Montana School for the Deaf and Blind

Case Study

SCHOOL INFORMATION
Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) provides comprehensive educational opportunities to students from across the state of Montana who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and visually impaired. The school currently serves about 50 students, between preschool and high school age.

SCHOOL NEEDS
Like many organizations, MSDB needed a solution to highly qualify its paraeducators to meet requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). To become highly qualified, paraeducators must complete two years of higher education, obtain an associate’s degree, or meet a rigorous standard of quality through a formal state or local academic assessment.

Additionally, because MSDB serves students who all have very specific learning needs, it was difficult to find a professional development program that offered both foundational and specialized training for paraeducators and provided ongoing support.

SOLUTION
The ParaEducator Learning Network provides MSDB paraeducators with the tools needed to meet highly qualified requirements and receive ongoing training.

“Paraprofessionals usually take the coursework during orientation and when students aren’t around—primarily to attain highly qualified status. But, the staff at MSDB has found that the program is doing even more for its paraprofessionals than originally expected.”

“We have found THE MASTER TEACHER paraprofessional online courses to be quite valuable not only in helping our teacher assistants earn ‘highly qualified’ status, but in expanding and enriching their knowledge of the field of education and their role therein,” says Kim Schwabe, Supervising Teacher for the Deaf Department.
Mary Lou Wiest, a paraprofessional at Montana School for the Deaf and Blind, says that supervisors don’t always have the time to train them—and she and the other paraprofessionals are all at different levels as far as work experience goes. “I like the courses because many times the work covers areas that we, as paraprofessionals, are not aware of,” she says. “The courses are more in depth and have examples on dealing with different situations. As far as I am concerned, they are a valuable tool in our training.”

Another paraprofessional, Lana Juden, says, “The best thing I have liked about these courses is that you can do them at your own pace and they are easy to understand. They have helped me do a better job in my classroom and with the students and to be aware of other important needs that the students may have.”

Additionally, Schwabe says that because paraeducators now possess more foundational knowledge as a result of completing coursework in The ParaEducator Learning Network, they’re better able to communicate with teachers about students’ goals.

Montana School for the Deaf and Blind has experienced recent gains in student achievement that can be attributed to a number of initiatives—including professional development.

A longtime user of The ParaEducator Learning Network, Schwabe says, “The team at THE MASTER TEACHER has been extremely helpful and patient when we’ve had questions and/or call for technical assistance. With them in your corner and their excellent product, you can’t go wrong!”

**FUNDING**

MSDB uses funds from its General Education Budget to purchase The ParaEducator Learning Network program.

**ABOUT The ParaEducator Learning Network™**

Since 1994, THE MASTER TEACHER® has taken a special interest in developing and providing professional training for paraeducators. The ParaEducator Learning Network addresses paraeducator training needs in an effective and affordable manner. The CASE-endorsed program contains over 130 one-hour training courses, delivered online, and written exclusively for paraeducators. The ParaEducator Learning Network ensures that every paraeducator has the basic skills required to be effective in the classroom—and the specific skills necessary to support students with special needs. The program also contains two assessments which can be used to meet the NCLB highly qualified requirements for Title I paraeducators. With over one million courses and thousands of assessments taken, The ParaEducator Learning Network truly is the #1 training resource for paraeducators in the world.
ABOUT THE MASTER TEACHER®

THE MASTER TEACHER is The Leading Provider of Continuous Professional Development in the K-12 market for educators at all levels—from paraeducators to administrators. Our comprehensive approach maximizes development and learning opportunities through a wide variety of content delivery methods and topic areas. Our exclusive online PD platform allows educators to create, deliver, and manage their own PD to support the MASTER TEACHER’s library of expert-created professional development, uniquely blending our expertise with that in the local organization. THE MASTER TEACHER also offers unique awards to recognize and encourage professional excellence, for a total 360-degree professional development solution.

To learn more about the MASTER TEACHER’s professional development solutions, visit www.masterteacher.com.