

Memo: Paraeducator Workforce Survey

To: Senator Bolz

Date: September 27, 2017

CC: Tami Soper, Legislative Aide, Education Stakeholders

RE: Administrators and Paraeducators Survey Results

From: Sam Huppert

Purpose and Contents

The purpose of this memo is to summarize the results of surveys of Nebraska paraeducators and school administrators completed by the Office of Senator Kate Bolz and staff of Project PARA. Project PARA is a University of Nebraska-Lincoln partnership between the State of Nebraska and Nebraska school districts to provides school based training and instructional resources designed to give schools flexibility in using paraeducators. It contains 14 units and three assessments that cover a variety of topics to aid paraeducators with the development of skills needed to work effectively in a classroom setting.

The last major surveys of paraeducators in Nebraska were conducted in the early 1980s, and subsequent guidelines published in 1991. These guidelines are the basis of the current Project PARA trainings. The goal of the paraeducator survey is to provide data to guide educational, administrative, and policy related decision making.

This memo covers the following subjects:

1. Methods and Limitations
2. Respondent Background
3. Job Duties
4. Education, Experience and Training
5. Benefits and Opportunities
6. Training Needs
7. Conclusions

1. Methods and Limitations

The surveys were developed by Senator Bolz and the staff of Project PARA and sent through email to 1,881 school administrators and 8,420 paraeducators. These lists were obtained from the Nebraska Department of Education's 2015-16 public database, the most recent data available. School administrators were limited to those who had the following job titles: Assistant Principal, Chief Administrator, Department Head, Principal, Program Supervisor/Director, and Special Education Administrator/Director. The paraeducators list was limited to those who had the 'paraeducator' job title in the database.

Surveys were sent out from Senator Bolz’s legislative email from August 16 through September 1. Response rates on the survey were 241/1881 (12.8%) for administrators and 876/8420 paraeducators (10.4%).

There were notable limitations with this survey. In order to complete the survey on a time frame conducive to the legislative process, it was administered under time limitations. Additionally, school was not in session during part of the time that the survey was being administered, and the survey was voluntary. The survey was electronic, and the results are not academic.

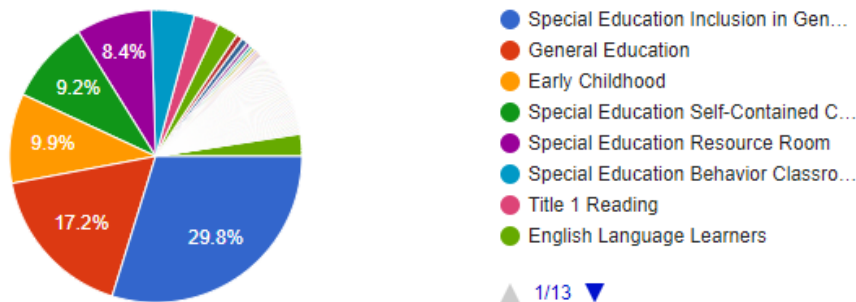
Nonetheless, the survey provides a snapshot of current issues, strengths, and challenges related to the paraeducator workforce in Nebraska.

2. Respondent Background

Of administrators that responded, their jobs most frequently were: building principles (60.6%), district administrators (14.9%) and special education administrators (14.5%).¹ Of paraeducators that responded, their assignments most frequently were: special education inclusion in the general classroom (29.8%), general education (17.2%), early childhood (9.9%), special education and self-contained classroom (9.2%), special education resource room (8.4%), special education behavior classroom (4.9%), Title I reading (2.8%), English language learners, (2.3%), library (.7%), title I Math (.7%).

1. What best describes your primary assignment?

859 responses



¹ .4% is equal to one survey response

3. Administrator and Paraeducator Job Duties

Duties that administrators report are assigned to paraeducators

- Highest percentage of frequent and majority duties (50-100% of time or 10-40 hrs/week)²:
 - Drill and practice with individual students and groups (72.7%)
 - Supervising students outside of the classroom (42%)
 - Monitoring and checking student work (38.7%)
 - Redirecting students to attend instruction (35.7%)
- Highest percentage of minor job duties³ (excluding items considered major duties)
 - Assisting with progress monitoring/recording observations (34.4%)
 - Helping students organize their workspace (30.1%)
 - Providing communication and social supports for students (29.1%)
 - Making/modifying instructional materials for classroom/student use (28.7%)

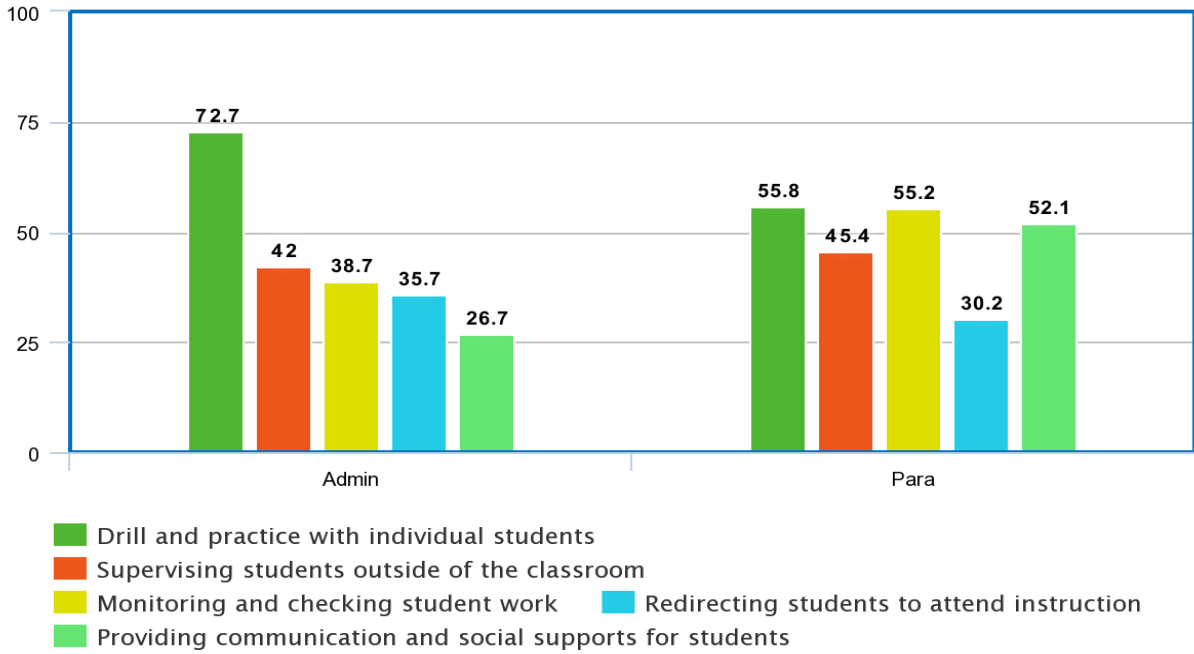
Duties assigned to paraeducators, as answered by paraeducators

- Highest percentages of frequent and major duties (10-40 hrs/week)
 - Drill and practice with individual students and groups (55.8%)
 - Monitoring and checking student work (55.2%)
 - Providing communication and social supports for students (52.1%)
 - Supervising students outside of the classroom (45.4%)
- (No minor job duties rose about 20% response rate)

² Answers with the highest percentage of '3' (25-50% of time or 10-20 hrs/week) and '4' responses (50-100% of time or 10-40hrs/week)

³ Answers with the highest percentage of '2' responses (5-25% or time or 2-10 hrs/week), excluding major job duties

Major job duties assigned by administrators vs. percent of time paras responding X was a major job duty

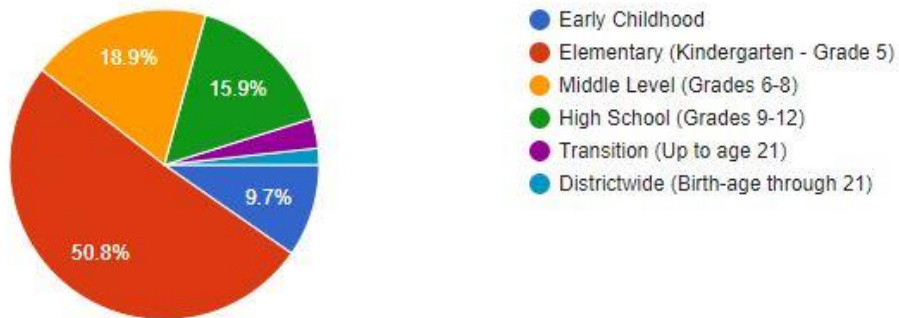


meta-chart.com

School Level of Primary Assignment

2. What level is your primary assignment?

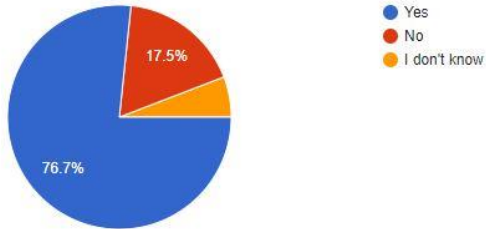
870 responses



Written Job Descriptions

3. Does your district have written job descriptions for paraeducators?

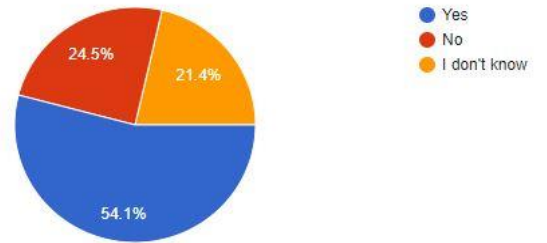
240 responses



Administrators

8. Do you have a written job description?

869 responses



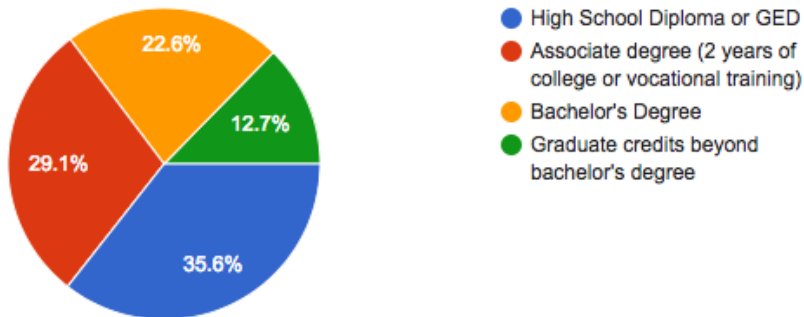
Paraeducators

4. Education, Training and Experience.

Education

4. What is your highest level of education?

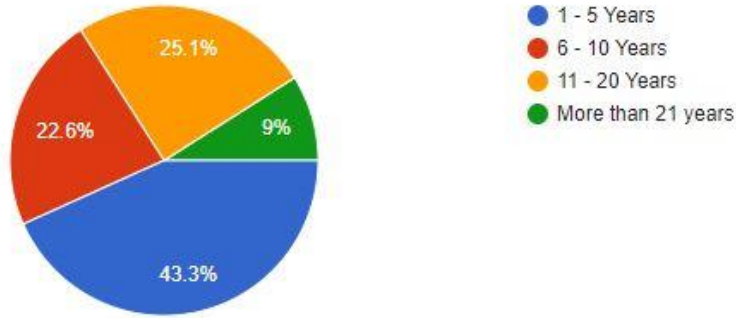
868 responses



Job Experience

3. How long have you been a paraeducator?

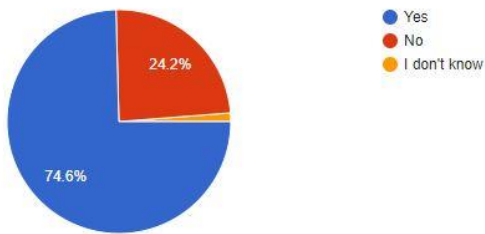
871 responses



Annual Evaluations

4. Is an annual written evaluation completed for each paraeducator?

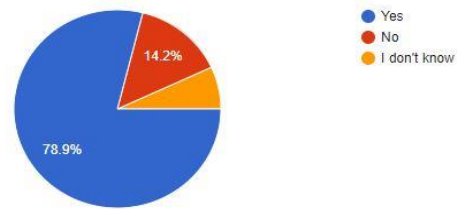
240 responses



Paraeducators

9. Does your supervisor complete an annual written evaluation of your performance?

869 responses



Administrators

Trainings Offered

	Percentage of administrators reporting specific training was offered (Q6)	Percentage of paraeducators reporting training of received (Q10)
Orientation at the beginning of the year	73.8%	46.2%
Workshop training at the beginning of the year	45.4%	38.7%
Ongoing training opportunities throughout the year	68.8%	48.6%
On the job training as assigned	76.3%	62.4%
Participation in Project PARA	45%	31.7%

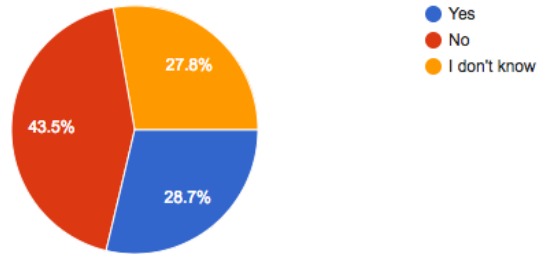
Highly Qualified⁴ Paraeducator Training

Of those that completed these training, the breakdown for specific programs are as follows: Project PARA (71.1%), teaching certification (14.7%), documented four years of experience at NDE (14.7%), Child Development Associate Credential (7.9%), Early Learning Guidelines Domain Training (6%), First Connections (6%), bilingual (4.9%).

⁴ To be 'High Qualified' in Nebraska, paraeducators must have: a High School Diploma or GED and either, an Associates Degree, 48 or more semester hours of college credit, or passed one of the 4 approved tests additional information can be found at:
<https://www.education.ne.gov/federalprograms/Documents/Main%20Page/HQ%20Teacher%20and%20Para%20Requirements%207-14.pdf>

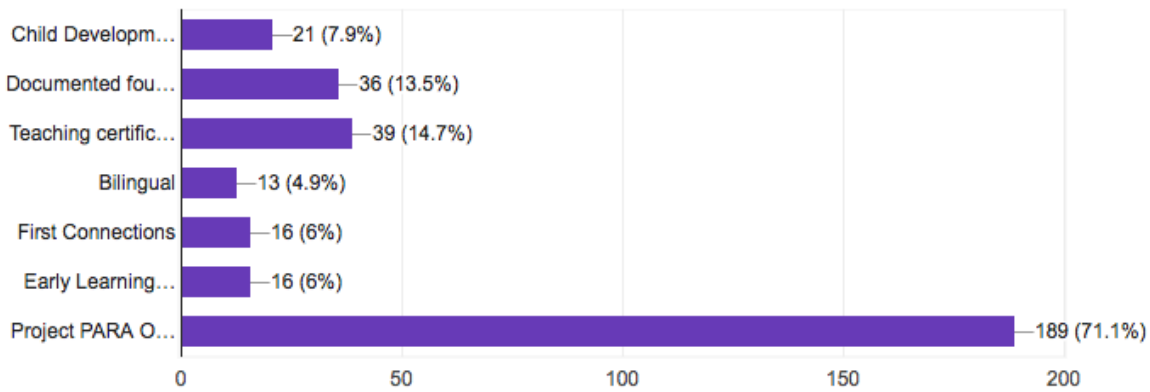
11. Have you completed any training or assessment to demonstrate you are "highly qualified" per state or federal regulations?

867 responses



11b. If yes on question 11, indicate the assessments you have completed

266 responses

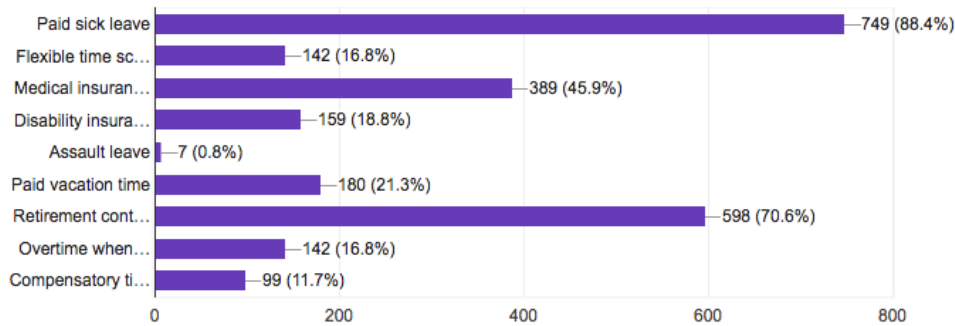


Benefits and Opportunities

Types of Benefits Offered

7. What benefits do you receive from your employing school district? (Check all that apply)

847 responses



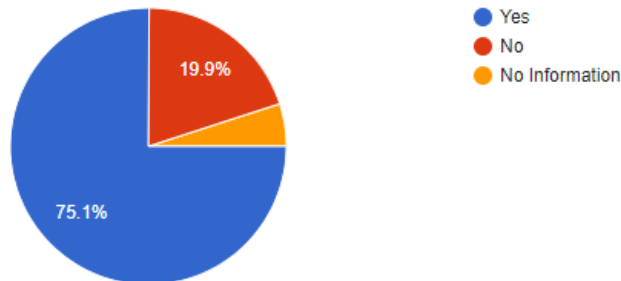
Opportunities of Interest

Question: Which of the following opportunities would encourage you to continue employment as a paraeducator in the future? ('4' answer indicates respondent would sign up today)

	Percent Answering '4'
Paid Sick Leave	60.9% (515/846)
Paid Vacation	63.2% (538/850)
Paid Health Insurance	61.9% (529/855)
Retirement Contributions	61.7% (520/843)
Career Ladder Increases	51.5% (444/862)
Increased Wages	75.9% (628/827)

7. Ideally, would your students benefit from hiring additional paraeducators?

241 responses



Training Needs Charts

Pages 9-18 are charts with paraeducator responses to the following prompt:

Indicate your interest in participating in training in each area listed below using the following scale

0 = No training needed

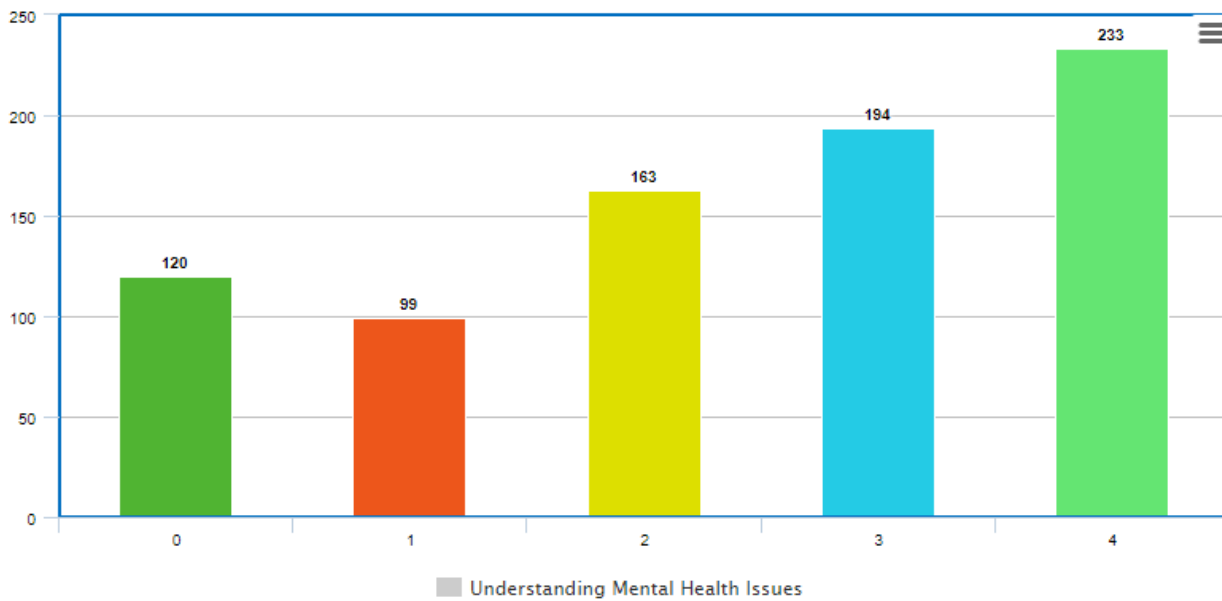
1 = Training only needed for paraeducators with specific assignments

2 = Low priority area for training

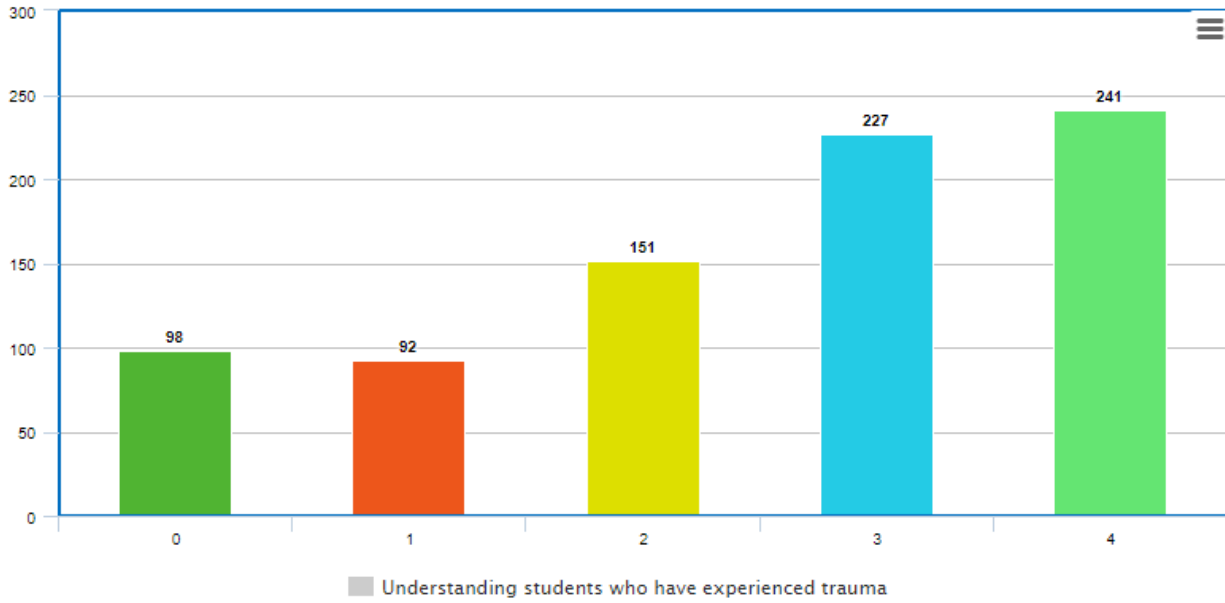
3 = Some need for training in this area

4 = Significant need for training in this area

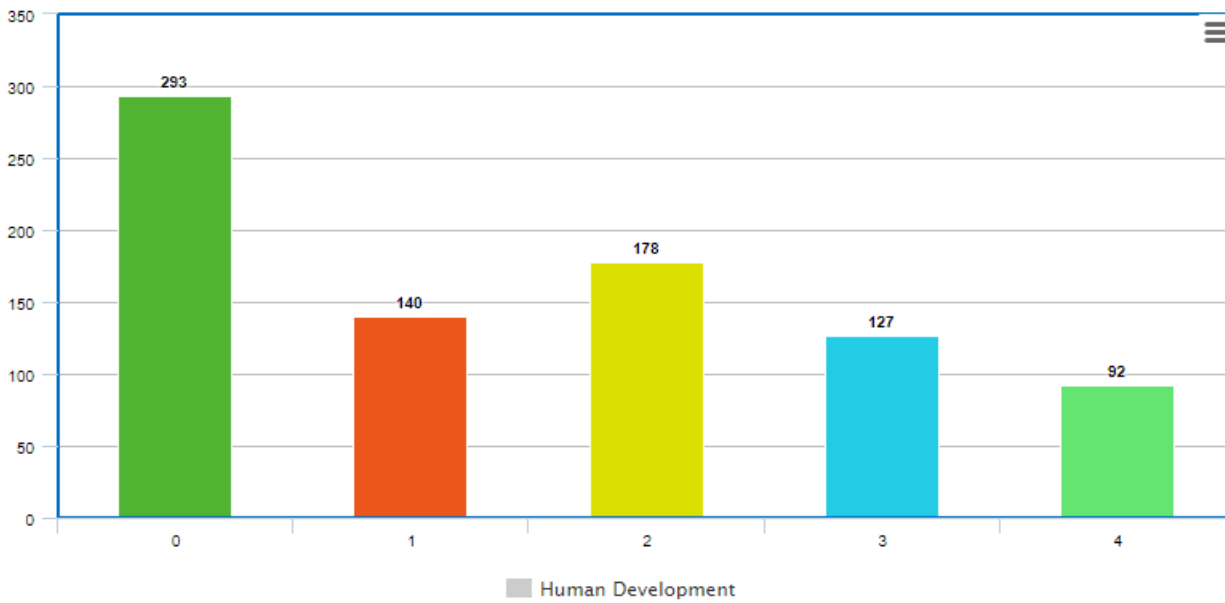
Understanding Mental Health



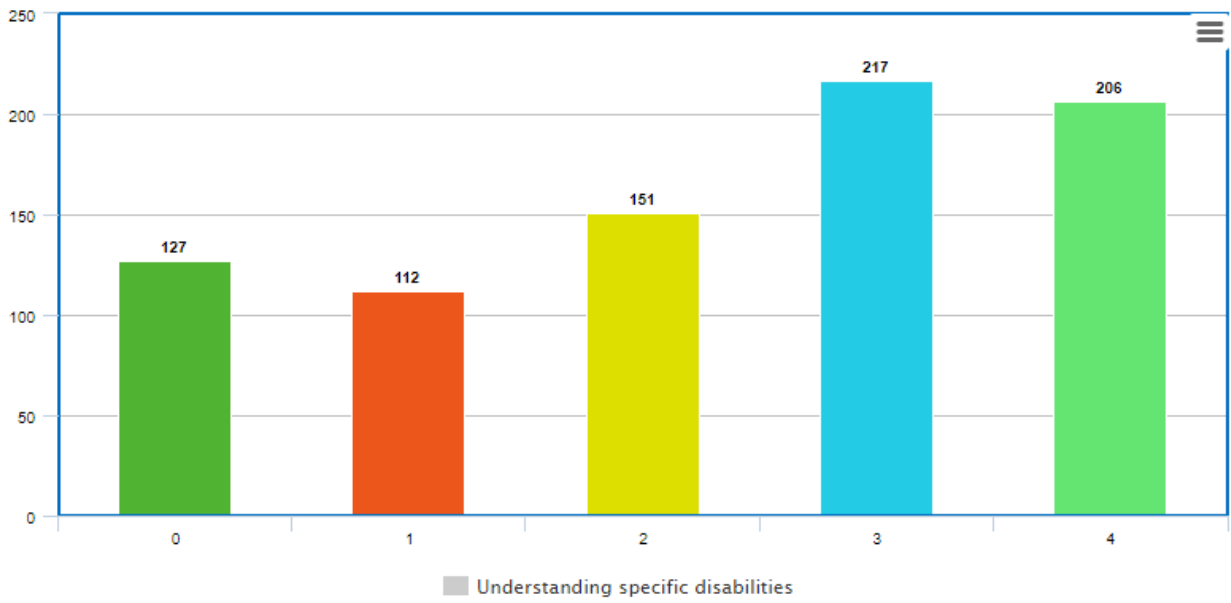
Understanding students who have experienced trauma



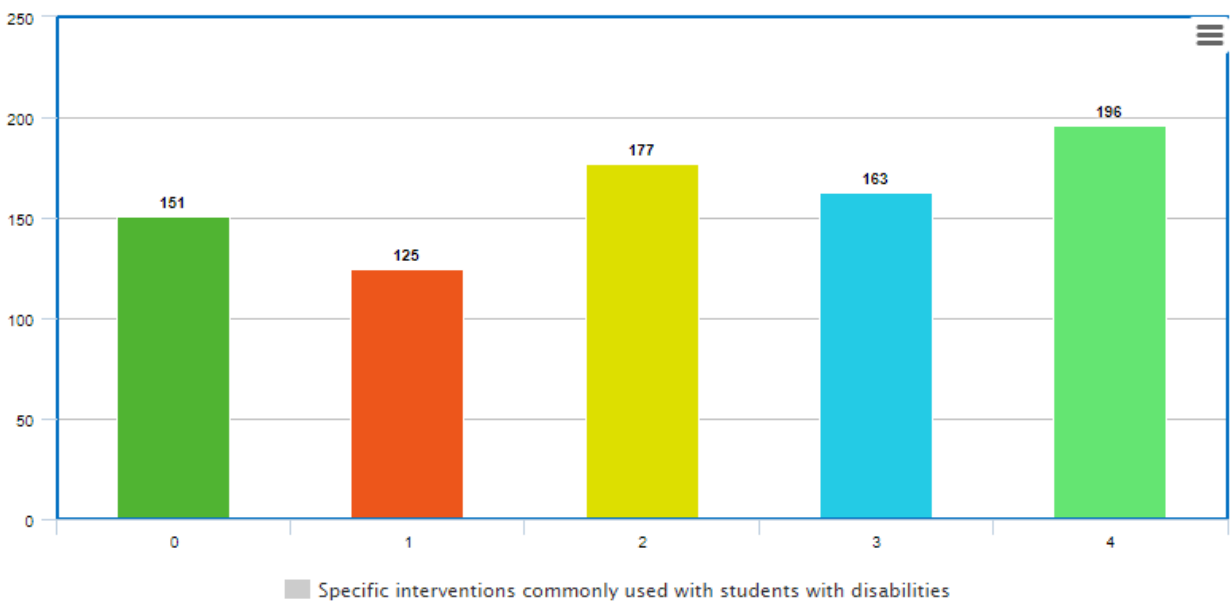
Human Development



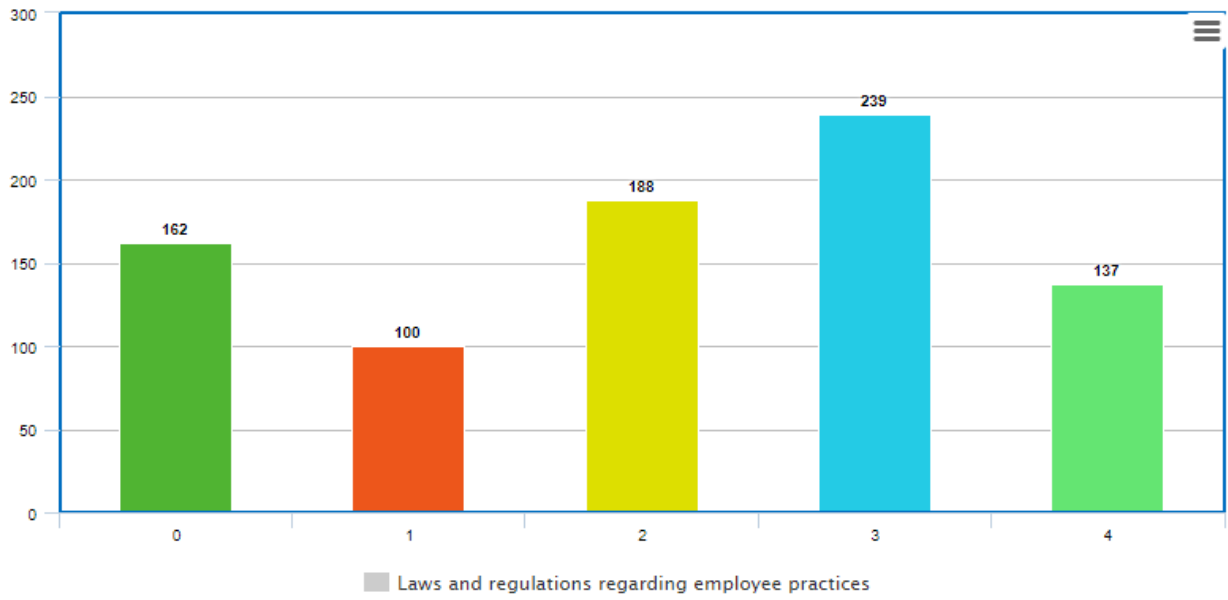
Understanding specific disabilities



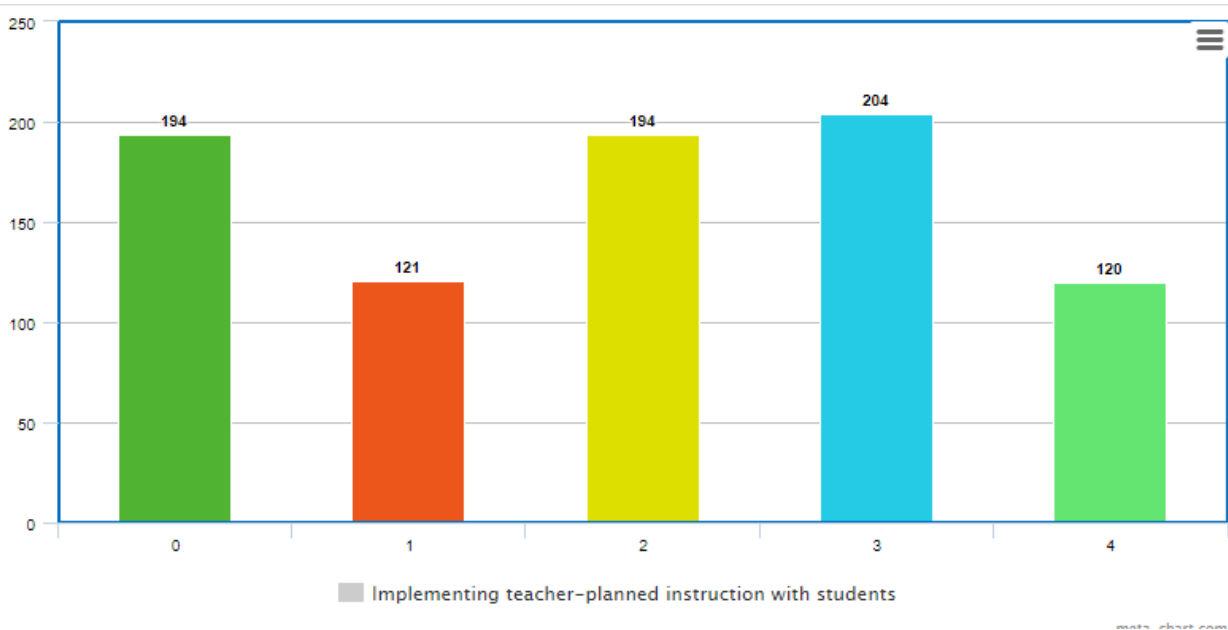
Specific interventions commonly used with students with disabilities



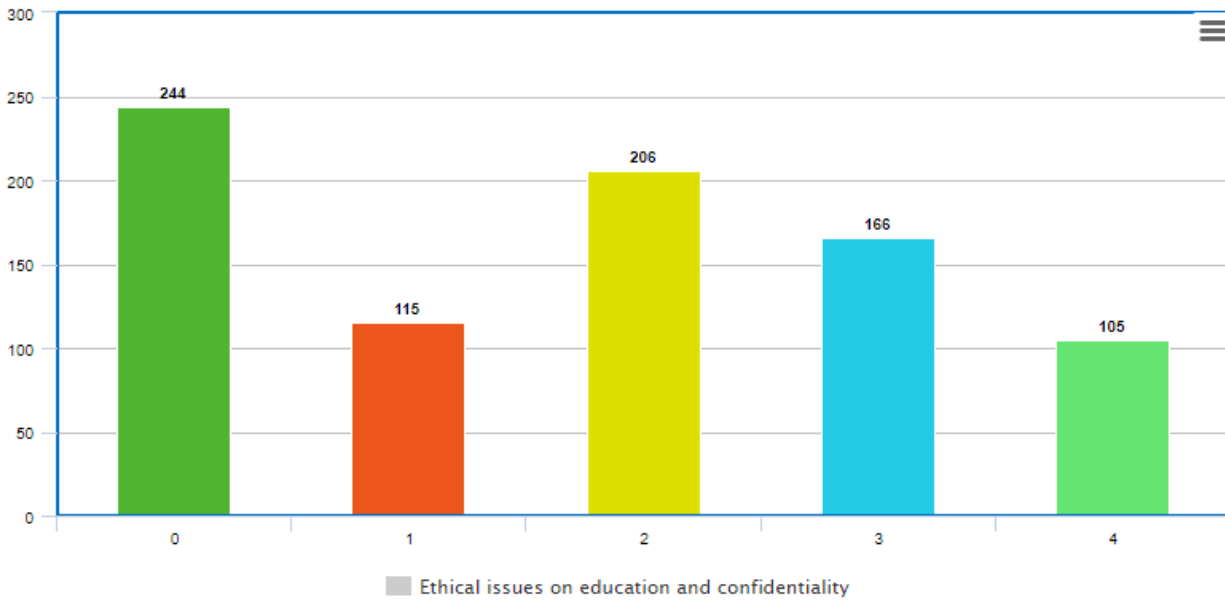
Laws and regulations regarding employee practices



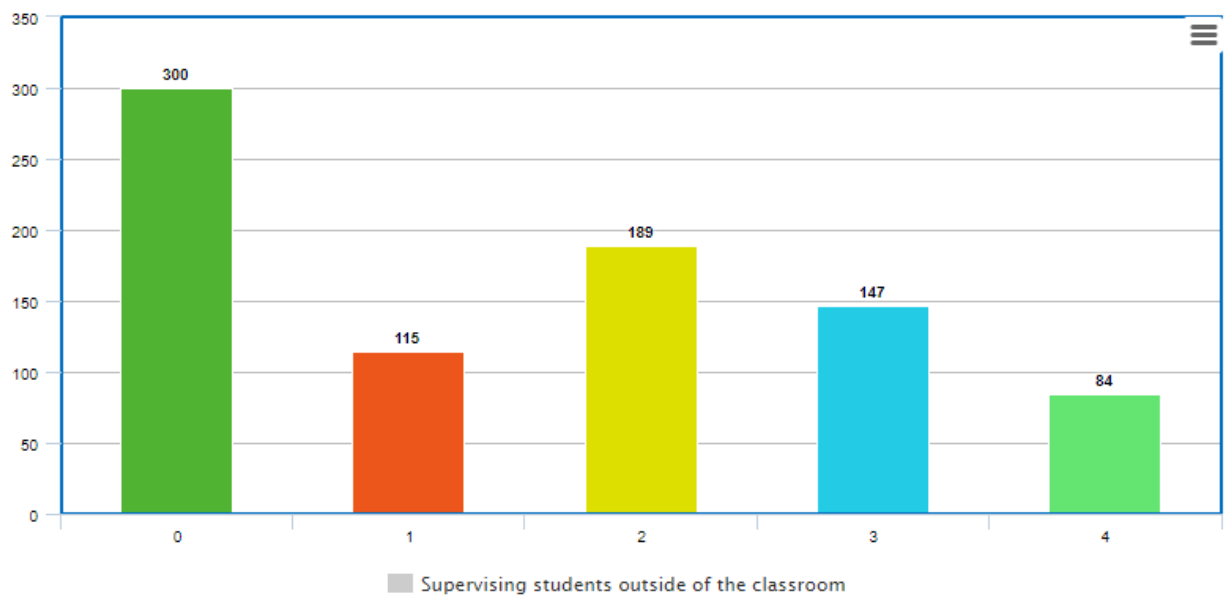
Implementing teacher-planned instruction with students



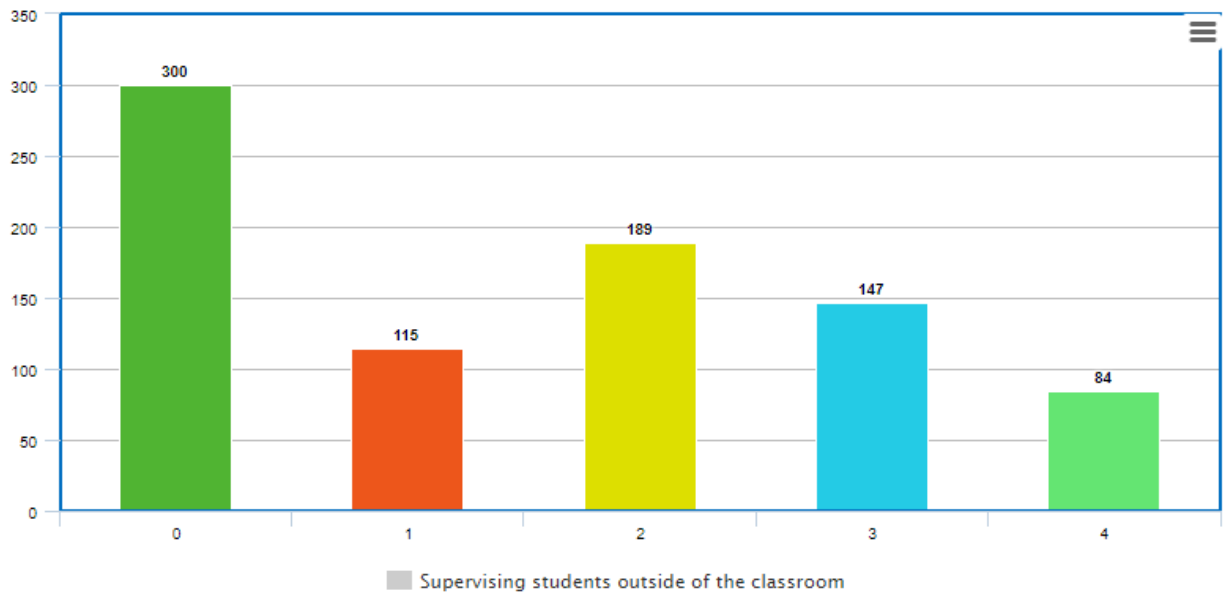
Ethical issues on education and confidentiality



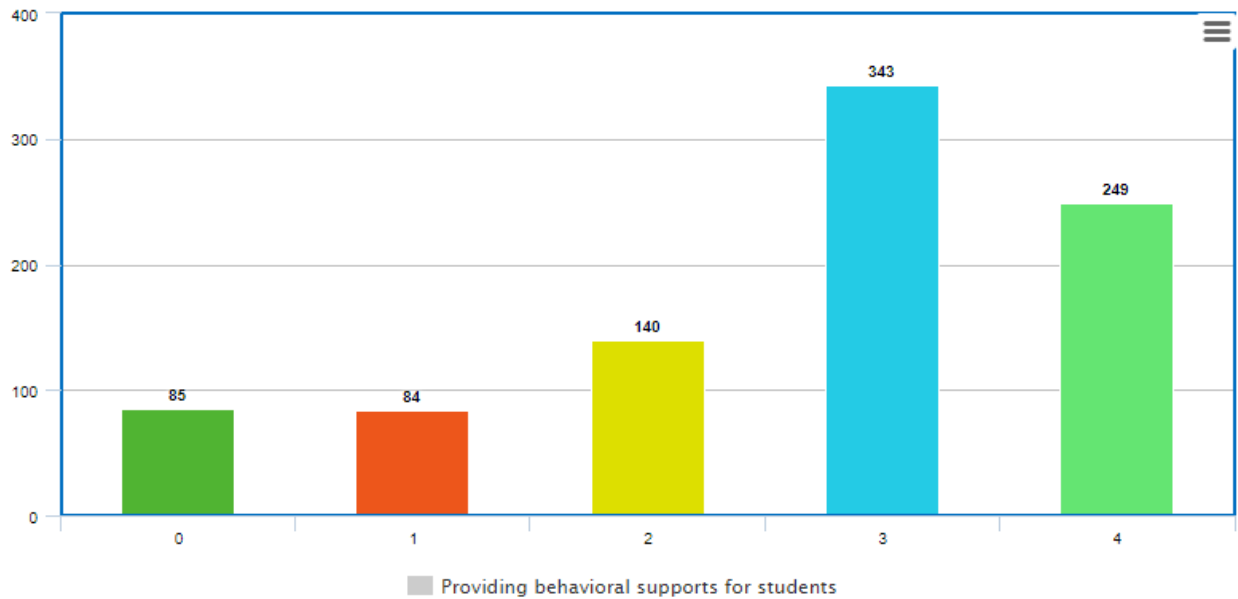
Supervising students in the classroom



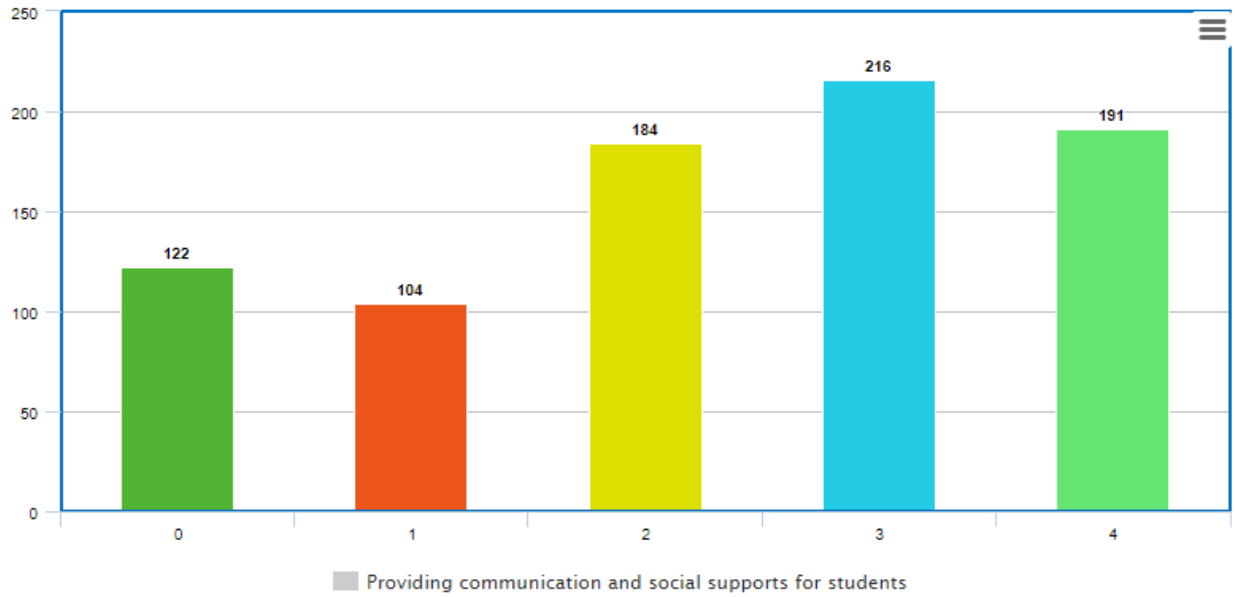
Supervising students outside of the classroom



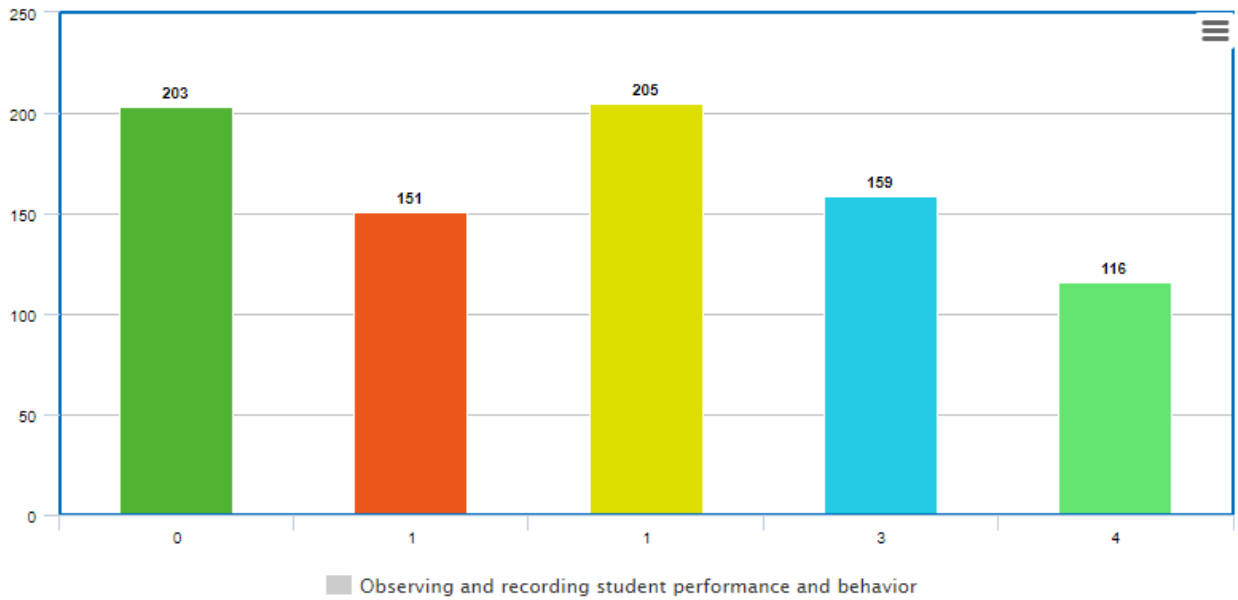
Providing behavioral supports for students



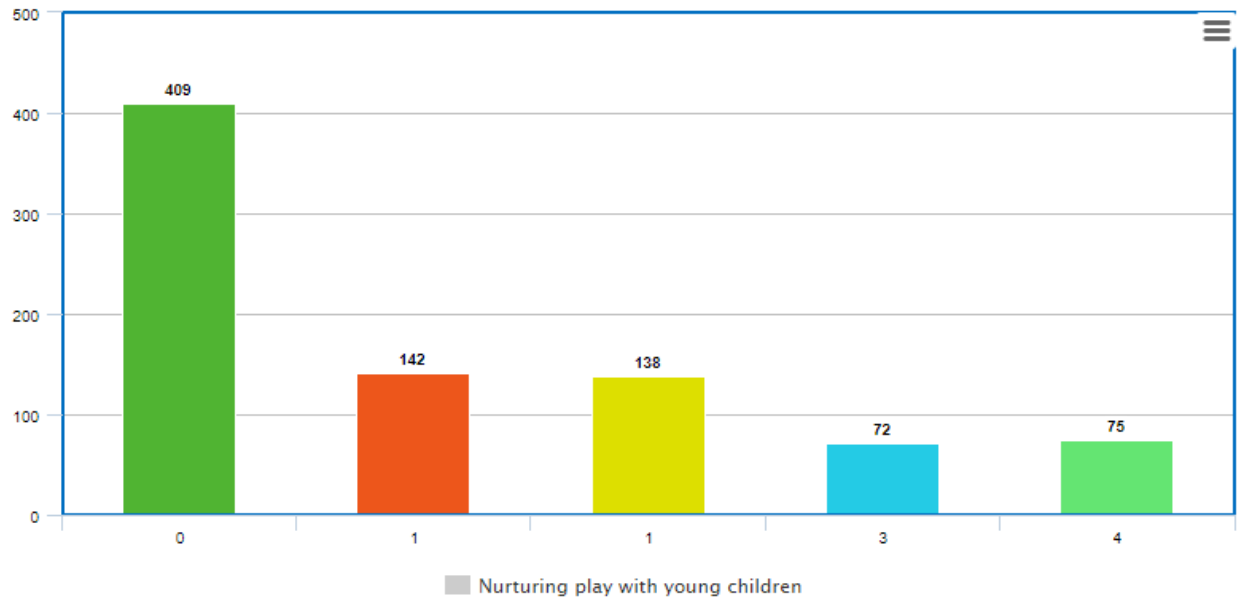
Providing communication and social supports for students



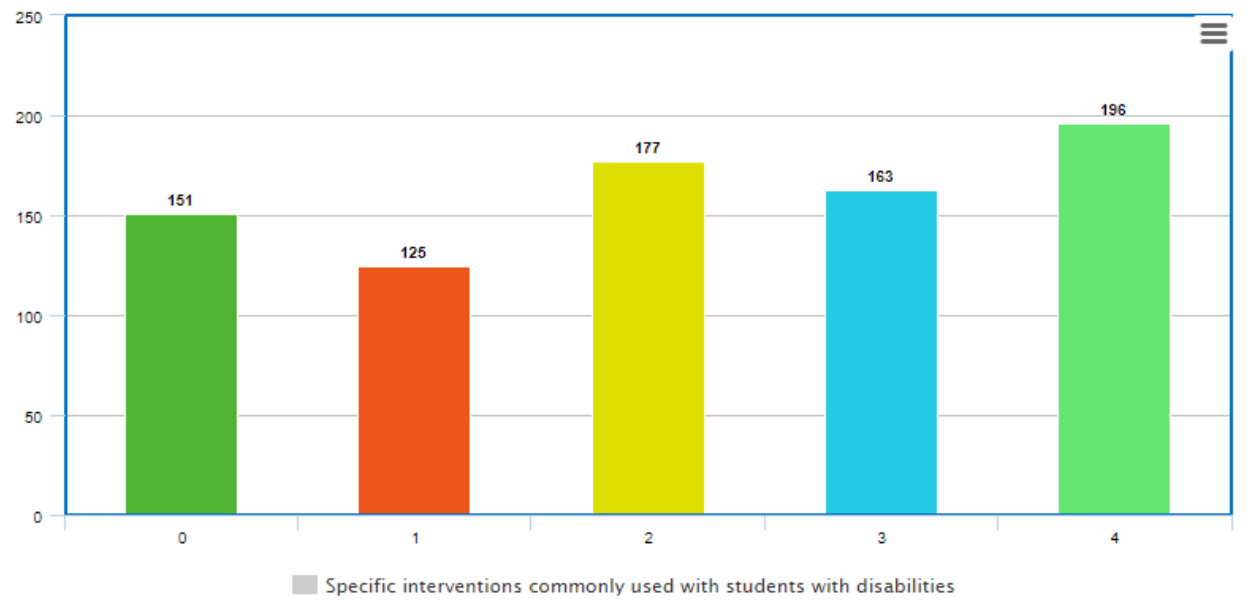
Observing and recording student performance and behavior



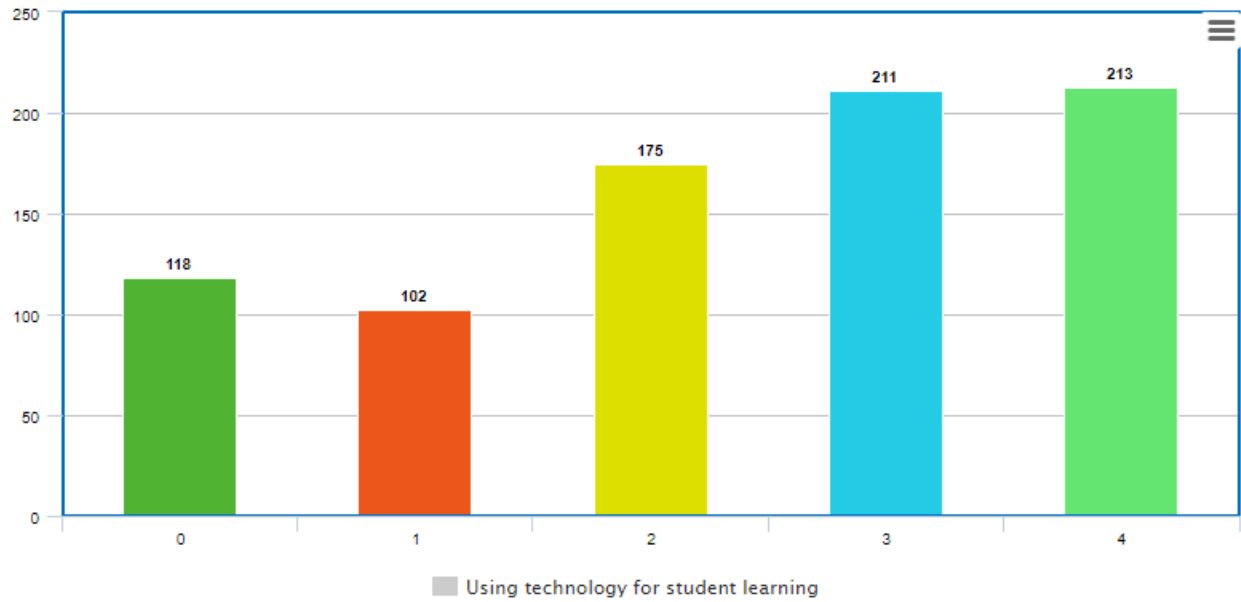
Nurturing play with young children



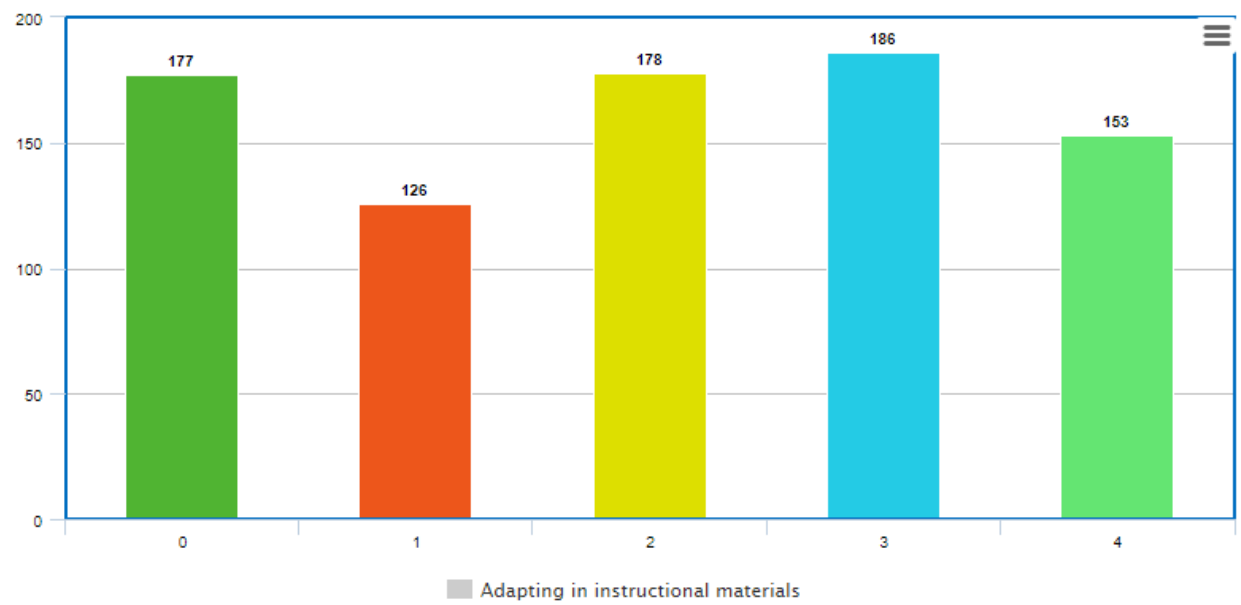
Specific interventions commonly used with students with disabilities



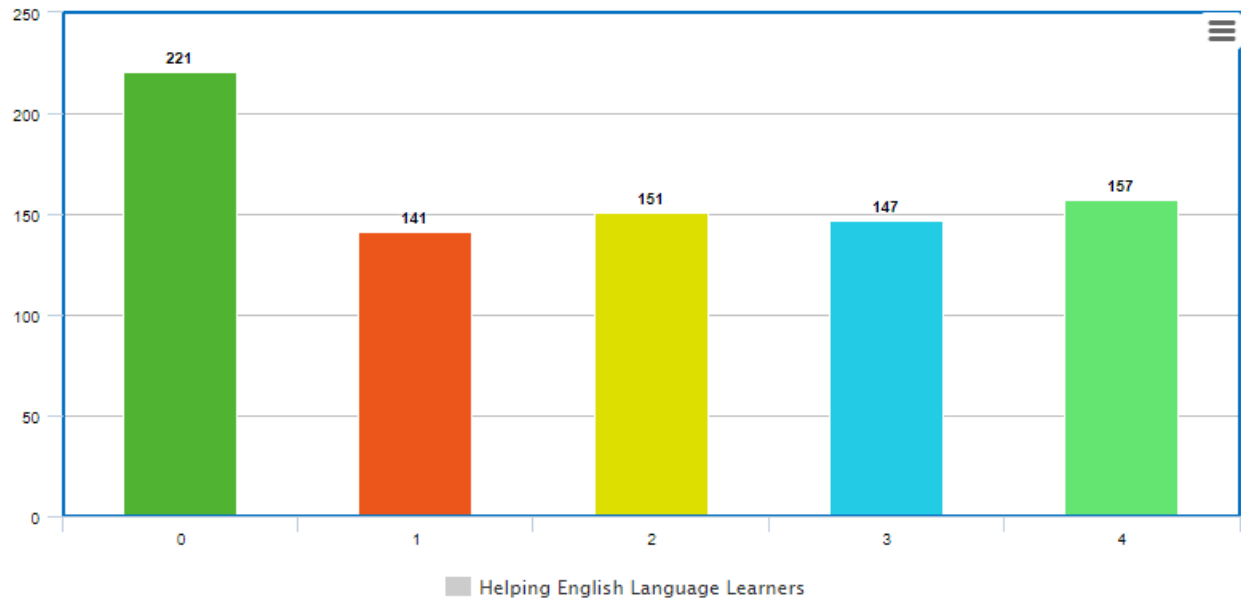
Using technology for student learning



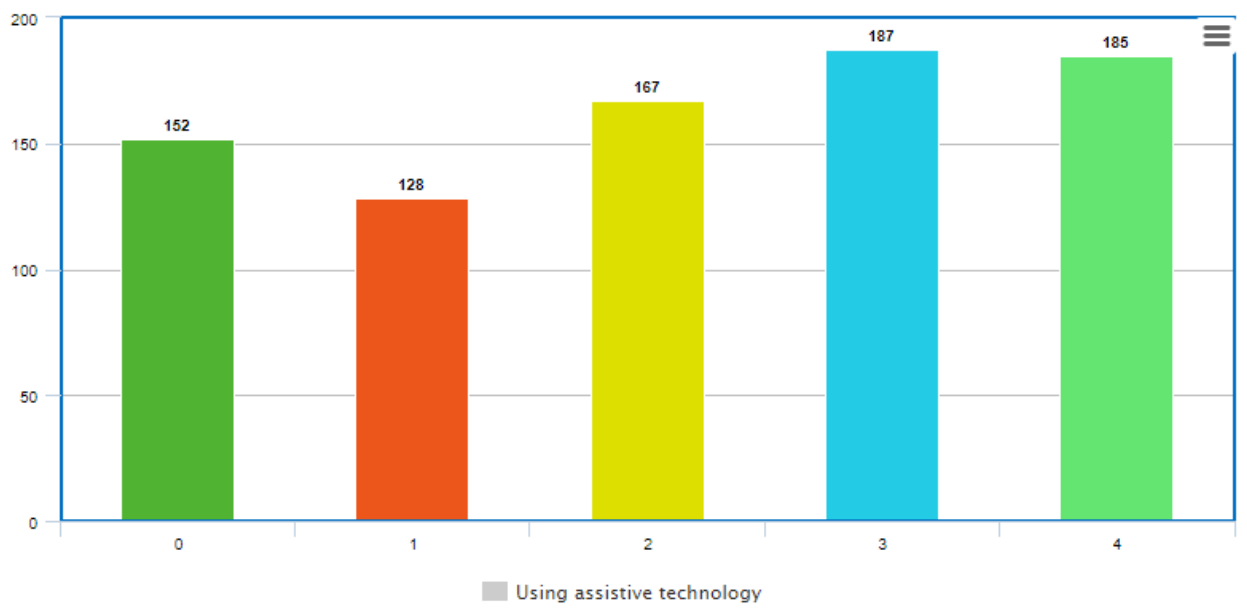
Adapting in instructional materials



Helping English Language Learners



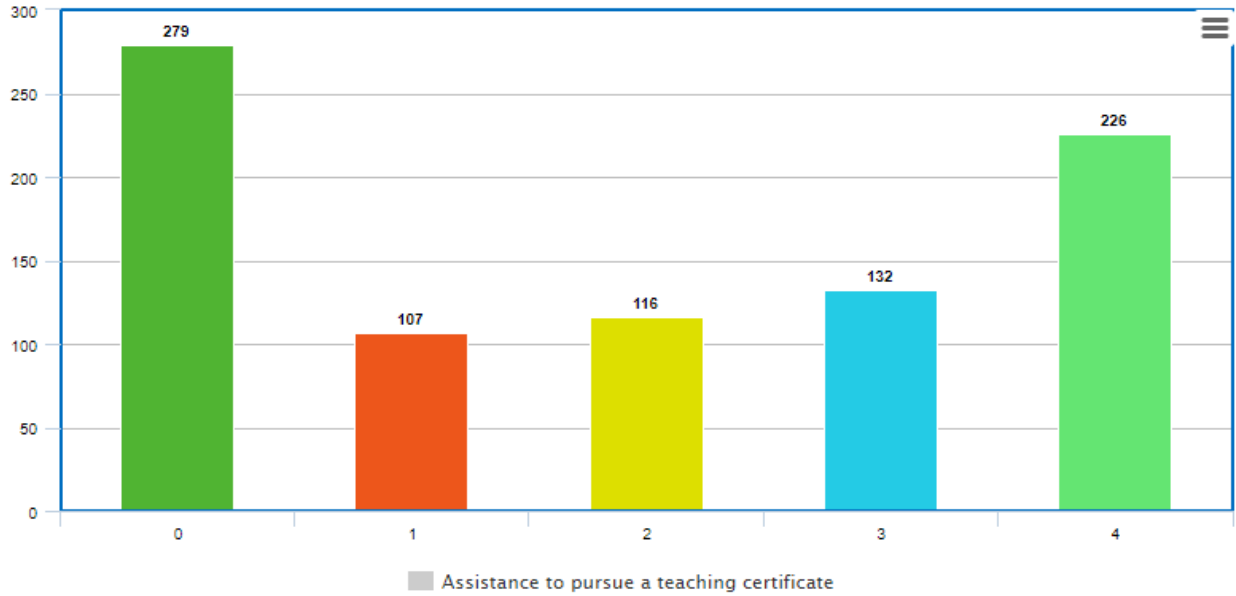
Using assistive technology



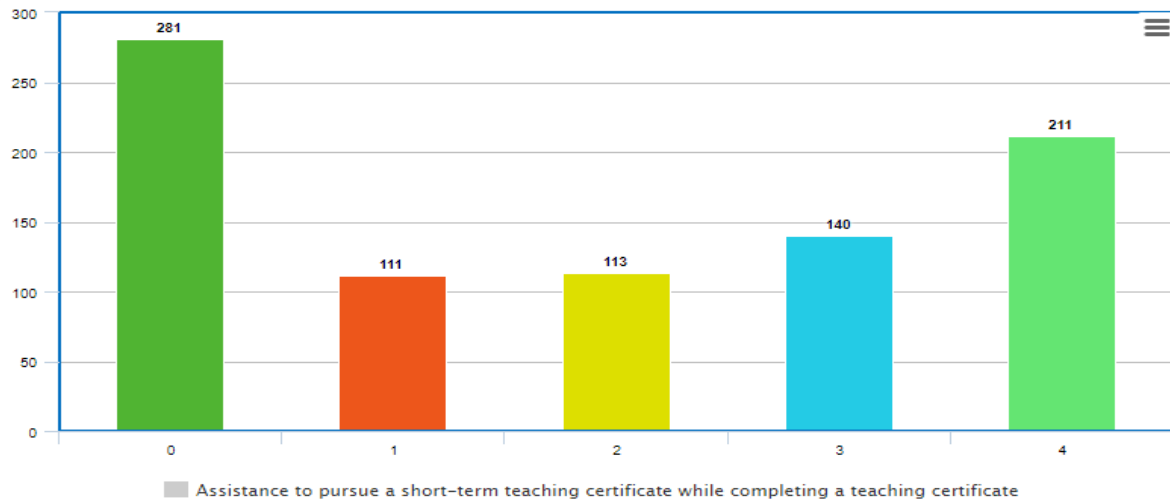
The following charts are paraeducator answers to the prompt:
Which of the following opportunities would encourage you to continue employment as a paraeducator in the future?

- 0 = I am not at all interested
- 1 = I have limited interest
- 2 = I might be interested in the future, but not now
- 3 = I would definitely seek out more information
- 4 = I would sign up today

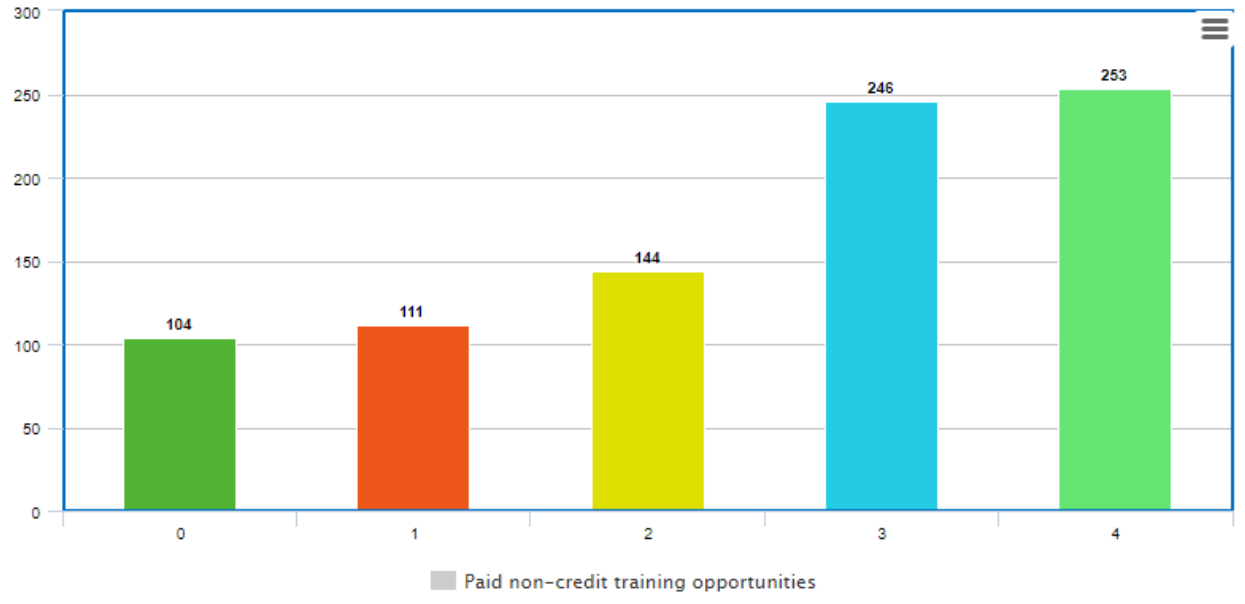
Assistance to pursue a teaching certificate



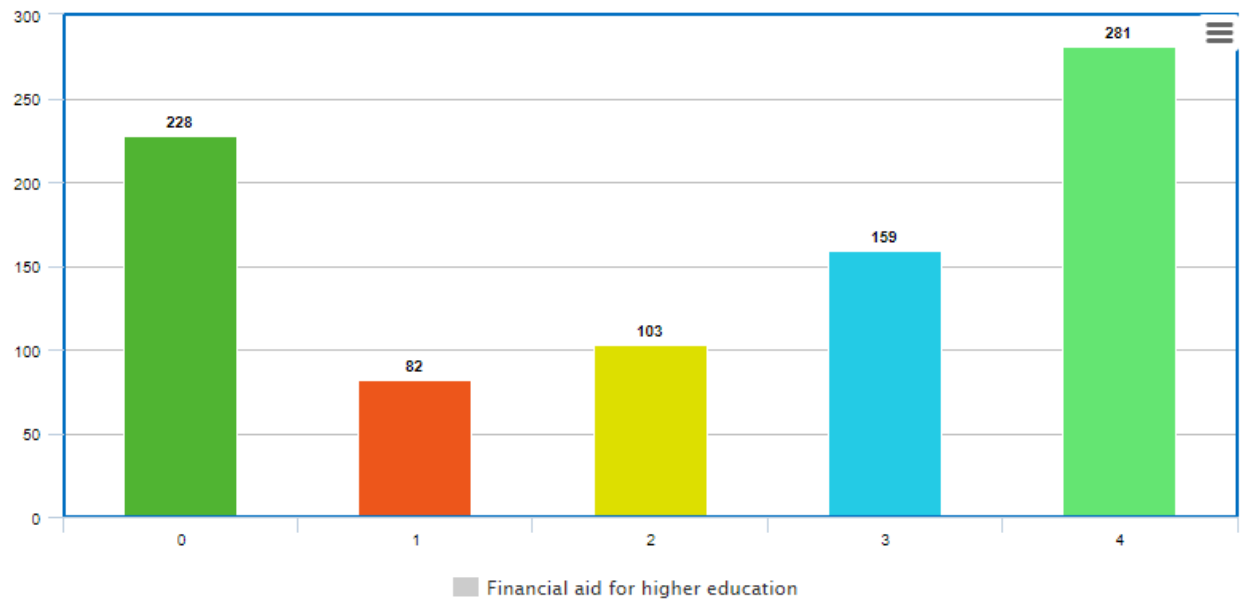
Assistance to pursue a short-term teaching certificate while completing a teaching certificate



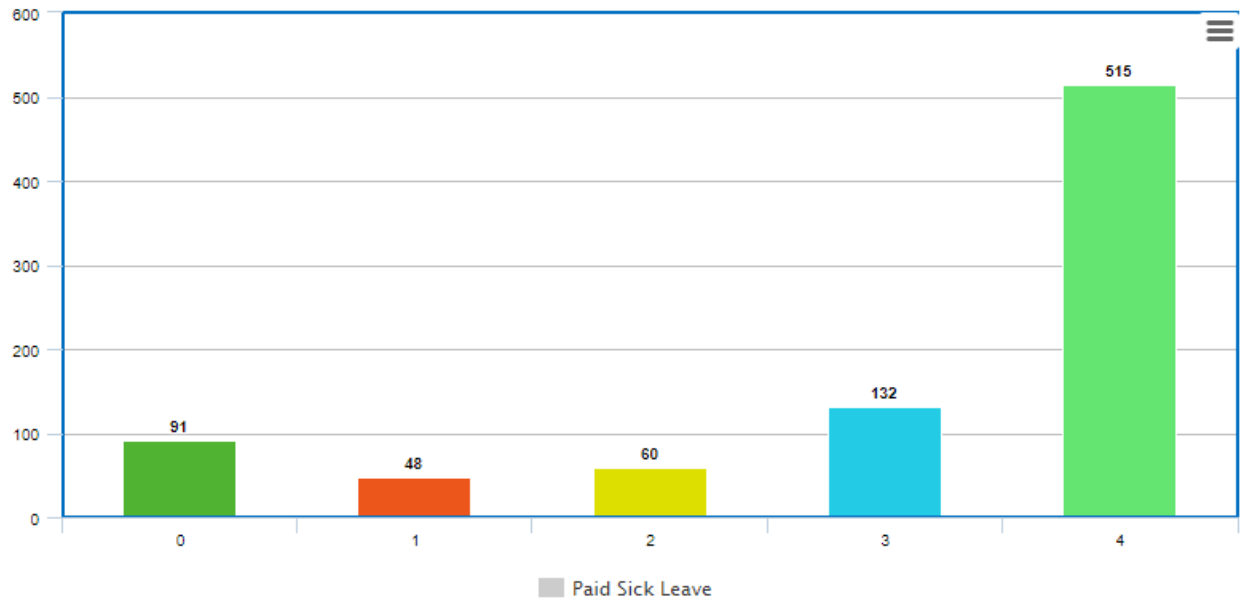
Paid non-credit training opportunities



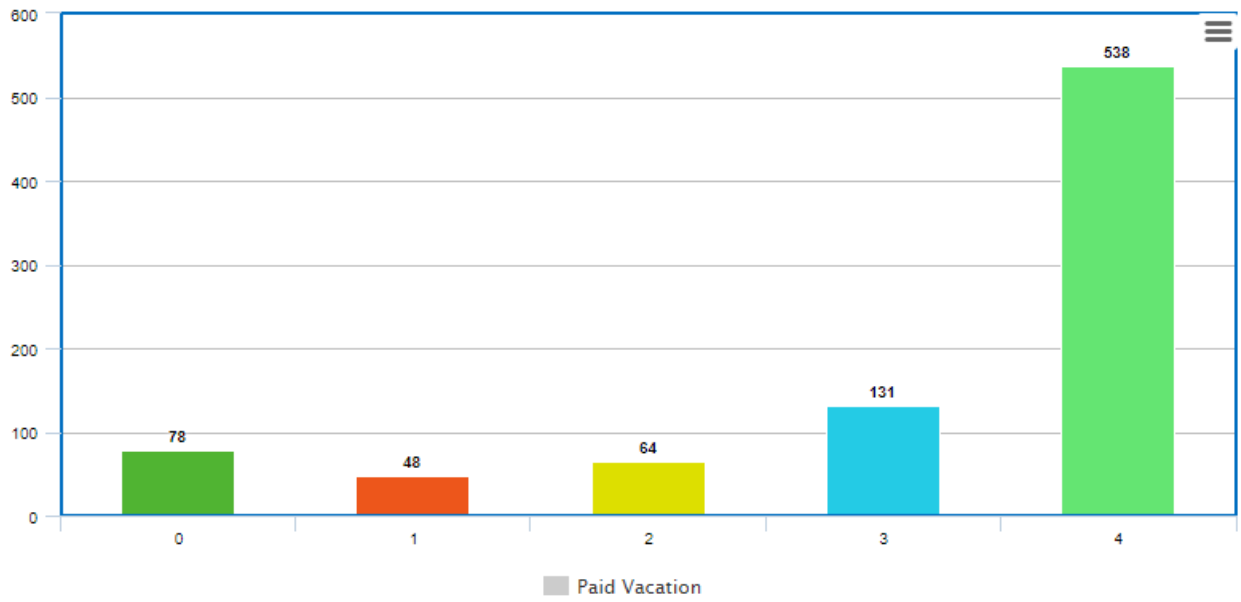
Financial aid for higher education



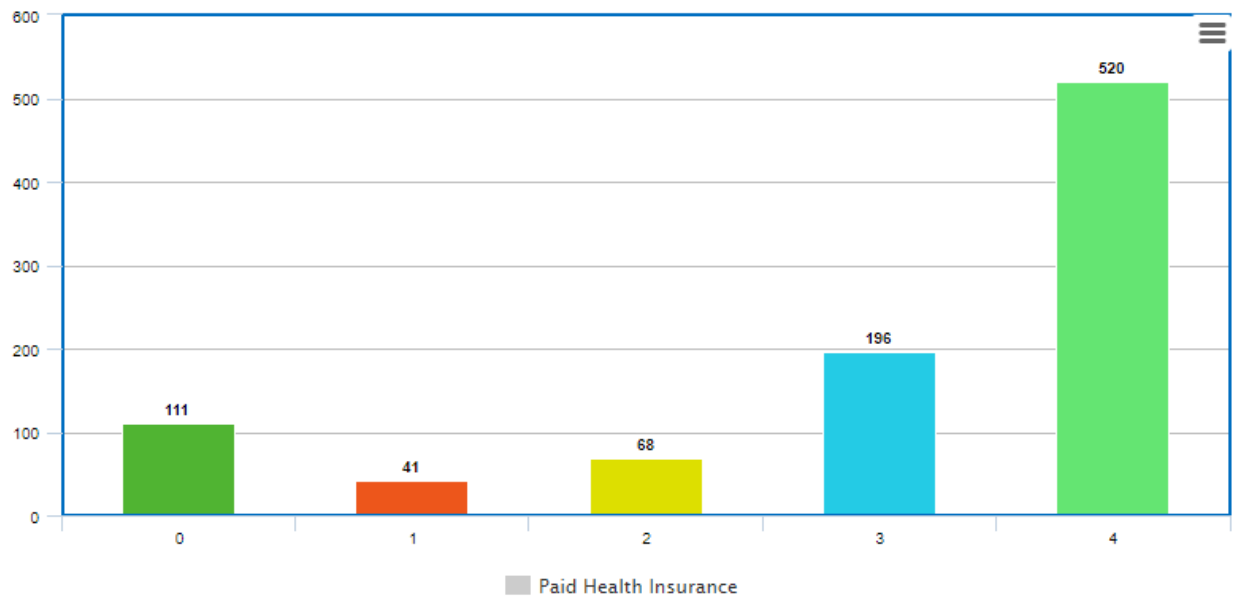
Paid Sick Leave



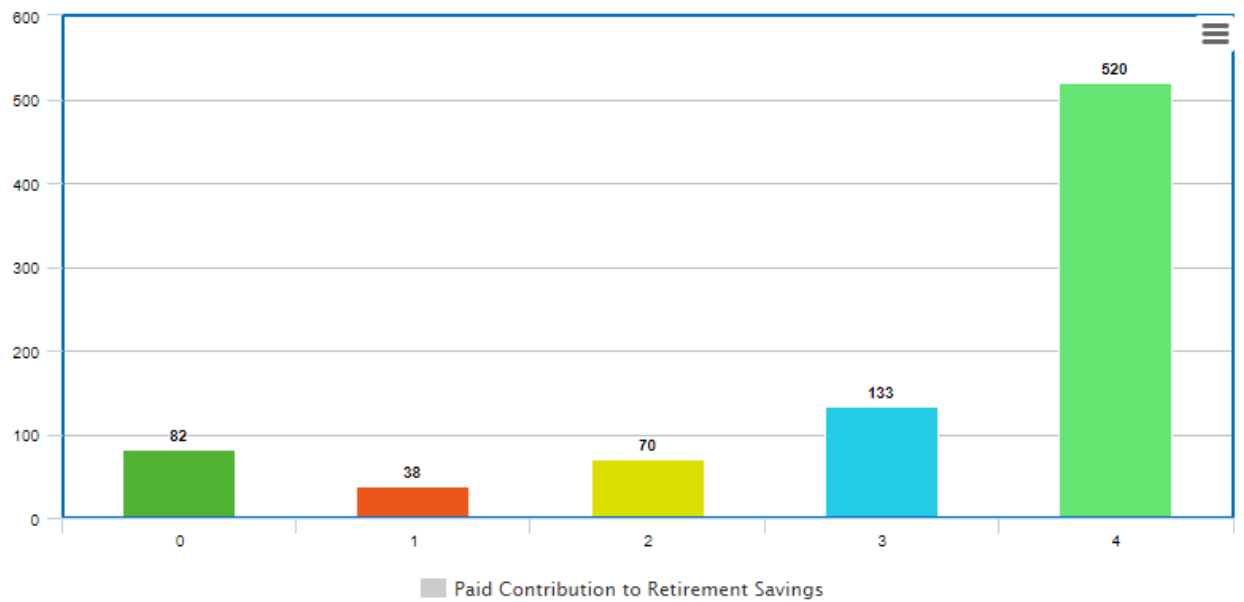
Paid Vacation



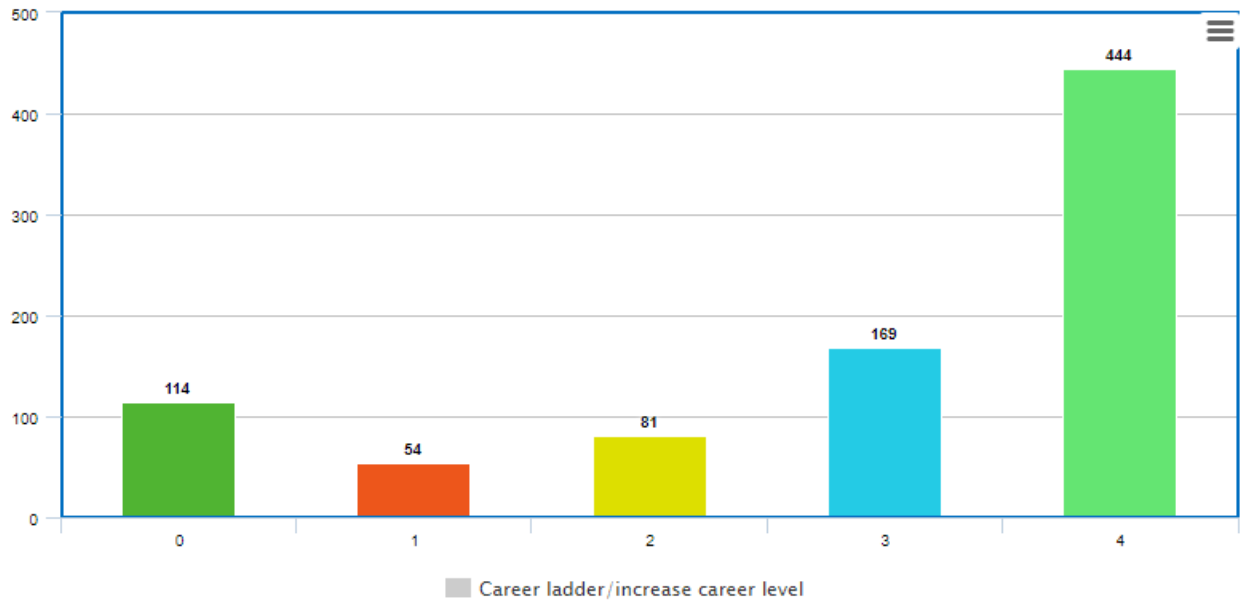
Paid Health Insurance



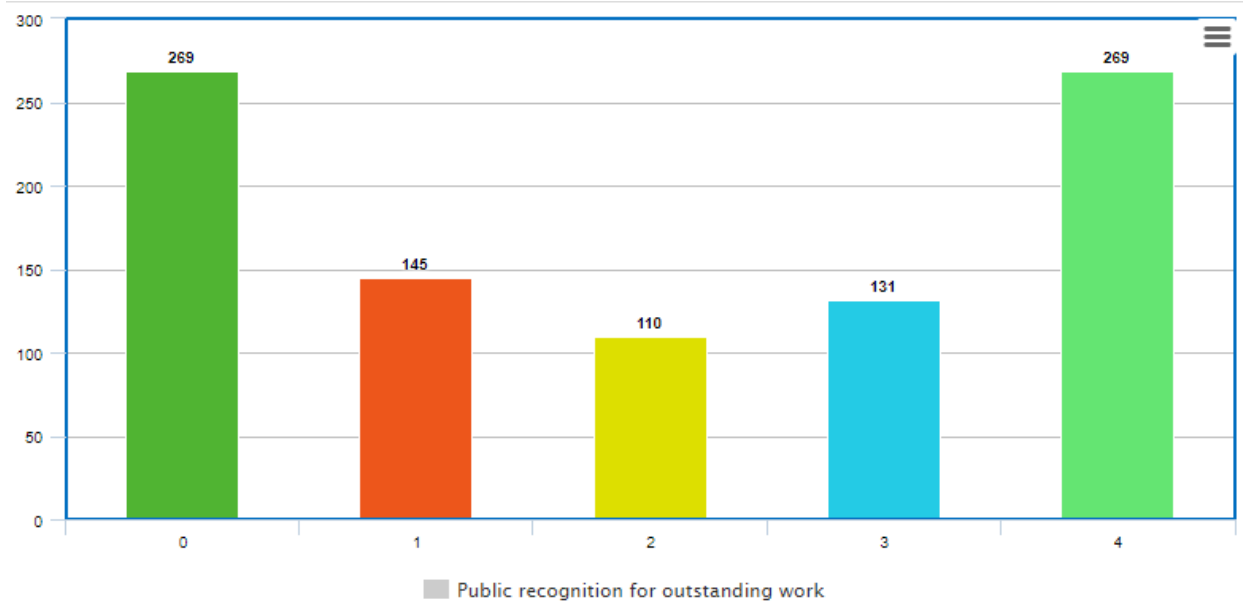
Paid Contribution to Retirement Savings



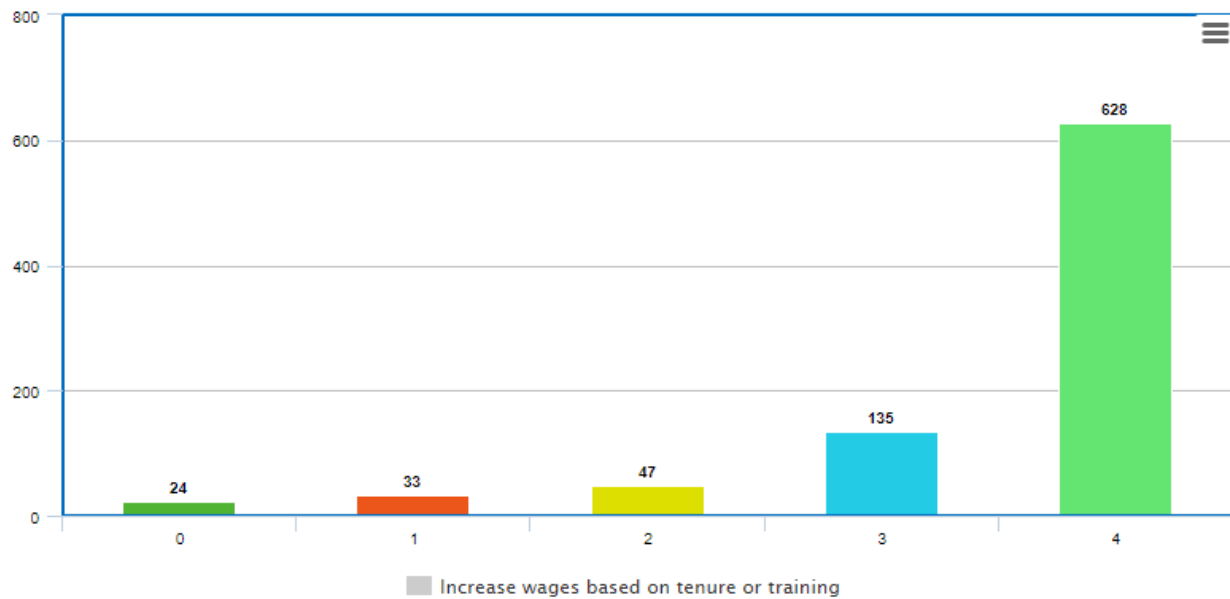
Career ladder/increase career level



Public recognition for outstanding work



Increase wages based on tenure or training



7. Conclusions

Additional work must be done to analyze the outcomes of this survey. However, some preliminary conclusions include:

Administrative Issues

- Simple changes to ensure that job duties are reviewed, job descriptions are provided, and evaluations are completed can promote clarity and communication.
- Reviewing training provided in local schools and comparing training offerings to training interests may lead to adjustments to meet paraeducator needs.
- There is interest in strategies for paraeducators to receive additional recognition for good work.

Training Issues

- Major areas of training interest include understanding trauma, mental and behavioral health and behavioral support, communication and social support /support for students with disabilities and technology use.

Benefits and Opportunity Issues

- The greatest interest from paraeducators was related to increased wages, paid sick leave, paid vacation, paid health insurance, and paid retirement.
- Paraeducators also showed great interest in career advancement opportunities generally, and non-credit, short-term, and certificate training opportunities. Financial aid was also of great interest.