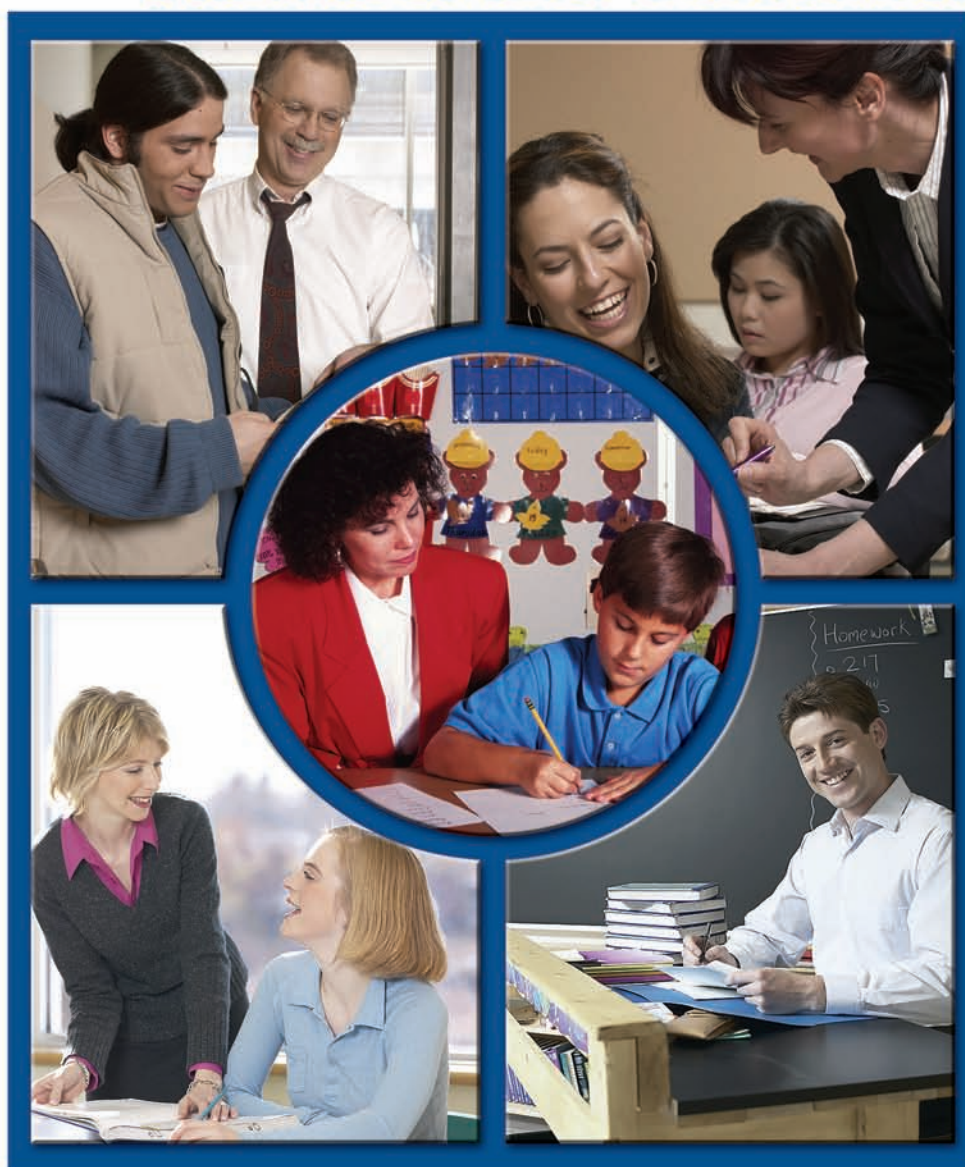




Department of Education
Student Services

Teachers and Support Staff Working Together

Standards and Guidelines



A Handbook for Teachers and Support Staff



Department of Education

*Teachers and Support Staff
Working
Together
Standards and Guidelines*

Acknowledgments

The Department of Education appreciates the efforts of all who have contributed to the development of this document.

Department of Education Student Services Advisory Working Group

Members of the Student Services and Special Education Standing Committee

Eastern School District Students Services

Western School Board Students Services

La commission scolaire de langue française de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard

Copyright Ownership

Care has been taken to acknowledge copyright material used in the development of this document. Any information that will allow the Prince Edward Island Department of Education to rectify any reference in subsequent editions would be gratefully received by the:

Special Education Coordinator, Department of Education
PO Box 2000, Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8

Contact Information:

Special Education Coordinator, Student Services Division
Department of Education
PO Box 2000, Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8
Tel.: (902) 368-4639
Fax.: (902) 368-4622

This handbook can be accessed on the Department of Education's website at:
www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/ed_tssworktog.pdf

June 2005

Table of Contents

Preamble	3
Standards and Guidelines for Teachers and Support Staff Working Together .	4
Introduction	7
Roles and Responsibilities of Support Staff	9
General Knowledge and Skills	11
Specialized Qualifications and Typical Duties	14
Educational Assistant	14
Youth Service Worker	18
Roles and Responsibility Chart	22
Information for Teachers and Support Staff Working Together	23
Personal Philosophy	24
Teaching Strategies	24
Classroom Management	24
Daily Planning	25
Flexibility	25
Understanding the Implications and Challenges of the Support Staff Role ..	27
Promoting Inclusion	27
Fostering Independence	28
Communication, Professionalism and Confidentiality	32
Conclusion	35
Appendices	
Minister's Directive	
Continuum of Services	
Positive Relationships Checklists	
References	

The object of teaching a child is to enable him to get along without his teacher.

Elbert Hubbard (1856-1915)

Preamble

The reality of teaching in the twenty first century is that schools must be prepared to meet the needs of a diverse group of learners. Teachers are responsible for the overall direction, education and management of programming, evaluating, reporting, and designing interventions for all students within the classroom. However, it should not be expected that any one teacher will have the repertoire of skills to meet the needs of all students all of the time. Classroom/subject teachers must be prepared to work collaboratively with parents*, other professionals and support staff to help students achieve success in learning.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide administrators, teachers, support staff, and other school personnel with information that will assist in developing successful working relationships. When roles and responsibilities of school personnel and support staff are clear and well understood, everyone will benefit.

* The term *parent* is used throughout this document to refer to parents and guardians.

Standards and Guidelines for Teachers and Support Staff Working Together

One of the supports in a wide continuum of support services available to students with special educational needs may be “additional assistance from [student] support staff within school settings”. (MD No. 2001-08)

- *Support staff refers to employees allocated to work in schools to assist administrators, teachers and school counsellors to address special educational needs within the school.*
- *Support staff may be assigned to schools where students with special educational needs have Individual Education Plans that demonstrate an assessed need for assistance, beyond what can be otherwise provided by teachers and other school personnel.*
- *Support staff must work under the supervision of school principals and the direction of certified teachers.*
- *Support staff must be versatile, well-trained and multi-skilled in order to competently fulfill the requirements of their respective roles.*
- *Support staff must continue to build capacity in knowledge and skills as it relates to current and potential assignments.*
- *Support staff must be prepared to work collaboratively as part of the educational partnership which includes parents, teachers, other professionals and other support staff.*
- *Support staff must remain flexible and be prepared to adapt duties and schedules in order to respond to changes in students’ needs in the school and/or at the Board/District level.*

- *Support staff must work in cooperation with school staff to ensure that assignments and schedules achieve the most efficient and effective use of their time.*
- *Support staff have a responsibility to participate in planning for students with other school personnel.*
- *Support staff must be well-versed in strategies which maximize the independence of students with special educational needs and provide opportunities for students to grow and develop within a natural school environment.*
- *Support staff act as inclusion facilitators with the goal of achieving an optimum level of inclusion in regular instructional settings.*
- *Support staff must respect and follow appropriate lines of communication as outlined in guidelines and policies of the school, district/board and department.*
- *Support staff have a professional responsibility to model and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other as well as for teachers, students, parents, and other professionals.*
- *Support staff have an obligation to respect the confidentiality of students and their families.*

Introduction

The Department of Education, Student Services Division, has the responsibility to set policies for the provision of special education and to define goals, standards, guidelines and priorities for students with special educational needs in the province of Prince Edward Island. *The Minister's Directive on Special Education* No. MD 2001-08 (see appendix) is the policy that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, school boards and schools. The directive is a framework document that provides for a continuum of support services based on the philosophy of inclusionary practices.

Like most educational jurisdictions in Canada, Prince Edward Island believes in a philosophy of inclusion. Students with varying degrees of special educational needs are provided with services and programs, based on the assessed needs of each student (a non-categorical approach), that will enable them to be educated with their age appropriate peers in neighbourhood schools. While most students will have their educational needs met in the classroom, some situations will require assistance beyond what classroom/subject teachers can provide. A continuum of support services is available to students with special educational needs in Prince Edward Island. (see appendix).

One of those supports may be the individual, paired, and/or shared support of trained support staff, who assist in the implementation of individual educational plans under the direction of classroom/subject teachers and under the supervision of school principals.

Support staff are assigned to schools annually by school boards/districts based on allocations provided by the Department of Education. The assignment process considers assessment information gathered from schools that prioritizes needs within the school.

This assessment information will include:

- overall special educational needs in the school;
- availability of resources that support students with special educational needs;
- individual education plans which specify role of support staff.

Although support staff have been an integral part of the education scene on PEI for many years, their numbers in Island classrooms have increased substantially in the last decade in proportion to the increasing number of students with special educational needs. Driven by societal change, and with the help of more sophisticated identification processes and medical interventions, greater numbers of students with special educational needs are attending school and being included with their peers. The nature of these special needs has also changed significantly resulting in the need for a wide range of versatile, multi-skilled support staff to assist educators.

The increased numbers and diverse nature of students with special educational needs have made a difference in the working relationship between teachers and support personnel. In the 1970s and 1980s, most of the planning around the integration of students with special educational needs was carried out by special education personnel with classroom/subject teachers having little input. In today's school, the teacher is a core member of the school-based team of professionals who will develop Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special educational needs.

The particular needs of the student have always determined the level and kind of support required and support staff have played an important role in the implementation of the IEP. However, guiding the work of support staff as inclusion facilitators in the classroom and in the school is a relatively new experience for Island administrators and teachers. The purpose of this handbook is to assist all parties in supporting this "new" collaboration.

Roles and Responsibilities of Support Staff _____

- *Support staff refers to employees allocated to work in schools to assist administrators, teachers and school counsellors to address special educational needs within the school.*
- *Support staff may be assigned to schools where students with special educational needs have Individual Education Plans that demonstrate an assessed need for assistance, beyond what can be otherwise provided by teachers and other school personnel.*
- *Support staff must work under the supervision of school principals and the direction of certified teachers.*
- *Support staff must be versatile, well-trained and multi-skilled in order to competently fulfill the requirements of their respective roles.*
- *Support staff must continue to build capacity in knowledge and skills as it relates to current and potential assignments.*



This wide range of services, in addition to classroom/subject teachers, is available to students with special educational needs.

The *PEI Student Services (1-12) Continuum of Services and Placement Options – Only as Special as Necessary* (see appendix) describes many of the support services and special programs that are functioning in Island schools. This wide range of services, in addition to classroom/subject teachers, is available to students with special educational needs. The term *support staff* encompasses a number of distinctive classifications of human resource support available to assist school staffs in meeting special educational needs. Some examples of support staff are educational assistants, youth service workers, job coaches, physical attendants, classroom mentors and tutors who support literacy programs and provide academic assistance for English Second Language (ESL) learners, students who are deaf or hard of hearing and who are blind or visually impaired.

In addition to teachers and other service-related professionals, support staff provide assistance on a school-wide basis as well as in regular classrooms. They are responsible for carrying out a variety of duties which may be specific to individuals or address the needs of groups of students.

Two of the most prevalent classifications of support staff assigned to schools are educational assistants and youth service workers. Educational assistants may be involved in the implementation of some individual education plans by providing support with personal care, social skills, behavioural and cognitive support for students with special educational needs. Youth service workers provide support services in the classroom, the community, and the home for students experiencing severe behavioural difficulties. Also, youth service workers assist both individuals and groups of students in the areas of social and life skills programming.



Teachers are responsible for the overall direction, education and management of programming, evaluating, reporting, and designing interventions for all students within the classroom.

The success of the support staff role depends greatly on the level of cooperation and collaboration that exists among all the educational partners. School principals must ensure that all school staff have a clear understanding of where support staff services fit into their school plan. Support staff must have a clear understanding of their roles and how the school addresses the needs of all students.

Teachers are responsible for the overall direction, education and management of programming, evaluating, reporting, and designing interventions for all students within the classroom. Therefore, any and all activities that support staff are assigned to carry out must be directed and monitored by a teacher or other teaching professional.

General Knowledge and Skills

To help support students with special educational needs in an inclusive educational setting, all support staff must demonstrate the following:

- a general knowledge of the legal and human rights of children and youth with special educational needs and their families;
- a knowledge of child and youth development and appreciation of risk factors that may influence typical development;
- a sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritage, life styles, and value systems among the students they support and their families;
- an ability to assist in the implementation of individual education plans for students with special educational needs so that the students may function as independently as possible within the context of the regular lesson plan framework as developed by the classroom/subject teacher;
- an understanding of the role of support staff as “inclusion facilitators” with the goal of achieving an optimal level of inclusion in regular instructional settings therefore maximizing independence;
- an ability to help students build self-esteem and develop self-advocacy skills by appropriately withdrawing support and giving them the opportunity to learn and socialize independently with peers;
- effective problem solving, time management, and organizational skills;

- sufficient physical capabilities, stamina, and coordination to competently meet the demands of a wide range of student needs;
- a willingness to support students during unstructured times in school, i.e. lunch, recess, etc.
- a willingness and readiness to participate in ongoing professional development to increase knowledge and improve skills required to meet the needs of the students on whose behalf they have been assigned;
- a positive regard for the distinction among roles and responsibilities of administrators, teachers, and support staff;
- an understanding that the nature of the support staff role is to be directed by educators and an acceptance that the classroom/subject teacher is responsible for the student in an educational setting;
- a proficiency in academic skills, including oral and written communication, so that support staff may follow through on reinforcement techniques designed by teachers;
- an ability to establish and maintain rapport with students, teachers, and other school personnel by working collaboratively within a team structure;
- an ability to follow directions of teachers to gather and maintain data about the performance and behaviour of individual students;
- an ability to operate computers, assistive technology, and adaptive equipment that will enable students with special educational needs to participate more fully in regular education classes;

- a willingness and ability to assist the teacher in carrying out recommendations of consultants such as psychologists or speech/language therapists; and
- knowledge of and compliance with board/district and provincial policies dealing with the rights and well-being of students and staff such as:
 - ▶ appropriate lines of communication;
 - ▶ child abuse protocol;
 - ▶ annual assignment process;
 - ▶ criminal record checks;
 - ▶ certification in First Aid and CPR; and
 - ▶ crisis response and physical restraint procedures.

Specialized Qualifications and Typical Duties ---



Educational Assistants work under the supervision of school principals and the direction of certified teachers to assist in the implementation of individual education plan (IEP) goals and objectives.



Not all students with special educational needs and on IEP's will require the support of educational assistants.

Educational Assistant

Educational Assistants work under the supervision of school principals and the direction of certified teachers to assist in the implementation of individual education plan (IEP) goals and objectives. Teachers develop lesson plans that specify what needs to be accomplished with all students in the classroom. Within that plan, teachers differentiate for the specific needs of all students. Teachers use the students' IEP's to make specific decisions regarding what materials the student will need, how the lesson will be presented, method of student practice, how the student will demonstrate learning and level of support required. Please note: Not all students with special educational needs and on IEP's will require the support of educational assistants.

Qualifications

Two (2) years of formal training in the education of persons with special educational needs (e.g. Human Services Program) or any equivalent program from a recognized institution; or

four thousand (4000) hours of experience as an Educational Assistant:

- ▶ providing instructional support for individuals with special educational needs;
- or
- ▶ providing a mixture of social, physical, and instructional support for individuals with special educational needs;
- or
- ▶ any combination of the above totalling four thousand (4000) hours. (See Collective Agreement Union Local 3260, July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2007.)

Typical Duties

Educational assistants work with students who have special educational needs *and* are on individual education plans *and* require support in one or more of the following areas, personal care, social skills, behaviour and cognitive functioning. In any one of these areas there are a number of responsibilities that educational assistants may be expected to fulfill.

Personal Care Support

In the area of personal care support, educational assistants may be expected to:

- provide for the personal care needs of students, which may include feeding, dressing and undressing, toileting and daily hygiene;
- assist with student mobility, including lifting and positioning students, exercising and supporting, embarking and disembarking from transporting vehicles, or any other mobility support as outlined in the IEP;
- administer medication and carry out medical procedures under the supervision of the school principal and in accordance with Board and/or Department of Education policies;
- promote a healthy and safe environment which respects the dignity and privacy of students;
- support students in their participation in activities in the community; and
- promote and encourage student independence and self-management to the greatest extent possible.

Social Skill Support

An important part of the support staff role is to facilitate the inclusion of students with special educational needs, not only in the classroom and school, but in the broader community as well. To this end, educational assistants must be able to:

- use appropriate strategies and techniques in a variety of settings to assist in the development of generalized social skills;
- use appropriate strategies and techniques to increase the student's self-esteem, with the objective of helping the student develop self-control, self reliance and self-advocacy skills; and
- use and encourage peer and other natural supports on a routine basis.

Behaviour Support

Educational assistants may work with students whose IEP includes a behavioural component.

Educational assistants may:

- assist in the implementation of strategies which address the behavioural component of the IEP in collaboration with other support staff and the team of professionals involved;
- assist in developing skills which provide appropriate alternatives to undesirable behaviours ie. replacement behaviours;
- apply non-violent crisis intervention strategies including, when necessary, the appropriate use of approved physical restraint techniques, when physical restraint is part of the individual plan for the student and parental approval has been given;

- when requested, keep records/written information on students' performance to ensure accurate and relevant data is collected and available to the teacher and other involved professionals; and
- assist the teacher in managing the learning environment to support positive changes in behaviour and a positive class climate for all students.

Cognitive Functioning Support

Educational assistants can often contribute valuable suggestions regarding a student's reaction to a particular lesson and the level of support that the student required to complete the task.

Educational assistants may :

- assist teachers in implementing IEP objectives, developed and introduced by teachers, through the use of developmentally and age appropriate strategies, equipment, materials and technologies;
- assist teachers in adapting strategies and preparing materials according to the needs of the student;
- follow teachers' verbal and written plans, seeking clarification as needed and provide feedback based on student observation; and
- be required to demonstrate the use of strategies which will assist students in achieving their optimum cognitive functioning and level of independence.

Educational assistants provide an invaluable service to the school system by helping students, to whom they are assigned, participate in school life with their peers. When educational assistants use strategies which develop student independence, the evidence of success will be the degree to which students are able to 'do for themselves'.



When educational assistants use strategies which develop student independence, the evidence of success will be the degree to which students are able to 'do for themselves'.

As part of the collaborative team that creates and carries out the individual educational plan, educational assistants strive for successful outcomes for students.

Youth Service Worker

Youth Service Workers work under the supervision of school principals and the direction of school counsellors and teachers to assist in the implementation of specific behaviour management and social and life skills programs in accordance with plans established by the school based student services team.

Qualifications:

- proof of completion of a Youth Service Worker Program from Holland College or a comparable program from another recognized post secondary institution.

Employers of Youth Service Workers have the responsibility and right to outline specific skills and experience required to fill any particular assignment, e.g.:

- ▶ demonstrated ability to apply non-violent crisis intervention and behavioural modification techniques in a variety of settings;
- ▶ training in approved physical restraint techniques;
- ▶ demonstrated ability to assist other groups/agencies in providing life skill programming which might include anger management, parent information sessions, and substance abuse prevention;
- ▶ ability to work independently outside the school setting; and
- ▶ experience working in educational settings.

Typical Duties

The primary role of the youth service worker is to promote behavioural change and personal growth in youth who are having difficulties coping within the school setting. These difficulties are usually a result of social, emotional and psychological issues which negatively affect their academic success. The school within the community setting can be seen as a microcosm which provides students with a real world setting, a training ground in which to practice life skills.

Community Extension

Youth Service Workers work with alternate school programs to assist in the implementation of IEP's which focus on behaviour, by extending support services beyond the traditional school setting into the community and home.

Youth Service Workers may be required to:

- provide community outreach service to students with severe absenteeism problems;
- liaise with families through home visits, phone calls and meetings;
- assist teachers and counsellors in establishing and maintaining contact with significant government departments and community agencies;
- assist with functional readiness skills and monitor community placements where such placements are part of the individual behaviour plan for the student;
- assist with transition of students into alternative school settings and back into regular classroom settings; and
- assist with transition of students returning from justice or mental health facilities.

Behaviour Management

In a school setting, youth service workers work under the direction of administrators, school counsellors and teachers to assist students experiencing severe challenges in the area of behaviour management.

Youth service workers may be required to:

- provide crisis intervention for students who present a danger to themselves or others;
- apply non-violent crisis intervention and behaviour modification techniques in a variety of settings;
- apply approved physical restraint techniques when part of the plan for student and with parental permission;
- observe behaviour, gather data, and provide input into the development and implementation of individual behaviour plans; and
- keep written records following the guidelines of the province, district/board, or school.

Social and Life Skills Programming

Youth Service Workers work under the direction of administrators, school counsellors and teachers to assist both individuals and groups of students in social and life skills programming. The role is not a traditional counselling role, but rather an activity-based encounter, where the activity becomes the means of setting up a relationship.

Youth Service Workers may be required to:

- assist teachers and counsellors in providing one to one or group sessions for the purpose of developing problem solving and decision making skills;



The role of the youth service worker is a sensitive one which sometimes requires that the youth service worker act as an advocate and liaison.

- work one on one with referred students experiencing severe behavioural difficulties; (**note:** schools should use written referral forms for individual referrals and parents must be made aware of such referrals.)
- prepare and maintain records and reports as may be required to provide feedback on student progress to school personnel and parents. All such records and reports are subject to provincial, board/district, and school guidelines; and
- assist in the delivery of special programs which might include anger management, substance abuse prevention, bullying prevention, and parent support groups.

The role of the youth service worker is a sensitive one which sometimes requires that the youth service worker act as an advocate and liaison. While the trust factor between a student and the youth service worker is very important, care must be taken to avoid a “we/they” attitude that creates opposition between youth services workers and the professionals involved. A teamwork approach in which all parties recognize and value the different skills each brings to the table is key to effectively meeting the needs of students with behavioural challenges.

The following chart may help to further clarify the roles of teachers and support staff in the inclusive classroom and school.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Support Staff

	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>Support Staff</i>
Class Organisation	<p>Establishes the weekly timetable.</p> <p>Plans lessons and class activities.</p> <p>Plans the physical layout of the classroom and the learning centres.</p> <p>Reviews the Individual Education Plan (IEP) regularly with the support staff.</p>	<p>Helps the teacher implement lessons and planned activities.</p> <p>Helps the student move around (only when necessary)</p> <p>Is familiar with the student's IEP and assists the teacher in implementation.</p> <p>Monitors proximity and structures physical space.</p>
Evaluation	<p>Prepares evaluations for all students.</p> <p>Evaluates on regular basis students' progress and carefully notes what skills can be performed with and without support.</p> <p>Evaluates students' progress, either individually or as a group.</p>	<p>Collects data based on observation on a daily basis regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> schedule and progress level of independence with task. behavioural and social interaction <p>Transcribes comments in the teacher's notebook.</p> <p>Provides teacher with feedback and updates on a regular basis.</p>
Teaching	<p>Is responsible for teaching all students in the class.</p>	<p>Assists the teacher in implementing students' individualized programs.</p>
Behaviour Management	<p>Plans positive behaviour interventions and supports for the whole class and for individual students.</p> <p>Serves as a behaviour model.</p>	<p>Helps the teacher implement interventions using the same techniques and approaches.</p> <p>May supervise students who must be out of the classroom temporarily.</p> <p>Removes angry or agitated students from the classroom when necessary.</p> <p>Helps to develop and implement behaviour contracts and programs.</p> <p>Serves as a behaviour model.</p>
Fostering Team Spirit	<p>Plans and organizes for ongoing communication with the support staff.</p> <p>Reviews the philosophy, goals, and objectives with the support staff.</p> <p>Determines the support staff's duties.</p>	<p>Takes an active role in the communication planned by the teacher.</p> <p>Shares his/her ideas and concerns with the teacher.</p> <p>Performs the work assigned by the teacher.</p>
Equipment	<p>Determines what material/equipment are needed to attain the objectives.</p>	<p>Assists in preparing and using the material/equipment with the student.</p>
Outings	<p>Organizes and plans field trips/educational outings.</p> <p>Ensures that documentation is completed as required.</p>	<p>May need to transport student from the school to the destination and supervise and assist student during outing.</p>
Communication with Parents	<p>Communicates with parents/guardians by initiating contact and participating in discussions concerning the educational challenges and progress for their child.</p> <p>Monitors any written communication that is sent to parents.</p>	<p>Refers any questions or concerns of the parents to the teacher.</p> <p>Attends parent/teacher interviews if requested to do so by a teacher.</p> <p>Responds in written form in log or journal, if deemed part of the individual plan and ensures that the teacher has seen and approved the message.</p>

Information for Teachers and Support Staff Working Together

- *Support staff must be prepared to work collaboratively as part of the educational partnership which includes parents, teachers, other professionals and other support staff.*
- *Support staff must remain flexible and be prepared to adapt duties and schedules in order to respond to changes in students' needs in the school and/or at the Board/District level.*
- *Support staff must work in cooperation with school staff to ensure that assignments and schedules achieve the most efficient and effective use of their time.*
- *Support staff have a responsibility to participate in planning for students with other school personnel.*



A positive working relationship between teachers and support staff is key.

A major component of the continuum of supports available to classroom teachers may be the assignment of support staff based on the special needs of students. Teachers who effectively use classroom-based support find that the presence of another adult enhances learning opportunities by providing an extra pair of hands, and by being a source of additional observations and suggestions. Since it is important and necessary that classroom/subject teachers and support staff work closely together, there are some actions that both can take to help ensure free and comfortable communication and share in the planning and implementation of classroom activities.

A positive working relationship between teachers and support staff is key. Teachers and support staff must be prepared to spend time discussing duties that will be performed in the classroom as well as sharing expectations for class routines

and management. At the beginning of the school year, teachers and support staff should meet to set out expectations and discuss views in areas such as personal philosophy, teaching strategies, classroom management and planning. Naturally, it is important that teachers model the behaviours and strategies which they want support staff to follow. It is also important that specific expectations and information are communicated.

The following information for classroom/subject teachers and support staff provide helpful details to include in initial discussions.

Personal Philosophy: Teachers and support staff should meet early to discuss their personal beliefs about learning and education. Since the classroom teacher has overall responsibility for what happens in the classroom, it will be important to clarify with support staff that certain principles may be non-negotiable. However, preferences, even strong ones, may have some leeway and can be agreed upon using a collaborative approach.

Teaching Strategies: Teachers should share their approach to creating a learning environment. If cooperative learning, activity centres, peer tutoring, and other instructional strategies are used on a regular basis, both teacher and support personnel should be clear on their own and each other's roles in these strategies.

Classroom Management: Support staff must become familiar with the teacher's repertoire of strategies and techniques for responding to classroom behaviour. They must also be clear on classroom procedures, rules, and methods of classroom management. This is especially important if the student receiving the support has a behavioural component in the individual educational plan.



In general, it is a good idea for teachers to write down the expectations for support staff on a daily basis.

Daily Planning: Support staff and teachers should be prepared to have scheduled daily and weekly planning meetings, no matter how brief, to promote orderly running of the classroom. In general, it is a good idea for teachers to write down the expectations for support staff on a daily basis. This way, support staff can be proactive, and will not feel the need to wait for directions from teachers concerning the many routine interactions and predictable situations that arise during a busy school day. Getting into the habit of setting up a column in a day book, or some other mutually agreed upon system, to jot notes pertaining to support staff should not increase the work load for the teacher. In fact, it will save time overall if support staff do not have to constantly seek direction throughout the day.

Since the teacher is responsible for all the students in the classroom, it is very important that he or she gets to know and understand their educational needs. This process will often involve the teacher spending some time in direct instruction with the student with special educational needs. It will be helpful if the teacher and support person decide together the most appropriate time in the day for this to happen and what the support person's responsibilities will be while the teacher is engaged with the student with special educational needs.



A fundamental requirement of the support staff role is flexibility.

Flexibility: A fundamental requirement of the support staff role is flexibility. Teachers and support staff must be prepared to adapt duties and schedules to meet the needs of students in order to respond to the variation that may occur in school settings.

Schools are busy, active places and the educational needs and behaviour of the students can be unpredictable. The best laid plans for the classroom on any given day may need to be adjusted to accommodate students who are experiencing changes in circumstances that affect their ability to cope with classroom learning.



It is evident that one of the most important aspects of developing positive working relationships is communication...

Flexibility is extremely important when responding to the needs of students. The better all parties understand their roles, the easier it will be to react calmly to the unexpected happenings that occur in a school day.

It is evident that one of the most important aspects of developing positive working relationships is communication through ongoing discussion and clarification of expectations with respect to classrooms and the special educational needs of students. A positive working relationship between the teacher and support staff facilitates a shared sense of ownership and responsibility for the students' success. It is important to work towards a setting where all may feel comfortable, supported, and valued. Frequent discussions, formal and informal, are helpful in this regard.

The concept of adults working together in a classroom may require some initial adjustment and getting used to. It will take a time commitment at the outset to work out roles and responsibilities for teachers and support staff. The initial organization and planning will facilitate the smooth running of the classroom over the year.

Educational assistants and youth service workers are members of The Canadian Union of Public Employees and are subject to terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement between the Education Negotiating Agency and CUPE Local 3260. Administrative personnel should refer to the collective agreement for further clarification of working conditions.

Understanding the Implications and Challenges of the Support Staff Role

- *Support staff must be well-versed in strategies which maximize the independence of students with special educational needs and provide opportunities for students to grow and develop within a natural school environment.*
- *Support staff act as inclusion facilitators with the goal of achieving an optimum level of inclusion in regular instructional settings.*
- *Support staff must respect and follow appropriate lines of communication as outlined in guidelines and policies of the school, district/board and department.*
- *Support staff have a professional responsibility to model and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other as well as for teachers, students, parents, and other professionals.*
- *Support staff have an obligation to respect the confidentiality of students and their families.*



In an inclusive classroom, the student should participate, at some level, in all classroom activities.

Promoting Inclusion

Probably the most critical role for student support staff is that of *inclusion facilitator*. Carol Johnson in her handbook *Teams Work*, emphasizes that most of the support staff's energy will be used to find ways to include the student with special educational needs in whatever activities take place.

In an inclusive classroom, the student should participate, at some level, in all classroom activities. If the teacher is planning lessons which provide opportunities to incorporate IEP goals, this could be:

- **full participation** where all students participate to the same extent in group and cooperative learning activities; (e.g., all students are listening to a story)



An ideal inclusive environment is one where all students have the support of each other, of the teacher, and of support staff.



All children require opportunities to work and learn with their peers, to take risks and learn from mistakes, and to experience success as they function independently.

- **partial participation** where the student participates in some part of the activity that is seen as important and equal to what other students are doing; (e.g., student with special educational needs will record information or distribute papers during group work)
- **parallel participation** which involves having the student complete an activity which is different but similar to what other students are doing; (e.g., student will work on printing letters while most students are working on writing process)

There may be occasions when students with special educational needs go to a specific area to work on individual objectives such as speech/language drills or personal care skills. If such **pull out time** is required, it should be indicated in the IEP, and be used for that specific purpose only. Otherwise, it is expected that students will be able to be included to some degree in the classroom activity.

Creative planning on the part of the teacher and support staff will be required to achieve this expectation of inclusion. An ideal inclusive environment is one where all students have the support of each other, of the teacher, and of support staff. Support that is too individual and too intrusive can interfere with potential relationships among students and other natural supports.

Fostering Independence

The main goal for students with special educational needs is to provide them with access to the same high quality of support that all students receive in the public school system. Part of that high quality of support for students with special educational needs is fostering the independence necessary for decision making and self-determination. All children require opportunities to work and learn with their peers, to take risks and learn from mistakes, and to experience success as they function independently. These goals are especially crucial for



One of the most challenging aspects of support staff work is the understanding that in order to be an effective support to students, a balancing act must be performed.



Remember Carol Johnson's four foot rule – Stay four feet away unless the student is having difficulty for at least two minutes.

students with special educational needs. It is essential that all support staff understand that their role is to provide support that allows students with special educational needs to experience these learning conditions, and to help deliver that support in an age-appropriate manner.

One of the most challenging aspects of support staff work is the understanding that in order to be an effective support to students, a balancing act must be performed. This balancing act consists of providing the students with the amount of support they require to have success in their learning but recognizing when to fade the support so that the presence of an adult is not creating a barrier to the normal interactions between students with special educational needs and their peers. Experiences with peers, not adults, provide optimal learning contexts. Remember Carol Johnson's four foot rule – *Stay four feet away unless the student is having difficulty for at least two minutes.*

The way support staff interact with the students they serve and their actual proximity to those students is critical to eventual independence. Because support staff are members of caring professions, they may believe that they have a responsibility to pay constant attention to the students on whose behalf they have been assigned. Intrusive practices such as maintaining physical contact and sitting with the student on a nearly constant basis, accompanying the student to virtually every place the student goes, and, in the extreme, holding the student on one's lap, interfere greatly with development of independence.

Support staff must reflect constantly on what are the acceptable norms of students of the same age and gender as the students they are supporting. For example, if it is inappropriate for other students at that grade level to be hugging the teacher or support staff before leaving for the day or for an adolescent male to be seen using the female washroom with a female educational assistant, then it is inappropriate for students with special educational needs.



Avoid the temptation to be constantly hovering over a student.

While safety and serving individual needs should always be uppermost, preserving the dignity and inclusion of students with special educational needs is a major priority.

Over-supporting and staying too close to a student can have a very negative effect in the short and long term. The temptation to be constantly hovering over the student interferes with the ownership and responsibility of regular classroom/subject teachers. It also may result in separation from peer interactions, dependence on adults, loss of student's personal control, and a negative image for the student. Avoid the temptation to be constantly hovering over a student.

Support staff should aim for *Invisible Support*. This means:

- providing the minimal amount of assistance needed for a student to participate and experience success;
- remaining positive and expecting the best;
- giving the student the opportunity to try a task before intervening; and
- gradually withdrawing support as the student gains skills and is able to function independently.

When students, parents or teachers become overly dependent on particular supports, human or otherwise, an additional need is created. Students with special educational needs, like all students, benefit by having a wide range of contacts within the school. For this reason, it is considered good practice to have staff sharing support responsibility for a student with special educational needs. No matter how flattering it may be to be considered the *one and only* in a student's school life, the long term effect of creating dependence is a grave disservice to the student.

It is extremely important that all personnel perceive and implement their role as one of fostering independence in the students. When student support staff fulfill a supportive role in the school, the classroom will operate more effectively



...support staff should be prepared to gradually withdraw in order to provide opportunities for the student to grow and develop naturally through interactions with peers.

and efficiently. As the student becomes more able to function independently and there is less reliance on adult support, support staff should be prepared to gradually withdraw in order to provide opportunities for the student to grow and develop naturally through interactions with peers.

The following paraphrase from Carol Johnson's handbook, Teams Work (October, 2000), sums up the importance of support staff roles in helping students with special educational needs grow and mature.

If the student has no friends, help him make friends, teach others to be his friend, and help others understand him.

Do not be his only friend.

If the student has trouble in groups, teach him how to work in a group, teach others how to work with him, and recognize that he must be in the group to learn about groups.

Do not remove him from the group.

If the student does not listen to others, teach him how to listen, reinforce him for listening to others, and teach others how to talk to him.

Do not be the only voice he hears.

If the student cannot do the work, accommodate his learning needs, reinforce him for what he does do, and do some of the work with him.

Do not take him away from the work.

Communication, Professionalism and Confidentiality

The issues of communication, professionalism, and confidentiality are too important to leave to chance. Taking some time to clarify the roles and responsibilities in these areas will help to avoid potential problems in the future.

Support staff must be very clear on the goals and objectives for students on whose behalf they have been assigned, and this information should be communicated by the teacher in a timely manner. Support staff should be informed of any information that is relevant to and enhances the work they do with students, but on a 'need to know' basis.

Since classroom/subject teachers have primary responsibility for all the students in the class, they, the teachers, will be the first point of contact for parents, school personnel and other professionals who may be part of the student's IEP team. There is a differentiation in the role of support staff regarding communication with parents and professionals from outside agencies. For example, educational assistants should never be expected to act as spokespersons or to represent the needs of students when collaborating with parents and outside professionals, while for youth service workers, this may be a primary responsibility of their role.



The responsibility of communicating with parents belongs to the classroom/subject teacher, and the administration in the school.

Most questions, concerns or issues brought forward by support staff will not need to go beyond the jurisdiction of the classroom/subject the teacher. However, there may be some situations when it is determined that the nature of the information requires the involvement of others. It is important for support staff to be clear on the standard lines of communication within the school, so they know the appropriate action to take when issues arise.

The responsibility of communicating with parents belongs to the classroom/subject teacher, and the administration in the



The primary professional responsibility is to model and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other as well as for students, parents and other professionals.

school. Support staff should not act as the main communication link between parents and school personnel. In the case of a regular written communication between home and school (ie., log or journal), it may be appropriate for the support staff to respond, but teachers must carefully monitor the message. Whether support staff attend parent teacher conferences is determined by teacher preference and/or school policy and procedures.

It is important that these communication guidelines are understood by parents, so that support staff are not placed in an awkward position. If support staff are approached by parents, they should encourage them to take any comments or concerns directly to the teacher. As part of the team in place to assist the student, support staff must help to reassure the parent that teachers want to be informed of any factors that will affect the student's learning and well-being.

Professionalism

Like all educational personnel, both teachers and support staff are expected to model ethical behaviour as outlined in their respective code of ethics. In general, working collaboratively will enhance the learning atmosphere of the classroom for all students. Approaches to students' educational needs, as well as the students themselves, change over time, so it is important for teachers and support staff to remain current and continue to build capacity in knowledge and skills. The primary professional responsibility is to model and promote an atmosphere of mutual respect for each other as well as for students, parents and other professionals.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality, with respect to students, parents and teachers applies to all educational personnel. It is recommended that administrators make it a priority to address this issue with all staff at the beginning of each year. Administration in the school may arrange for support staff to be present when



*In schools,
confidential
information is
shared on a
'need to know'
basis only.*

confidentiality is discussed with the whole staff or relay the information at another time. Support staff, through their work with students, will be privy to a certain amount of sensitive information. In schools, confidential information is shared on a 'need to know' basis only. It is important that the principal inform support staff of the provincial laws, board policies and school protocols on respecting the confidentiality of students, parents, and teachers in the school.

Conclusion

This document, *Working Together: A Handbook for Teachers and Support Staff*, provides administrators, teachers, support staff and other school personnel with the standards and guidelines they require to work together harmoniously to address the special educational needs of students. The handbook explains that in order to provide an inclusive school and classroom environment, there is a need for a wide range of versatile, multi-skilled educators, service related professionals and support staff who have developed successful working relationships.

Specifically, this handbook clarifies the roles and responsibilities of teachers and support staff and clearly differentiates the two in the context of the continuum of support services and programs functioning in schools. It also presents recommendations for teachers and support staff regarding the importance of communicating on beliefs about student learning, teaching strategies and classroom management, as well as the day to day workings of the classroom. Issues which are critical to everyone working in the public school system such as, inclusion practices, student independence and communication, professionalism and confidentiality are also addressed in respect to the support staff role.

Educators, service related professionals and support staff are valuable and contributing team members in the educational process and although teachers have the ultimate pedagogical responsibility for students, the input of all professionals and support staff is valued and encouraged.

Appendices

Appendix A

Minister's Directive No. MD 2001-08

Appendix B

Continuum of Services

Appendix C

Positive Relationships Checklists

References

Appendix A

Minister's Directive

NO. MD 2001-08

Special Education
(Supersedes MD No. 97-07)

Pursuant to section 8 and 51 of the *School Act* R.S.P.E.I. 1988, Cap. S-2.1, I hereby issue the following Minister's Directive concerning Special Education:

1. In this Directive:
 - (a) "Special Education" means programming and/or services designed to accommodate students within the public school system whose educational needs require interventions different from, or in addition to, those which are needed by most students. Assessments of students are the basis for determining appropriate special education programs and services. These programs and services may involve the use of adapted or modified curriculum, materials and facilities, and/or alternative methodologies, and/or additional assistance from student support staff within school settings.
 - (b) "Special educational needs" refers to:
 - (i) educational needs of students where there is substantive normative agreement - such as blind and partially sighted, deaf and partially hearing, severe and profound mental handicap, multiple handicaps.
 - (ii) educational needs of students who have significant difficulties in learning which do not appear to be attributable to (I) or (iii).
 - (iii) educational needs of children which are significant and are considered to arise primarily from socio-economic, cultural and/or linguistic factors.
 - (c) "Continuum of Support" is a range of programs, settings, materials and services of additional or alternate curriculum, adaptations or modifications, changes in teaching methodology and/or evaluation and/or support from school staff that accommodate various levels of support within public schools for students with assessed special educational needs.
 - (d) "Student record" means a collection of information directly related to a student and maintained by a school board in paper, electronic or other form.
 - (e) "Assessment" is a systematic process of gathering information from many sources in order to make appropriate educational decisions for a student. It is a collaborative and progressive process designed to identify the student's

strengths and needs, and which results in the identification and implementation of strategies to assist educational planning for the student.

- (f) "Individualized Education Plan (IEP)" is a written record that documents the collaborative process for the development of an individualized plan for a student with special educational needs. This planning is a continuous and integrated process of instruction, assessment, evaluation, decision-making and reporting. The IEP outlines support services and educational program adaptations and/or modifications.
- (g) "School-Based Student Services Team" is an on-going collaborative team that has a specific role to play as a problem-solving unit in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to co-ordinate support resources for students with special educational needs within the school.
- (h) "Transition" is the passage of a student from one environment to another at key points in his or her development from childhood to adulthood.
- (I) "Inclusionary practice" is the value system which holds that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in their education. The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and belonging.
- (j) "School profile" is a compilation of information providing an annual record of the programs and services required to meet the special educational needs of students within a school. It includes current student status, assessments, nature of difficulties, and present and proposed interventions as well as a listing of outside agencies involved.

Part 1: Provision of a Continuum of Support

A continuum of support services will be implemented according to Department of Education standards, policies, procedures and guidelines in order to assist students with special educational needs achieve learning outcomes. This continuum of support services will be based on the philosophy of inclusionary practices.

Roles and Responsibilities

- A. The Department of Education has the responsibility to set policies for the provision of special education and to define the applicable goals, standards, guidelines and priorities for students with special educational needs. Specifically, the department shall:
- implement policy directions of the Government and the Minister of Education;
 - define the standards and write the necessary policies, procedures, and guidelines applicable to the financial administration and provision of special education programs and student services;
 - maintain a database (including students enrolled, nature of difficulties, funding, and special education personnel) in order to inform policy development and plan special education programs and services;
 - provide and maintain a Standing Committee on Special Education and Student Services to advise the Department of Education on issues related to special education and student services;
 - establish guidelines for allocation of student support personnel and allocate staffing units to school boards;
 - provide, in collaboration with other government departments, school boards and agencies, comprehensive support for students with special educational needs to be delivered within public schools;
 - research and assess changing needs, trends and approaches in special education and develop and implement strategic plans;
 - approve educational programs and supplementary and/or specialized instructional resources and services delivered in the school for students with special educational needs;

- develop criteria, guidelines and procedures for the provision and use of a range of support and/or specialized resources and services in the school; and
 - establish and maintain a student services handbook outlining the directives, policies and guidelines applicable to special education and student services in the school.
- B. A school board has the responsibility to determine the placement of students in the school and to make provision for instruction in an educational program to all students who are enrolled in its schools. In accordance with department regulations, directives and guidelines, the School Board shall:
- place students in the school environment that is the most enabling and that allows opportunities for them to interact with their peers;
 - implement policies and establish procedures for student support services in the school;
 - ensure the establishment and maintenance of Student Services Teams at the school board and school levels;
 - ensure the development of Individual Education Plans and transition planning for students with special educational needs in public schools;
 - provide consultative services to in-school Student Services Teams;
 - gather information, assess needs and allocate resources to schools;
 - ensure equitable access to a continuum of support resources in the school for students with special educational needs;
 - establish written procedures regarding the storage, retrieval and appropriate use of student records;
 - ensure that schools under its jurisdiction establish and maintain a record for each student enrolled in special education at the school; and
 - provide, in collaboration with government departments and other agencies, support in school for students with special educational needs.

- C. Under the direction and leadership of the principal and subject to department and board guidelines and policies, the school shall:
- establish and maintain a Student Services Team;
 - provide special education programming and services in its school for students with special educational needs that are consistent with the programs and services approved by the department and the school board;
 - maintain a record of each student in accordance with the regulations and school board policies;
 - develop Individual Education Plans when required;
 - implement a transition planning process and include details of the plan within the student's I.E.P.;
 - seek the collaboration of parents in the development and implementation of the I.E.P. in a timely and supportive manner;
 - gather information, assess needs and allocate resources within the school;
 - annually prepare and submit to the school board school profiles of its students with special educational needs; and
 - attend meetings called by the Board and collaborate with parents, Board personnel and outside agencies to provide support within school settings for students with special educational needs.

Part 2: Assessment/Intervention

A process will be established to ensure that students with special educational needs are identified and appropriate interventions are implemented and reviewed.

Roles and Responsibilities

- A. The Department of Education, through the *School Act*, has the responsibility to establish outcomes and standards of performance and assess the extent to which outcomes are achieved and standards are met. The *School Act* enables the department to prescribe policies respecting the assessment and evaluation of students. Specifically, the department shall:

- establish guidelines for a pre-referral process;
- establish guidelines for the referral process;
- set standards and guidelines for assessment of students with special educational needs; and
- provide consultative and direct services for low-incidence populations.

B. A school board, in carrying out its responsibilities under the *School Act*, and subject to department regulations, directives and guidelines, may develop policies respecting the educational assessment of students. Specifically, the school board shall:

- implement the pre-referral process according to the guidelines established by the Department of Education;
- implement the referral process according to the guidelines established by the Department of Education;
- implement the standards to ensure consistency in reporting and documenting assessments according to standards and guidelines established by the Department of Education;
- promote an effective consultation model and provide opportunities for collaboration; and
- review and respond to requests for student support services and/or resources by school personnel.

C. Under the supervision and leadership of the principal and subject to department and board policies, the school shall:

- establish and implement procedures to support collaborative consultation and planning;
- consult with parents regarding assessment of their child's needs, programs and supports;

- complete the pre-referral process based on observations, discussions, and informal assessments by the classroom teacher;
- initiate the referral process when required;
- identify and implement appropriate interventions;
- establish and maintain a written record of assessments and interventions carried out by the school and, within the provisions of the *School Act*, share this information with parents/guardians, the student (where appropriate), staff and, when necessary, Board/department personnel.

Part 3: Accountability

An accountability framework is required to evaluate the effectiveness of special education programming and services, to determine if special education is receiving sufficient and appropriate funding, to ensure efficient use of special education resources within public schools, and to guide decision making.

Role and Responsibilities

- A. The Minister, through the Department of Education, has the responsibility to establish an accountability framework for the school system. The Department of Education shall:
- establish a funding protocol, within the overall funding framework, that builds the capacity to deliver, within public schools, a continuum of supports based on inclusionary, evidence-based practices;
 - review and monitor special education and student services programs and services provided in public schools to students with special educational needs;
 - review and monitor school board resource allocation (material and personnel) to ensure that the resources are used appropriately, effectively and efficiently within public schools in order to support the philosophy of inclusionary practice;
 - establish and maintain procedures for evaluation and revision of special education programming and services delivered within public schools;

- communicate results from the evaluation process to stakeholders;
 - consult with education partners to identify staff development needs, establish priorities for professional development and coordinate and provide professional development and in-service activities that enhance the delivery of special education;
 - establish desired qualification standards for student services personnel; and
 - establish guidelines, within the provisions of the *School Act*, for a dispute resolution procedure.
- B. According to the *School Act*, the school board is responsible for delivering the provincial curriculum through effective programs, instruction and services within its schools, the management of the schools in its unit and for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of schools. The school board shall:
- ensure the departmental policies and guidelines are implemented in the planning, documentation and delivery of student support services in its schools;
 - report to the department on the utilization of staffing allocations for special education;
 - ensure that personnel assigned to special education have met department standards of qualification, relevant experience and appropriate training;
 - ensure that special education staffing needs are addressed in the recruitment and deployment of staff;
 - monitor and evaluate the delivery of special education programs and services within schools;
 - identify and assist in the provision of professional development and in-service activities, consistent with provincial priorities and guidelines, to enhance the delivery of programs and services to students within its schools.

- C. Pursuant to department and board policies and under the direction and leadership of the principal, the school shall:
- adhere to departmental and board guidelines in the assignment of special education personnel;
 - provide information to the school board on the utilization of special education staffing allocations and student information required by the School Board or department;
 - support and encourage professional development of staff;
 - maintain liaison with students who are temporarily placed in alternate schools maintained by the school board or department;
 - consult with parents regarding students' progress.

DATED at Charlottetown, October 26, 2001.

Jeffrey E. Lantz
Minister of Education

Appendix B

Prince Edward Island Student Services (1-12)

Continuum of Services and Placement Options

Only as Special as Necessary

<p>Grade/Subject Classroom Placement with or without additional in-class support (may consist of co-teaching with and/or planning support for classroom teacher as well as direct support for students)</p>	<p>Grade/Subject Classroom Placement with scheduled withdrawal for specific programming from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading Recovery Teachers • Special Education/Resource Teachers • Speech Language Pathologists (SS&S) • Itinerant Teachers (APSEA/HEAR) • Autism Consultants • Tutors (e.g. ESL, Literacy, APSEA, Aboriginal) • School Counsellors (social skills, behaviours, bully prevention, anger management) • Educational Assistants (reinforcement of specific skills) • Youth Service Workers (e.g. anger management, absenteeism, specific needs of Aboriginal students) <p style="text-align: center;">↔ ↑ ↔</p>	<p>Special Programming in Neighbourhood Schools</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GIFT/EPPY Programs for teen mothers • Co-op Education • After School Programs • MAST Teams • Bullying Prevention • Roots of Empathy • Literacy Projects • Mentors <p style="text-align: center;">↔ ↑ ↔</p>	<p>Special Supports/Programs in School Boards/Districts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Education Programs, Services, Sites for Students at Risk • EAP • Tutoring • Aboriginal Alternative Program • Board based Student Services Teams • Education/Health Teams • Crisis Response Teams • Social Skills Groups • WOW • LEAP <p style="text-align: center;">↔ ↑ ↔</p>	<p>Residential or Day Placements outside school boards where educational services are government funded</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provincial Group Home/Provincial Adolescent School • APSEA Short Term Programs • Hospital/Home Tutoring • Correctional Institutions • Addictions Services • 1 to 1 Program (SS&S) • Community-based outreach youth service workers (AG) <p style="text-align: center;">↔ ↑ ↔</p>
--	--	--	---	---

Appendix C

Positive Relationships Checklist for Teachers Working with Support Staff

- Accept prime responsibility for all students in the class and their activities.
- Ensure that support staff are given clear directions and that the directions are followed.
- Keep open lines of communication with support staff.
- Seek input from support staff when planning and implementing the Individual Education Plan.
- Share expectations and observations on student's program and behaviour with support staff.
- Explore support staff's areas of strength and talents and use them appropriately to plan themes and class activities.
- Expect questions and be prepared to make suggestions and give examples to clarify directions.
- Show sensitivity to support staff by tactfully and privately correcting and constructively criticizing.
- Explain to support staff that teachers are responsible for making decisions regarding changes in materials, approaches or strategies used with students.
- Remind support staff that although they are assigned to schools and classrooms based on the special educational needs of particular students, they are also there to assist teachers in the role of teaching and managing all students.
- Arrange for support staff to work with other students while the teacher spends some time each day in direct instruction with students with special educational needs.
- Clarify with support staff that they may work with small groups of students, but unlike teachers, they will not be expected to teach or to take sole responsibility for classes of students.
- Assign a variety of duties for support staff to ensure that independence is fostered in students with special educational needs.
- Acknowledge the contribution of support staff in the smooth and effective running of the classroom and school.
- Create school environments that sustain an attitude of mutual respect and consideration.

Positive Relationships Checklist For Support Staff Working with Teachers

- Understand that the teacher is ultimately responsible for what happens in the classroom.
- Know and understand the support staff role in the school and the classroom.
- Meet with teachers and other professionals regarding the special educational needs of the students on whose behalf you have been assigned.
- Follow instructions from teachers and ensure you have a clear written account of your schedule which outlines expectations.
- Clarify your role in attending staff meetings and IEP meetings.
- Get to know all staff and students in the school.
- Regard yourself as a person who is there to help all students and teachers.
- Familiarize yourself with school rules and policies regarding emergencies , child abuse protocol, and other critical matters.
- Remember the teacher is the parents' first contact person. If you are asked to keep notes or communicate in a log, be sure to follow ethical principles of reporting.
- Be clear on teachers' behaviour management and discipline methods.
- Consult daily with supervising teachers.
- Learn the location of media equipment, computers, and supplies.
- Inform teachers about your special talents or interests which may be helpful in the school and classroom.
- Ask for clarification when you do not understand an assignment or suggestion.
- Offer suggestions when asked and if you have an idea, run it by the teacher first.
- Follow the principles of collaboration recognizing that working as a team will be most successful.
- Be an inclusion facilitator and advocate for the students on whose behalf you have been assigned. Your best measure of success will be the level of independence you have helped the students achieve.

References

British Columbia Special Education Branch (1995). *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies and Guidelines*. Victoria: Queen's Printer for British Columbia.

Bunch, Gary (1999). *Inclusion: How To*. Toronto: Inclusion Press.

Chignecto School Board (2005). *Student Services Manual*. Nova Scotia.

Giangreco, Michael F. and others (2004). Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals in Inclusive schools. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 17(2), 82-90.

_____ (2001). Respect, Appreciation, and Acknowledgement of Paraprofessionals Who Support Students with Disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 67(4), 485-498.

Johnson, Carol (2000). *Teams Work: Teachers and Assistants Creating Success*. Calgary, Alberta: Chaos Consultation.

Morgan, Jill and Ashbaker, Betty Y.(2001). *Working with Para-educators and Other Classroom Aides*. Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mueller, Patricia H. And Murphy, Francis V. (2001). Determining When a Student Requires Paraeducator Support. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 33(6), 22-27.

New Brunswick Instructional Services Branch (2001). *School Para-professionals*. Fredericton, N.B.: Department of Education.

New Brunswick Student Services Branch (1994). *Teacher Assistant Guidelines*. Fredericton, N.B.: Department of Education.

_____ (1999). *Teacher Assistant Support Protocol*. Fredericton, N.B.: Department of Education.

Nova Scotia Student Services (1998). *Teacher Assistant Guidelines - Student Services Series*. Halifax, N.S.: Department of Education and Culture.

Prince Edward Island Department of Education. *Minister's Directive No. MD 01-08*.

Saskatchewan Education - Special Education Unit (2001). *Creating Opportunities for Students with Intellectual of Multiple Disabilities*.

School District No. 34 (Abbotsford)(1998). *Para-professionals and Teachers- A Relationship*.

Wallace, Teri and others. (2001). Knowledge and Skills for Teachers Supervising the Work of Paraprofessionals. *Exceptional Children*, 67(4), 520-533.

_____ (2004). Para-professionals in School- Topics for Administrators. *Journal of Special Education Leadership*, 17, 46-61.

Western School Board (2002). *Teacher Assistants Supervision and Evaluation Procedures and Guidelines and Exhibits*.