

Issue Brief on Teacher Assistants

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Drawing on teacher organization policies and collective agreement provisions (where they exist), this document provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of teacher assistants in Canadian public schools with respect to the classroom teacher, highlighting issues and concerns. The appendices contain information defining teacher assistants (Appendix 1) and describing how teacher assistants are used (Appendix 2).

In addition to the term 'teacher assistant', a variety of other descriptors are used including: educational assistant, learning support teacher, teacher associate, teacher aide, auxiliary personnel, support personnel, paraprofessional.

Generally speaking, teacher assistants provide needed support to teachers by carrying out a range of non-professional tasks in classrooms and schools. The Alberta Teachers' Association position paper on teachers' assistants notes that:

In all cases the role of assistants should be to assist the quality of teacher-student interaction by removing clerical, technical and supervisory barriers to this interaction. If assistants fulfil this role, the teacher is released for more contact with colleagues, parents and students (individually and in small groups), thereby improving the amount and quality of teacher-to-teacher, teacher-to-parent and teacher-to-student interaction.

Selected Issues

The May 2007 issue of CTF's *Economic & Member Services Notes* highlights the role of educational/teacher assistants in the classroom as an issue of growing importance among Canadian teachers' organizations:

With increasing workloads and greater numbers of students with exceptional needs, teachers are feeling pressure and are rightfully demanding that more classroom support be provided. Education/Teacher Assistants are frequently called upon to provide this support to the teacher and to the students. However, concerns about role infringement, teacher-to-assistant ratios and supervision responsibility, suggest that the introduction of assistants requires monitoring. In some jurisdictions it has been reported anecdotally that teacher-to-EA/TA ratios are alarmingly high.

Manitoba is a case in point where the ratio of teachers to educational assistants is on average one EA for every two teachers; if this trend continues the ratio is projected to be one teacher to one EA by 2012. In addition to the growing number of EAs compared to teachers, the Manitoba Teachers' Society has expressed concerns about the lack of responsibility for setting regulations and minimum standards for EAs in the province, and is pressing the Manitoba department of education to regulate EAs. As there are no hiring criteria or regulations governing EAs, the qualifications and training of the EAs currently employed in public schools ranges from those with education degrees to those with no specific preparation for their roles.

The majority of Manitoba teachers, based on the MTS annual member survey, believe that the most effective method of reducing teacher workload is by hiring more teachers to allow for smaller class sizes, rather than hiring more EAs to help teachers with special needs students. MTS research indicates that for some teachers, having an EA in their classroom may actually add to their workload by increasing demands on organization, space and supervision.

This sentiment is echoed by Alberta teachers. According to the 2007 Alberta Teachers' Association survey of the teaching profession's views on the future of special education, access to the services of well-trained education/teaching assistants is only one of several conditions that must be in place in order for learning to occur in highly diverse classrooms. The vast majority of respondents agreed that

these paraprofessionals require entry-level training as well as ongoing opportunities to increase their knowledge and skills with respect to child development, specific disabilities and disorders, behaviour management, and communication. Inadequately trained teaching assistants become a burden for the teacher, who then has to plan both for the students and for the assistant. Untrained assistants require greater direction, monitoring and supervision.

Toward this end the report recommends that "Alberta Education establish criteria governing the knowledge, skills and experiences that teaching/educational assistants must possess in order to work with students having special needs."

The ATA policy on teachers' assistants opposes the use of teachers' assistants as a rationale for increasing class size or failing to reduce class size. It also opposes the use of TAs when this may result in a reduction of certificated professional staff. In addition to urging school jurisdictions to develop enforceable standards of conduct for noncertificated staff and volunteers, the ATA urges the Alberta Department of Education to develop regulations that set standards for the role, supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals or assistants employed by school boards.

The ATA position paper on teachers' assistants highlights two areas – library services and remedial services – to illustrate how assistants are being used in Alberta to undertake the work of professional teachers:

When the situation called for teacher-librarians, some boards responded by supplying library-technicians. In many cases, boards replaced teacher-librarians with library-technicians. It was argued that, in the absence of financial provision for a teacher-librarian, a library-technician was preferable to no library resource person at all. We must remember though that the library-technician is not qualified to perform the same functions and cannot assume the responsibility of the teacher-librarian.

Unfortunately this is a trend – the use of library technicians at the expense of teacher-librarians – that has been played out elsewhere across the country. With regard to use of TAs to provide remedial services for students, the ATA notes that this has implications for teacher workload:

...when teachers requested the help of specialists to provide help for students needing highly skilled assistance with special learning difficulties, some boards responded by assigning teachers' assistants. This did not resolve the problem: the child did not receive the needed services and, because the teacher cannot allow an unqualified person to perform professional tasks, the teacher experienced no reduction in workload. In some circumstances, teachers have experienced an increase in work responsibilities because the teacher coordinates the work of assistants with students in the teacher's care.

The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation policy makes it clear that "teachers may delegate to or share with others some of the tasks involved in the instruction of a student or students. At the same time, the teacher's basic responsibility for educational decision-making must not be compromised." It also states that "teacher associates shall not displace teachers" and that the STF "should oppose the use of teacher associates when such use denies a teacher a position."

Among the other issues cited by the STF are the following:

- While not common, relationship issues still crop up from time to time related to the expectations that teachers hold for themselves and the expectations held for the TA.
- There is considerable variation among individual TAs with regard to their training or relevant background experiences. As a result, teachers sometimes find that there is a poor "fit" between the TA and the special need(s) that are supposed to be the focus of the individual's work. A related point is that in these circumstances teachers feel that

their workload increases significantly. One result is that, in some cases, teachers are looking for more influence (i.e., a stronger professional voice) in administrative decisions about TA assignments.

- In the past few years, a formal post-secondary training program has been established in Saskatchewan. Anecdotal reports from teachers suggest that graduates are, in general, well prepared for most TA employment situations (or at least much better prepared than individuals who do not undergo this kind of training).

According to the 2008 Saskatchewan Education Indicators Report, there were 3,603 (FTE) Education/Teacher Assistants in 2007-08, up from 3,583 in 2006-07.

The Newfoundland & Labrador Teachers' Association policy on auxiliary personnel in schools emphasizes that

the NLTA clearly recognizes the need for additional professional personnel in the schools of our province and will continue to press for such an increase through a change in the present teacher allocation formula. The NLTA [also] holds that as additional funds for personnel become available at the government and/or school board level, such funds should be utilized to provide additional classroom teachers, and such funds should be utilized for the provision of teacher assistants only when adequate professional requirements have been met.

The New Brunswick teacher collective agreement states that “auxiliary personnel may under no circumstances be used as replacements for licensed teachers.” Similarly the PEI collective agreement stipulates that “auxiliary personnel shall be engaged as supplementary to and not replacements for the certified teacher.”

The growing use of teacher assistants in Canadian public schools is an issue that is embedded in a complex mix of related issues, policies and trends – class size in conjunction with class composition (the increasing degree of student diversity), increasing teacher workload, education funding, the rise of disability rates among Canadian children, and the need to provide adequate support for teachers in making schools more inclusive for students with special needs.

Access to the services of well-trained TAs is an important aspect of this support, as are a number of other necessary conditions required for teachers working in inclusive classrooms (in this case as reported by Alberta teachers):

- class sizes should be small and inversely related to the number of students with special needs;
- teachers and students must have uninterrupted time for instruction;

- school boards should have the latitude to exclude from regular classes students who are highly disruptive and/or who pose a physical risk to other students;
- adequate time to prepare and to collaborate with other teachers;
- access to professional development, workshops and courses to help them acquire the knowledge and skills to work with students with disabilities;
- access to site-based special education/resource teachers;
- access to material resources that would help them to tailor their instructional strategies to the needs of their students;
- access to assistive technology to help students learn more quickly;
- access to an electronic template to help them prepare IPPs [individual program plans]; and
- coordinated support from principals, school board personnel, Alberta Education and other agencies that provide services to students.

It should be noted that as the population of students with special needs in public schools has increased (as reported by educators) combined with the fact that spending on more services for students with special needs is a priority for Canadians, funding for public education as a proportion of provincial budgets has decreased. The share of consolidated provincial/territorial and local government spending in Canada allocated to elementary and secondary education dropped to its lowest level in two decades, falling from a high of 14.6% in 1992-93 to 11.8% in 2007-08.

Putting in place mechanisms to ensure that teachers have opportunities to participate in the decision-making process with respect to inclusive education is critical. A CTF review of 247 teacher collective agreements found that only 19 contained clauses specifically related to the inclusion of children with special needs, most of which “attempt to limit either the number of exceptional students that may be placed in a class or ensure that the placement of exceptional students in a class does not cause the maximum class size to be pierced.”

In PEI a Provincial Joint Committee has been established, with representation from the PEI Dept. of Education, school boards and the PEI Teachers’ Federation, to address class composition concerns. A special fund of \$200,000 per school year (for each of the three years of the contract) has been set aside solely for the purpose of addressing class composition issues, and separate from the resources normally allocated from the Dept. of Education and school boards for supports related to class composition. The Dept. of Education shall allocate the monies to school boards, and the boards shall administer the monies in accordance with the guidelines and procedures established by the Joint Committee.

The CTF review notes that the most comprehensive contract language addressing inclusion of students with special needs is in the Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT) agreement:

Among other things, this clause sets out the processes for integration of students and refers to classifications of exceptionalities that are used to determine the number of students that may be integrated. The formula that is used determines a weighting factor based on the maximum number of students permitted in each integration class divided by the maximum number of students permitted in a self-contained class.

A recurring theme throughout this overview of teacher organization policies and collective agreement provisions on teacher assistants is a recognition that TAs play a vital role in supporting classroom teachers, while also recognizing that they cannot perform the professional responsibilities of certified teachers. Such responsibilities include diagnosing the learning needs of students including students with special needs; prescribing educational programs for students based on those needs; implementing educational programs including selecting appropriate learning resources; reporting on student progress; and evaluating the results of the educational process. The respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and teacher assistants need to be clearly defined and communicated to avoid overlap.

Another theme is that the use of teacher assistants should not result in a reduction of certificated professional staff or an increased workload for already overloaded teachers. Other issues revolve around the qualifications, training, supervision and evaluation of teacher assistants.

Also, a recent CTF review of 21 teacher collective agreements found that many jurisdictions do not have language regarding teacher assistants in terms of stipulating teacher-to-TA ratios or clarifying the role of TAs as classroom supports for teachers.

Appendix 1 – What is a Teacher Assistant?

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) policy defines "educational support personnel" in schools as "those persons other than teachers as defined in the Teaching Profession Act who are directly employed by school boards and who provide educational assistance to students, schools and school boards".

The OTF policy further states:

That every person who is employed to fulfil a teaching role (as authorized by the Acts and Regulations) be qualified as a teacher and employed as a teacher.

That teaching functions which involve decisions regarding: (i) identification of student needs; (ii) planning, development, and implementation of educational programs; and (iii) evaluation and reporting of student progress be the exclusive responsibility of teaching staff.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) believes that, "working together, teachers and support personnel are integral to the success of every school staff. Establishing a professional relationship based on mutual respect and communication is essential. The teacher, as instructional leader, is responsible for program planning, student assessment, and liaison with parents. Support personnel are there to support and assist the teacher with these responsibilities."

The policy statements of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (NLTA) define teacher assistants as "auxiliary personnel assigned to work with a teacher, or small team of teachers." Other examples of auxiliary personnel include library assistants, clerical assistants, audio-visual technicians, volunteers (usually part-time teacher assistants who offer their services without pay), and student assistants who are assigned to work with students with special needs.

The Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU) Guidebook contains a policy on Teacher Assistants which are defined as follows:

A teacher assistant is defined as an individual who is employed to assist the teacher/teachers who work with a child/children who is/are identified as having individual needs out of the ordinary. Teacher assistants should possess training in a course in child care, personal/health care, child development, or experience in related work or an equivalent combination of training and experience.

The New Brunswick teacher collective agreement contains an article (Article 25) on Auxiliary Personnel that defines them as "those persons who assist teachers by performing some of the non-professional functions carried out by teachers.

Such personnel could, for example, provide assistance in classrooms, libraries, shops, laboratories, or assist in supervising halls, lunchrooms, cafeterias, playgrounds or the loading and unloading of buses. Auxiliary personnel are not limited to the above forms of assistance; however, at no time shall they perform any professional function such as: planning, diagnosing, prescribing, instructing and evaluating.”

The Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA) policy on teachers’ assistants notes that:

12.A.1 Teachers’ assistants are those persons other than teachers who directly assist individual or groups of teachers in achieving educational objectives. [1973/85/93]

12.A.2 Permitting teachers’ assistants to assume any professional responsibilities of teachers is educationally unsound. [1973/93]

12.A.5 The teacher has certain professional responsibilities that include

1. diagnosing learning needs of students;
2. prescribing educational programs for students in accordance with those needs;
3. reporting student progress to parents;
4. implementing educational programs; and
5. evaluating the results of the educational process, which the teacher cannot neglect or ethically delegate to any teachers’ assistant. [1973/78/93/2003]

The preamble to the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation (STF) policy on teacher associates states that:

A growing number of people are being employed by school boards to perform a variety of functions that complement the professional role of teachers.

A clear distinction needs to be drawn between teaching functions and those associated functions that are being performed by school personnel who are not certificated teachers.

The policy goes on to state that the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation believes that:

(1) Teacher associates include in-school employees of school boards who have not been hired as certificated teachers, and are responsible to and work under the direction of the principal and/or a designated teacher or teachers.

(2) For the purposes of this policy, the functions of teacher associates can be seen to fall generally into two categories (although it is recognized that individual associates may sometimes perform functions from both categories):

(a) Secretarial, clerical, technical or other functions that support the operation of the school and/or the instruction of students, but are not part of the teaching-learning process.

(b) Functions that involve the teacher associate in tasks directly related to the instructional process of the school.

It is primarily teacher associates in the second category who need their role clearly distinguished from that of teachers.

(3) Certificated teachers are responsible for instruction in the school. The process of instruction includes diagnosing learning needs, prescribing educational programs to meet those needs, selecting appropriate learning materials, implementing educational programs and assessing educational results. Teachers may delegate to or share with others some of the tasks involved in the instruction of a student or students. At the same time, the teacher's basic responsibility for educational decision-making must not be compromised.

The Manitoba Teachers' Society (MTS) has produced a useful booklet, *Teachers and Educational Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities*, "intended to assist teachers in their work with the Educational Assistants who may be working in their classrooms and schools", noting that "a clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities should make the relationship harmonious and productive." EAs are defined as follows:

In Manitoba public schools, educational assistants may provide educational support as volunteers, library assistants, supervisory aides, school secretaries, clerical aides, lunch aides, attendants and markers.

Some terms which you may recognize are:

- **Teacher assistants** are assigned to work with a teacher, principal or a small team of teachers.
- **Student aides / paraprofessionals** are assigned to work with one student or a specific group of students under the direction of a teacher, principal or a group of teachers.
- **School aides** perform a large variety of tasks for the entire teaching staff.
- **Volunteers** are occasional teacher aides or school aides who offer their services without pay.

The MTS booklet also includes a regulation from the Manitoba Education Administration Act on “Persons Having Care and Charge of Pupils” which states in part that a “paraprofessional [educational assistant] shall perform the duties assigned by the principal. Those duties may not include any of the following: (a) organizing or managing the classroom; (b) planning teaching strategies; (c) directing the learning experiences of pupils, including assessing individual needs, selecting materials to meet those needs and evaluating progress.”

The British Columbia School Act (Section 18) states that:

1. Boards may employ persons other than teachers to assist teachers in carrying out their responsibilities and duties under this Act and in the Regulations.
2. Persons employed under subsection (1) shall work under the general supervision of a teacher or administrative officer.

The Quebec Provincial Association of Teachers (QPAT) notes that integration aides, who are considered support staff with their own collective agreements, generally provide support to special needs students while the teacher is teaching.

Appendix 2 – How are Teacher Assistants Used?

CTF policy (2.7.2) states that “Instructional and professional duties normally carried out by teachers should not be performed by persons employed as paraprofessionals, aides, or volunteers. **(1990)**”

CTF policy (3.3.3) also states that teachers responsible for students with special needs require a number of things for successful integration including access to support services. Among the provisions of the policy are the following:

The educational context should facilitate successful integration.

c) When students with special needs are integrated into regular classes, class size and teaching load should be reduced. **(1992)**

d) Personnel to assist in the physical care and routine implementation of special programs should be provided to each student who requires these services. Assistants should carry out their duties under the supervision of the classroom teachers, the in-school administrator and in consultation with additional health-care personnel as required. **(1992)**

e) Such provisions should be negotiated by collective agreement and be subject to grievance procedures. **(1992)**

With specific reference to “Educational Support Personnel” OTF’s policy states:

1. That educational support personnel assume no responsibility for any evaluation involving the school personnel, students, or program.
2. That educational support personnel be responsible to the principal of the school.
3. That educational support personnel not be included in the calculation of student-teacher ratio.
4. That the deployment of educational support personnel within the school be the responsibility of the principal in consultation with staff.
5. That educational support personnel be directly employed by school boards.

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA) in its *Beginning Teachers Handbook* (see section on “Working with Volunteers and Educational Assistants”) describes the relationship between teachers and educational assistants:

Educational assistants are not teachers. The assistant must always work under the direction of the principal or a teacher. Teachers retain full responsibility for diagnosing learning needs, for selecting appropriate

educational programs, for implementing educational programs and for assessing the educational results of students. The role of the educational assistant is to implement student learning strategies under the direction of the teacher.

Usually an assistant is hired to perform special duties with particular students in the classroom. All professional decisions are the teacher's responsibility. The paraprofessional should be treated as a partner on the education team. Invite your assistant to sit in on any conferences which are pertinent, if appropriate. Hold meetings for decision-making purposes and to share information.

When the roles are defined and clarified, the assistant can then decide how to approach the assigned responsibilities. For students to achieve maximum benefits, you will need to build a climate of trust and give encouragement and support to the educational assistant.

One final note: Evaluation of an educational assistant's performance is the responsibility of the principal.

ETFO's policy on "Support Personnel" contains the following provisions:

- That paid support personnel be responsible to the principal of the school.
- That the evaluation of support personnel be the responsibility of the principal and vice-principal.
- That teachers and support personnel be provided additional preparation time within the students' instructional day to plan and communicate.
- That district school boards provide appropriate training for teachers and support personnel to enhance the effectiveness of teachers and support personnel working together.
- That district school boards provide appropriate training for support personnel that is relative to the condition of his/her students(s).

ETFO also identifies a number of important considerations for developing an effective working relationship between teachers and support personnel:

The role of the teacher and the role of the support personnel should be established and clarified at the beginning of each school year. This could be done between the two of you, and/or in consultation with other staff or the school administration, depending on the circumstances of the particular assignment.

Role descriptions, responsibilities, and duties must be clearly defined and should be communicated to the whole school team at the beginning of each school year to assist in preventing: overlap; communication problems; or confusion or conflict regarding role description.

Expectations and protocols should also be clearly established. These should include:

- Communication – with each other, with parents and students, with administration;
- Strategies for classroom management;
- The appropriate way to express concerns;
- Confidentiality;
- Ethics and professionalism;
- Use of non-violent crisis intervention and/or restraint procedures; or
- Administration of medication and emergency procedures.

NLTA's policy on auxiliary personnel in schools stipulates the following:

3. Every person who is employed to fulfill an instructional role (as authorized by the Acts and Regulations) shall be qualified as a teacher and under contract as a teacher.

a) The function of auxiliary personnel is to assist the teacher or student to whom assigned.

b) Auxiliary personnel shall assume no responsibility for any evaluation involving the school personnel, pupils, or program.

c) Auxiliary personnel shall be responsible to the principal of the school.

d) Any teacher has the right to decline auxiliary personnel services.

e) Auxiliary personnel shall not be included in the calculation of student-teacher ratio.

f) Teaching functions which involve decisions regarding diagnosis of pupil difficulties, prescription of learning experiences and evaluation of pupil progress are the exclusive domain of professional teaching staff.

g) The deployment and assignment of duties within the school of auxiliary personnel who are to work in a classroom setting are the responsibility of the teachers involved in consultation with the principal.

4. Volunteers in the school are responsible persons who provide a service to the school to fulfill specific needs, as determined by the principal and the teaching staff directly involved, without reimbursement or contractual commitments of any kind.

Regarding the specific role of student assistants, NLTA policy states that:

The primary role of the student assistant is to assist the special needs student(s) in the effective implementation of the student's Individualized Program Plan (IPP) under the direction of the program planning team. The student assistant shall not be responsible for instruction, assessment, program design, evaluation, or reporting to parents.

To fully implement the special needs students' program as outlined by the IPP, student assistants may be required to carry out, under the direction of the program planning team, personal care duties such as, but not limited to feeding, cleaning, toileting; portering, lifting; and individual student supervision. If such services are routinely required in order for a student to be in regular attendance at school, student assistant(s) shall be provided in sufficient numbers to carry out such duties.

The NLTA reports that there are about 897 student assistants employed in the NL school system.

The NSTU policy on Teacher Assistants states that:

professional teachers should be free to teach and that non-professional tasks may be performed by other personnel. Teacher assistants should be assigned to a school under the direction of a teacher/principal to work with a child/children identified as having individual needs which necessitate the use of additional services and supports. The NSTU maintains that only teachers can be responsible for programs and program delivery. The teacher's responsibility for students and for educational decision-making is not changed by the addition of teacher assistants. Teacher assistants can assist but should not be assigned to the program; rather, they should be assigned to a student/students or to a teacher.

The specific duties of a teacher assistant are varied, from assisting students requiring medication administration, attending to basic physical needs (toiletry, feeding, etc.), giving assistance under the teacher's direction, shadowing students and performing classroom clerical duties. It must be stressed that whatever the teacher assistant is assigned to do, it is always under the supervision of a competent educational professional.

A provision in the PEI teacher collective agreement (Article 36.01) governs the use of Auxiliary Personnel as follows:

(a) The function of auxiliary personnel is to assist the teacher;

(b) Teaching tasks such as planning, diagnosing, prescribing, instructing and evaluating are the responsibility of the certified teacher; responsibility for such tasks shall not be delegated to auxiliary personnel;

(c) Auxiliary personnel shall be responsible to the principal of the school to which they are assigned and shall be supervised by a certified teacher or group of teachers;

(d) No teacher shall be required to use the services of auxiliary personnel;

(e) Auxiliary personnel shall be engaged as supplementary to and not replacements for the certified teacher.

(f) The principal shall ensure that prior to working in a school, auxiliary personnel are provided with an orientation program.

Provisions of the article on Auxiliary Personnel in the NB teacher collective agreement state that:

25.02 Auxiliary personnel may under no circumstances be used as replacements for licensed teachers.

25.03 Auxiliary personnel shall be assigned to a school only after consultation with the principal and teaching staff and shall work under the supervision and direction of the professional staff of the school.

25.04 Auxiliary personnel shall not be assigned specifically to one or more teachers without consulting the teacher(s) concerned. If the teacher wishes to further discuss this specific assignment, a meeting between the teacher, the Director of Education and the principal involved shall be arranged to resolve the matter.

25.05 Qualified teachers acting as auxiliary personnel shall at all times be restricted to the provisions of Clauses 25.01, 25.02, 25.03 and 25.04.

The ATA policy on teachers' assistants states that:

12.A.3 Specific functions and duties of teachers' assistants should be determined by the teacher to whose class the teacher's assistant(s) is assigned rather than by statute or departmental regulation.
[1971/73/75/78/83/85/93/2003]

12.A.4 Assignment of a teachers' assistant to a class as justification for increasing or failing to reduce class size is opposed.
[1971/73/75/78/83/85/93/2003]

12.A.6 The assignment of a teachers' assistant must have the approval of the teacher to whom the assistant is assigned, and such teacher shall determine the assistant's specific duties. [1973/93/2003]

12.A.7 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the utilization of teachers' assistants when such utilization may effect a reduction of certificated professional staff. [1985/93]

12.A.8 Alberta public colleges should ensure that their education programs for teachers' assistants prepare them for the inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes. [1992/95/98/2002]

12.A.9 Teachers supervising a teachers' assistant should be able to provide input into the evaluation of the assistant's performance. [1999/2002]

The STF policy on teacher associates states that:

(4) Where a position requires and uses the skills of a certificated teacher, the position must be filled by a person employed as a certificated teacher. Teacher associates shall not displace teachers.

(a) The Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation should oppose the use of teacher associates when such use denies a teacher a position.

(5) The role in the school library of a clerical aide or library technician needs to be defined clearly as being one of support for a qualified teacher librarian.

(6) Where a teacher associate is assigned to support a teacher, the teacher's instructional responsibilities should not be excessive.

(7) The principals and teachers concerned should be consulted in the decision to employ teacher associates and in the hiring process.

(8) Boards of education should develop guidelines for the use of teacher associates. School policies and procedures based on these guidelines should be developed to include such matters as adequate role descriptions, the clear designation of supervisory responsibility for teacher associates, provision for the orientation and training of teacher associates, procedures for evaluating them, and the expectations of them in such specific areas as student discipline, school ethics and parent-school communications.

Starting from the basic assumption that "the roles of both teachers and teacher assistants are integral to ensuring the success of students with special needs", a

BCTF/CUPE joint paper outlines some of the specific roles and responsibilities of teachers and teacher assistants regarding special needs students, as well as shared roles and responsibilities. These fall into 4 categories:

1. Designing programs and planning and organizing learning experiences for students with special needs.
2. Implementing programs for students with special needs: Delivery of service.
3. Assessing, evaluating, reporting and recording student progress.
4. Developing supportive environments for learners, their families, school and district staffs.

The B.C. Ministry of Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Special Education Services stipulates that:

“The teacher responsible for a student with special needs is responsible for designing, supervising and assessing the educational program for that student.” (B.7)

“Teachers are expected to design programs for students with special needs. Teacher assistants play a key role in many programs for students with special needs, performing functions, which range from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs. Under the supervision of a teacher they may play a key role in implementing the program.”

“While teacher assistants may assist in the collection of data for the purpose of evaluating student progress, the teachers are responsible for evaluating and reporting on the progress of the student to parents.” (B.8)

The MTS policy on “Guidelines for Use of Educational Assistants” (revised 2007) states that:

- a) The teaching staff shall at all times supervise persons employed as educational assistants.
- b) Teachers who are not school administrators do not participate in the written evaluation of educational assistants.
- c) Educational assistants shall not perform teaching tasks. Teaching tasks include such functions as planning, diagnosing, prescribing, evaluating and selecting learning resources to meet pupils’ needs.

- d) Teachers shall be involved in the selection of educational assistants.
- e) Educational assistants shall not be time-tabled for supervision responsibilities in classroom environments including libraries, excluding noon hour supervision.
- f) Educational assistants shall not be assigned to supervision responsibilities on student field trips without the presence of a supervising teacher.

In addition the MTS booklet on “Teachers and EAs” contains a section outlining the duties of teachers and of educational assistants, as well as joint teacher/EA activities, in the areas of planning, programming, supervising, assessing, teaching, evaluating and reporting. There is also a section with questions based on real situations reported by teachers.

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