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STRAIT REGIONAL SCHOOL BOARD <i>Excellence in Lifelong Learning</i> POLICIES AND GUIDELINES	Students with Special Needs TEACHER ASSISTANTS Framework: Objectives and Principles	
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TEACHER ASSISTANTS
Framework: Objectives and Principles

POLICY STATEMENT

The Strait Regional School Board supports the initiatives of the Nova Scotia Department of Education in promoting and implementing inclusive education. This includes the provision of support services that will assist students with special needs to achieve to their potential. To that end, the Board adheres to relevant provincial legislation, policy and procedure including but not limited to: the *Education Act*, the Special Education Policy (2008) and the Teacher Assistant Guidelines (2009).

The purpose of this policy is to define the roles, responsibilities, expectations, allocation and supervision practices associated with teacher assistant services in our schools.

Principles

Fundamental Principles

1. Teacher Assistant support is provided with the objective of assisting students to become as independent as possible in all aspects of school life.
2. Teacher Assistants are paraprofessionals who work under direct teacher supervision to provide support for the education of students with special needs.
3. Teacher Assistants provide programming support in the areas of personal care and safety/behaviour management.
4. Teacher Assistants are expected to work co-operatively as members of a school community by respecting privacy and confidentiality.

Allocation, Assignment and Supervision of Teacher Assistants

1. To foster student independence and to provide opportunities for students with special needs to interact with a wide range of adults and age peers in the school setting, it is recommended that Teacher Assistants complete regular rotations and work with several students during the school day.

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2. The allocation of Teacher Assistant support to schools is part of the annual staffing process completed by the Strait Regional School Board.
3. The scheduling, deployment and supervision of Teacher Assistants in schools is the responsibility of the school administrators and supervising teachers.
4. Teacher Assistant assignments are determined by a variety of factors, including individual student challenges, student gender, rotation practices and the changing profile of school requirements for teacher assistant support.
5. For students requiring assistance with personal care, it is recommended that the teacher assistant be the same gender as the student, whenever possible.
6. In instances where the school requirement for teacher assistant support changes, the school principal will make a written request to the Director of Programs and Student Services for a needs assessment. At the Director's request, the Coordinators of Student Services will complete a school-based needs assessment. A decision will then be enacted regarding the reduction or increase of teacher assistant support at the school.
7. Supervision and evaluation of teacher assistants is the responsibility of the principal and implemented as per the requirements of the Board's Human Resources Department (refer to Performance Management Process – Support Staff), governing collective agreements and provincial guidelines. It is the responsibility of the principal to complete an annual performance appraisal of the teacher assistant within this supervisory framework.
8. The principal is responsible for the orientation of teacher assistants to their specific school assignments.

Restricted Duties

Teacher assistants must neither be given responsibility for nor engage in:

- planning and/or initiating learning activities for students
- attending program planning team meetings
- selection of learning resources and/or instructional activities
- substitute teaching
- evaluation of school programs, student work and/or the job performance of school staff
- reporting to parents/guardians or outside agencies

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- accessing or recording information in student records as per provincial and board student records policies, IV-A-1, IV-A-2, IV-A-3, IV-A-4 and IV-A-5.
- participation in activities contrary to the Strait Regional School Board’s Staff Conflict of Interest Policy V-B-5.

Continuing Education

1. Teacher Assistants are expected to participate in training and certification as required to fulfill the position requirements.
2. Continuing education for teacher assistants will be provided as per identified school requirements, teacher assistant certification needs, provisions contained in the collective agreement and identified priorities of the Strait Regional School Board. Responsibility for the organization of professional development activities for teacher assistants lies with the Coordinators of Student Services in consultation with school principals and partner agencies.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Principals

Teachers’ Responsibilities

“Teachers are responsible for teaching all students who are placed under their supervision and care. This includes responsibility for safety and well-being, as well as program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This is not a responsibility that can be transferred or delegated to non-teaching staff.”

(Special Education Policy, Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008)

Teachers working with a teacher assistant have the following responsibilities:

- collaborating with the teacher assistant, providing regular feedback, discussing and clarifying specific job functions based on the needs of the student(s)
- ensuring ongoing communication with the teacher assistant (e.g., through communication books, logs, and discussions according to board policy or practice)
- informing the teacher assistant of classroom procedures and the established school matrixes according to positive and effective behavioural support (PEBS)

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- informing and modelling confidentiality practices pertaining to home-school relationships
- resolving conflicts with the teacher assistant with the teacher assistant first, administration second, and school board third, reflecting board policies
- serving as primary contact with parents and guardians
- informing the school principal or designate when students whom the teacher assistant is supporting are absent so that the teacher assistant’s schedules or assignments can be adjusted
- collaborating with the principal regarding identified job functions and performance appraisal of the teacher assistant(s)

“... teachers must be willing to operate under a new set of assumptions, to redesign curriculum, to be imaginative in creating classroom environments, be innovative in instruction, and to be cooperative in collaborating with peers, special education personnel, and paraeducators.” [Winzer, M.A. “The Dilemma of Support: Paraeducators and the Inclusive Movement.” *Exceptionality Education Canada* 15, no. 2 (2005): 101-123]

Principals’ Responsibilities

“The principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for the school, including teachers and other staff.” (Education Act, Section 38(1))

Principals have the following responsibilities:

- daily management, supervision, and evaluation of all school personnel including teacher assistants
- scheduling, assigning responsibilities to, and supervising teacher assistants in collaboration with teachers and student services staff
- providing information to teacher assistants about relevant legislation, provincial and board-level policies, procedures, and practices, including union contracts
- meeting the training needs of teacher assistants in collaboration with the school board; specific training needs may be required for personal/medical or safety/behaviour management support

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- supervising teacher assistants and communicating with teachers and teacher assistants, verbally and in writing, regarding the teacher assistants' schedules, specific job functions, and performance expectations of the assignment
- ensuring that teacher assistants work the hours established and that scheduling, including lunch breaks and before and after school time, is based on the goal of meeting the specific program needs of identified students

"... policies and systems are needed that reflect these changes in both teacher and paraeducator roles. Equipping teachers, administrators, and paraeducators with the skills necessary to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous student population lies at the core of changing practices and improving access. School systems must confront in-service training for teachers and paraeducators, the clear delineation of support roles, and appropriate supervisory modes." [Winzer, M.A. "The Dilemma of Support: Paraeducators and the Inclusive Movement." *Exceptionality Education Canada* 15, no. 2 (2005): 101-123]