & resources for RICERT TA on the TA website on the Resources webpage. To document their PD, TAs should:

- Enter information on the PD they take into the RICERT TA System (assuming that this system is in place in the district). A “Worksheet for Professional Development Activity Documentation on RICERT TA” that explains how to do that is available on the RICERT TA webpage of the TA website).
- Get documentation of all PD they complete, keep a copy for their own files & follow district procedures concerning PD verification. Likely, this would entail having the TA submit a certificate, PDC Credit report or other documentation to someone at central office who oversees RICERT TA. Check with your district/program to be sure.

The district/program then uses the RICERT TA system & the TA’s documentation to verify the TA’s PD.

★Setting TA PD Goals

- On an individual TA basis - Some districts use performance evaluation as a process to assess TA strengths & needs & set PD goals. This is recommended in RIDE Guidelines. TAs can also work with their teachers &/or administrators to identify PD goals appropriate to the TA job assignment.
- On a district/program-wide basis – The RICERT TA system provides a means for each TA to identify “PD interests”. The RICERT TA system then provides a way for the district/program to generate a report identifying the PD topic of interest & the number of TAs who identify that interest (#s – not actual names of TAs). This information can assist the district/program in planning TA PD.

★**Accessing PD By or Through Your District** –Districts provide various PD supports such as TA specific training in-district, encouraging TAs to attend in-district teacher in-service training, funding TAs to attend job-related training out-of-district, providing TAs with PD days each year, TA orientation strategies, study groups, etc. Districts should consider including TA PD in their Consolidated Resources Plans (CRPs). TA PD funding sources include: Title I; Title II, Part A, Improving Teacher Quality State Grants; Title III, Part A, the English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, & Academic Achievement Act; Title V, Part A, Innovative Programs; Title VII, Part A, subpart 7, the Indian Education Program; IDEA, Part B; & Article 18 (31).

★**TA Networks** – TA Networks provide TAs with PD & the chance to network with TAs from other districts. Networks meet 3 times each school year (Fall, Winter & Spring) reaching 200+ TAs each “season”. Sessions are 4:00-6:00 with light refreshments. Although networks are designed particularly for TAs, we welcome teachers, administrators & others interested in TAs & the instructional teams on which they serve. TA Networks provide RIDE approved professional development. At the network, you will get a RIDE Professional Development Credit Report. This is for your records & for you to share with your district/employer to document your professional development. TAs should also document their professional development in the RICERT TA system. TA Networks are a partnership of the Educational Collaboratives & RIDE. Collaboratives serve as “Network Sponsors”. This means that you:

- Register through the Collaborative Network Sponsors (NOT through the TA website)
- Attend the session at the Collaborative Network Sponsor of your choosing at East Bay Collaborative (Warren), West Bay Collaborative (Warwick), Northern RI Collaborative (Lincoln) or Southern RI Collaborative (North Kingstown).

★**Presenters for TA PD** – Information on individuals & organizations with whom districts/programs may choose to make arrangements for local TA PD is available on the TA website, Training Opportunities webpage.

★**ParaPro Training** - The TA website ParaPro webpage contains a handout entitled, ParaPro Training & Testing Resources in RI that is updated whenever new training or testing information is received.

★**Staying Informed** – Go to the TA website for updates. Get on RIDE’s TA Master Email List by registering on the TA website Resources webpage. Through being on this email list, you will get RIDE’s quarterly TA newsletter & routine emails about PD opportunities, resources, policy updates, etc.

★**TA Training Resources Available on Loan** – These are available on loan through TA libraries at the 4 Educational Collaboratives: East Bay (245-4998), Northern RI (658-5790), Southern RI (295-2888), & West Bay (941-8353) plus 2 sites at RI Technical Assistance Project (RITAP) at RI College (456-4600) & CHILDSPAN (729-0765). An Annotated Bibliography of these resources is on the TA website on the Resources webpage.

★**Training Module for Teacher Assistants Who Work with Students Who Have English As a Second Language** - Districts can use or adapt this module to address local needs. Module content complies with RIDE ELL regulations & WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards. It trains TAs in competencies specified in RIDE State Guidelines for TAs Working Students who Have English as a Second Language. The module is an outstanding product with easy-to-follow scripts for the trainer with lecture notes & step-by-step activity instructions, handouts & transparency masters that can be

converted to PowerPoints. The module is divided into 7 parts, all in PDF for downloading. Adaptations/applications you can make: (1) Module content on ESL/ELL is appropriate for various educational personnel – not just TAs – &, thus, can be used to train ESL/ELL teams of teachers, TA & others. (2) Some parts can be modified for use with any type of TA, not just TAs working with students who have English as a second language. Access this on the TA website on the Resources webpage.

- ★ **TA Training Resources Available on the TA Website** – The TA Website, Resources Webpage provides a variety of TA PD resources including, but not limited to, those listed on this handout.
- ★ **Online PD** – Online PD is an effective way to access training to fit individual schedules 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 Training Opportunities webpage provides link to a variety of online PD & related resources appropriate for TAs & those who work with them – some at no cost & some at low cost.
- ★ **Training on the Effective Use of TAs** – Federal & state law require that TAs work under the direction & supervision of a teacher or other appropriately certified professional staff, underscoring the need for teachers & TAs to work as instructional teams. RIDE Guidelines provide additional clarification concerning Instructional Teams, Supervision & Performance Evaluation related to TAs. Districts & related education agencies can access a module & related resources on Effective Use Of TAs on the TA website on the Resources webpage.
- ★ **College Courses** – The TA website Training Opportunities webpage has information on CCRI Supports for TAs Pursuing Associate Degrees & TA Career Advancement Opportunities in Special Education.