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TEACHER GUIDE

Teachers and Educational Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities



The Alberta
Teachers' Association

Teachers and Educational Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities

Teachers hold primary responsibility for the educational program of their students, and students are entitled to instruction from highly qualified teachers. To meet the high standards set by the province, employers and the profession, teachers sometimes have support from educational assistants who enrich the educational experience through their own qualifications and competencies. Some highly qualified professionals provide specialized services, such as diagnostic testing, speech therapy and physical therapy, to students. Others have nonprofessional credentials earned through college studies. Still others have no postsecondary qualifications at all. Educational assistants are not teachers. They work with qualified teachers and are assigned duties consistent with their qualifications, the *School Act* and other relevant legislation.

The Accountability Framework

Teachers are held to a high standard of conduct, care and instruction by law. The Teaching Quality Standard states "Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning by students." The *School Act* authorizes school boards to employ nonteaching employees, including educational assistants, to help teachers realize the educational mission of the school board. Educational assistants' accountability arises from board and school policy and their working relationship with the teacher.

Employers should ensure that all contracts of employment for nonteaching personnel include the following necessary conditions:

1. A clear role description and definition
2. A statement to the effect that the employee will respect the confidentiality of students
3. The name and position of the person to whom the employee reports
4. A clause outlining the duty of care that the employee is expected to maintain with respect to students
5. A clause outlining the standards of conduct expected of the employee
6. A statement to the effect that the employee will comply with school and district policies

Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers and Educational Assistants: A Summary

	Responsible to	Responsible for	Actions governed by
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employer • profession • public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diagnosing learning needs • prescribing program • planning lessons • implementing lessons • evaluating students • reporting to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legislation: <i>Teaching Profession Act, School Act, Teaching Quality Standard</i> • policy: school and board • Code of Professional Conduct • collective agreement
Other professionals providing support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employer • profession • public • supervising teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advising teachers • providing services and recommendations to the teacher consistent with professional qualifications and expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • legislation governing their profession • policy: school and board • professional codes or standards • collective agreement (if one exists)
Classroom-based educational assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employer • supervising teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reporting to teachers • providing service under direct supervision of a teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy: school and board • role description • collective agreement (if one exists)
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher • school administration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertaking activities as directed by teachers • maintaining confidentiality, privacy and security of the class and program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • policy: school and board • signed expectations form: every school should have a document of understanding for in-school volunteers

Adapted from the ATA publication *Teachers and Teacher Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities*

Resources

Alberta Teachers' Association Documents
(available online at www.teachers.ab.ca or in print by request to ATA)

ATA Code of Professional Conduct
ATA Policy on Educational Assistants
ATA Position Paper on Educational Assistants
Teacher Rights, Responsibilities and Legal Liabilities
Teachers and Teacher Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities

Government of Alberta Documents (available online or by purchase through www.qp.alberta.ca/Laws_Online.cfm)

Education Act (Revised Statutes of Alberta Chapter E-0.3 2012) (unproclaimed at date of this publication)
Teaching Profession Act (Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000 Chapter T-2)
School Act (Revised Statutes of Alberta 2000 Chapter S-3)
Teaching Quality Standard (Ministerial Order #016/97)