BUILDING COLLABORATIVE TEAMS

Roles and responsibilities of teachers and educational assistants

Contents

Throughout the document, you'll see this symbol to help you engage with the information further. Make sure you pause as a team and complete the activities as outlined.

District Strategic Plan

To make the most effective use of our efforts and resources, Edmonton Public Schools has developed a Strategic Plan. Through a common understanding of the District's Vision, Mission, Values and Priorities, the Strategic Plan sets the direction for the District, guiding its efforts and investments from 2014 to 2018.

VISION: Transforming the learners of today into the leaders of tomorrow.

MISSION: We inspire student success through high quality learning opportunities, supported by meaningfully engaged students, parents, staff and community.

VALUES: Supporting the Vision, Mission and Priorities are the District's cornerstone values of accountability, collaboration, equity and integrity.

District priorities 2014-2018

1. Foster growth and success for every student by supporting their journey from early learning through high school completion and beyond.
2. Provide welcoming, high quality learning and working environments.
3. Enhance public education through communication, engagement and partnerships.

Activity

Before you begin working through the *Building Collaborative Teams* document, **read and reflect** on the Administrative Regulations and related information below.

FBCA.AR Respectful Working Environments
FBCB.AR District Staff Code of Conduct
Workplace Violence
Position Descriptions

Overview

Learning outcomes for students improve when staff work together effectively and efficiently as a team. One of the most common teams in a school is a teacher and an educational assistant (EA).

Building Collaborative Teams was developed to help teachers, EAs and administrators better understand the teacher's and the EA's roles in this team. It provides:
- a framework for clarifying the roles, responsibilities and shared duties of teachers and EAs
- a range of tools and suggested processes for communicating in these teams

The principal (or designate) should encourage the teacher and EA to review the roles and responsibilities diagrams, checklists and tips, and complete the action plan in this document.

Before the teacher and EA meet to review this document, the principal/designate should review the administrative aspects with the teacher who will then work through the action plan with the EA.

We recommend that teams review this document at the beginning of each school year and when staff changes in the classroom.

The principal/designate is responsible for making sure the teacher and EA have current copies of the EA's position description and roles and responsibilities. If the EA's position description changes, update it in PeopleSoft.

The EA's direct supervisor

All parties should know who the EA's direct supervisor is. This person has several responsibilities including:
- taking a lead role in communicating expectations to the EA
- advocating for resources needed for the EA to do their job, so they can contribute to the success of the program
- creating an environment of cooperation
- making sure the work other staff assign to the EA is reasonable and the work aligns with their position description
- advocating on behalf of the EA for appropriate professional development, work space, equipment, etc.

Important considerations for teachers and educational assistants

Supportive environments

All staff members who work in the classroom are responsible for creating and maintaining a supportive classroom environment for students and staff.

Teachers and educational assistants are expected to interact with each other and with students in a respectful, professional manner. They should address concerns as they arise, offer and receive feedback and be open to suggestions. Address concerns privately—not in front of students, other staff or parents.

Confidentiality

Student and staff information must be kept confidential at all times. All District staff must have a general knowledge of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)](#).

Teachers and educational assistants should have access to information which will affect student learning. Occasionally, teachers may receive sensitive information about students that cannot be shared with others, or if it is shared, only minimal details can be provided.

All school staff must be careful to respect the confidentiality of private information.   District Information Management provides [Top 10 FOIP Must Knows for school staff](#).

Challenges

All staff are obligated to consistently contribute to a safe, respectful and ethical learning environment free from abusive behaviour, harassment and violence in any form.

There may be times when the relationship between a teacher and educational assistant becomes strained. In most cases, good communication can resolve the issue. Staff members are encouraged to discuss concerns privately with the individual(s) involved in a respectful manner and as soon as possible when an issue arises.

If the issue can't be resolved, either individual can ask for help from their supervisor or decision unit (DU) administrator as appropriate in their work location. If the conflict continues or the administrative supervisor determines that a neutral third-party needs to be involved (i.e., facilitated conversation or mediation), they can request support through Human Resources, Staff Relations.

Confidential personal support is available to all staff through the District's [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#).

Human Resources, Staff Relations also provides advice and assistance for serious matters that may violate District administrative regulations on respectful working environments, code of conduct or workplace violence.

Using the tools

This document is structured to lead teachers and educational assistants through a collaborative conversation. Review the following tools:

- the roles and responsibilities diagrams are designed to clarify operational expectations
- the checklists and tips help all parties know what is expected of them
- the action plan will help teams develop positive relationships and outline how the team will work together

This document is not intended to be used for performance evaluation.

It should be reviewed at the beginning of each school year or when the classroom composition changes.

Roles and responsibilities diagrams

The principal/designate and the teacher outline the EA's responsibilities. There is some overlap between the responsibilities of the teacher and the EA, so use the roles and responsibilities diagrams to discuss and clarify operational expectations.

The principal/designate can indicate their expectations to the teacher and EA in an initial meeting and outline a process (using meetings and scheduled discussions, among other tools) to make sure roles are clearly defined and understood.

The roles and responsibilities diagrams help make clear:

- the teacher's responsibilities
- the EA's responsibilities
- shared responsibilities

Responsibilities are organized into three areas: designing programs, implementing programs and creating supportive environments.
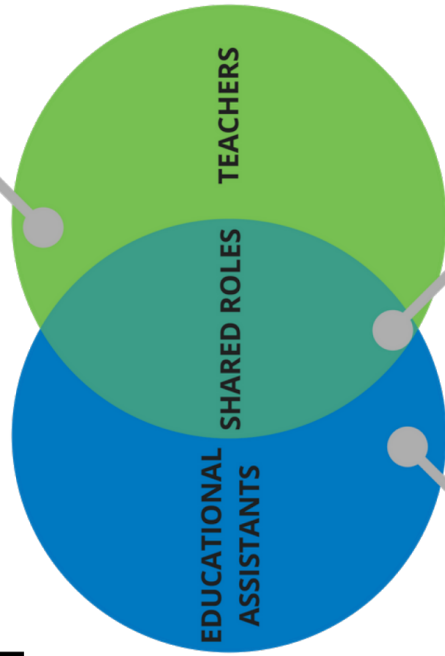
> ### *Activity*
>
> **Read and discuss** the roles and responsibilities diagrams—this is the time to talk through each team member's roles and responsibilities.

DESIGNING PROGRAMS

Roles and responsibilities of teachers and educational assistants

Venn diagram:
- TEACHERS
- EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS
- SHARED ROLES

Teachers

DEVELOP
- and collect assessment information
- individualized behavioural plans including Individual Program Plans (IPPs) and identify student support teams' responsibilities for IPPs
- the instructional program, learning activities, goals, objectives and priorities
- classroom expectations and management plans

COORDINATE
- and advocate for resources for EAs to do their duties
- program planning meetings

MONITOR
- appropriate use of resources

MODEL
- techniques for EAs to use for instructional and behavioural assistance

CONSULT
- with parents about learning priorities

Shared roles

DISCUSS
- learners' strengths and areas of need to decide learning priorities
- goals, objectives and instructional practice
- how EAs can help teachers set expectations for learning and behaviour of students, and implement instructional programs
- specific philosophy, techniques, strategies and appropriate language

SHARE
- resources and monitor for effectiveness in program delivery

DEVELOP
- learning activities to meet goals
- learning resources and collaborate in setting priorities for developing learning resources

Educational assistants (EAs)

CONTRIBUTE
- to student assessments
- to student IPPs and document, monitor and report to the teacher/team on its implementation
- to instructional activities considering skill development and appropriateness for students

SHARE
- information about individual learners' performance and behaviour
- student information for the planning process and attend program planning meetings (as required)
- possible instructional/learning resources with the teacher to facilitate learning
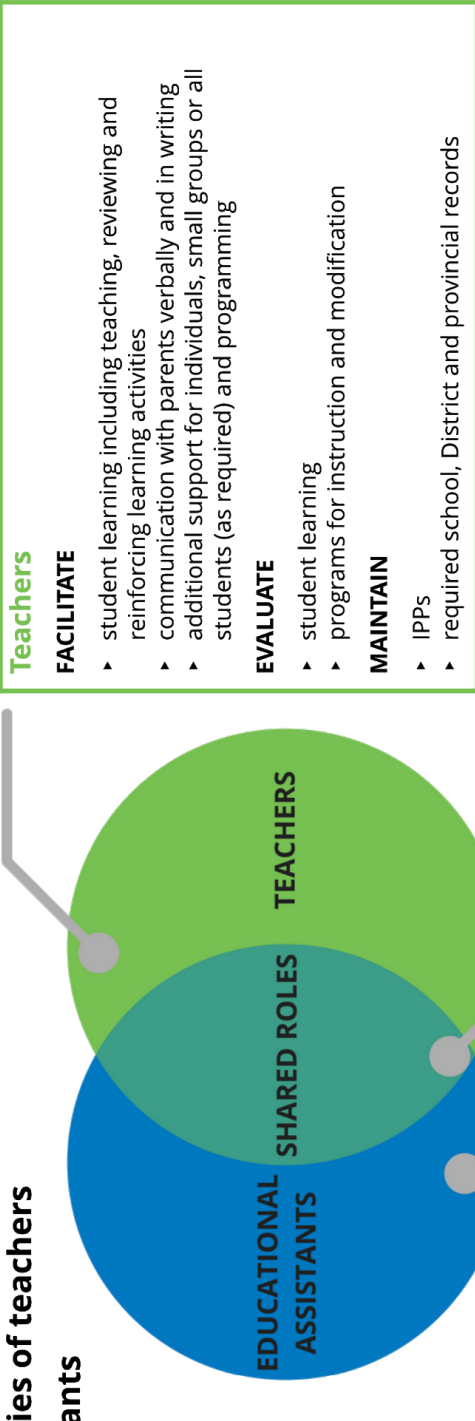
SUPPORT
- the educational program and learning environment
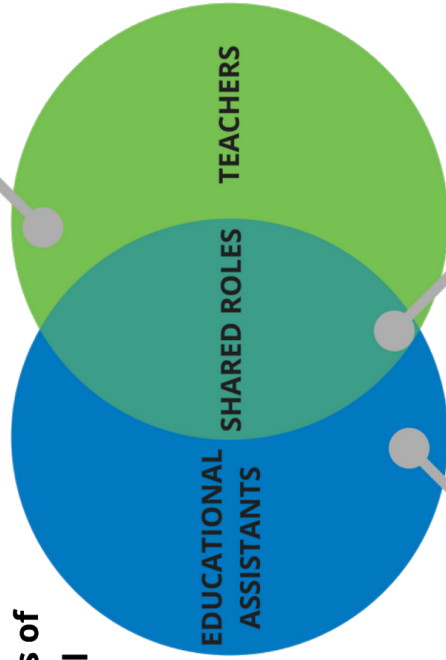
PREPARE
- classroom materials

IMPLEMENTING PROGRAMS

Roles and responsibilities of teachers and educational assistants

Teachers

FACILITATE

- student learning including teaching, reviewing and reinforcing learning activities
- communication with parents verbally and in writing
- additional support for individuals, small groups or all students (as required) and programming

EVALUATE

- student learning
- programs for instruction and modification

MAINTAIN

- IPPs
- required school, District and provincial records

Shared roles

DISCUSS

- data requirements to provide clarity

SHARE

- information about student progress, assessment and evaluation while respecting confidentiality and considering FOIP
- workplace concerns and documents (when necessary)

FACILITATE

- student learning

REVIEW

- learning resources and activities to clarify and share experiences and expectations
- assessment and learner profiles to make sure they are current

Educational assistants (EAs)

FACILITATE

- learning activities and student programs under the teacher's direction
- informal and standardized assessment under the supervision of the teacher

REVIEW

- and reinforce learning by following lesson plans and using appropriate learning strategies and activities under the teacher's direction
- learner strengths, achievements and needs through observing and documenting daily learning activities

SHARE

- information with the teacher for home and school formal/informal communications
- information with parents under the direction of the teacher

HELP

- collect data to evaluate student progress
- maintain required school, District and provincial records

TEACHERS

SHARED ROLES

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

CREATING SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Roles and responsibilities of teachers and educational assistants

Teachers

FACILITATE

▸ open lines of communication with EAs, other staff, students, parents and consultants

DEVELOP

▸ the priority of duties for classroom staff

INFORM

▸ EAs about the classroom management structure, discipline plan and expectations for students and staff

LEARN

▸ school, District and provincial policies and procedures (e.g., FOIP, collective agreement, School Act, etc.) and ensure they are adhered to
▸ the classification of EAs working in your classroom and adhere to the classification when assigning duties

COORDINATE

▸ or advocate for necessary workspace and materials for EAs to perform their duties

Shared roles

DISCUSS

▸ and adhere to school/District guidelines to protect the safety and well-being of students and staff
▸ classroom management structure, discipline plans and expectations for students
▸ potential organization of physical space in the classroom to determine appropriate workspace
▸ duties and schedule to ensure effective implementation
▸ the position description and update as changes to assignment happen

FACILITATE

▸ open and professional communication
▸ early resolution to problems through informal communication and regularly scheduled meetings

CONSULT

▸ with the student support team

Educational assistants (EAs)

CONTRIBUTE

▸ to behavioural program implementation
▸ feedback to the teacher on the effectiveness of your workspace
▸ suggestions or information about interventions and strategies for student behavioural needs

FACILITATE

▸ and support classroom routines, discipline plans and expectations for students
▸ open lines of communication with teachers, other staff, students, parents and consultants

IMPLEMENT

▸ the teacher's plan and inform the teacher about how the schedule is working

LEARN

▸ and adhere to school, District and provincial policies and guidelines
▸ the classification process and how your role complements the teacher

Checklists and tips

These checklists help make sure all parties know what is expected of them. Be mindful that expectations may change periodically throughout the year.

> ⬟ *Activity*
>
> **Read and discuss** the following checklists and tips. Conversation is important to understand what is expected of each staff member.

Principals/designates

- ❏ assign the EA's direct supervisor ([see FAQ's](#))
- ❏ coordinate the process for defining and communicating responsibilities of the teacher and EA
- ❏ make sure the teacher and EA have a copy of the EA's current position description
- ❏ meet with the teacher and EA to outline expectations
- ❏ review the action plan and roles and responsibilities once complete

Teachers

- ❏ clarify who is the EA's direct supervisor
- ❏ review the EA's position description and seek clarification, if needed
- ❏ adapt the roles and responsibilities to suit the needs of the school and classroom before meeting with the EA (keep in mind the job duties outlined in the EA's position description)
- ❏ meet with the principal/designate and EA to clarify process and the principal's/designate's expectations
- ❏ meet with the EA to review the roles and responsibilities, discuss and clarify expectations
- ❏ submit the roles and responsibilities and the action plan to the principal/designate for review

Educational assistants

- ❏ review the position description and seek clarification, if needed
- ❏ meet with the teacher and principal/designate to review expectations
- ❏ meet with the teacher to review the roles and responsibilities and the action plan
- ❏ seek clarification of duties

Tips for teachers

- let your EA know they are an important member of the team and they have a lot to offer—treat them with respect and consideration
- As the classroom teacher, you're responsible for providing direct instruction to students and directing their activities—be clear that the EA is not a teacher and should not be requested or required to teach
- make sure the EA works under your supervision
- plan in advance for your EA—make sure they have computer access and all necessary program access
- establish regular routines and duties for the EA related to their position description
- keep open lines of communication—talk about it!
- find out your EA's strengths and maximize them
- encourage input and collaboration from the EA—they have much to offer
- be a role model and demonstrate best practices
- be open to suggestions and provide opportunities for the EA to demonstrate their skills and abilities
- find ways to tactfully correct and provide feedback while being sensitive to the EA's feelings
- be specific about what and how the EA can communicate with parents
- be clear about the need for flexibility and model flexible behaviour yourself
- depending on the circumstance, have the EA work with other students while you spend a few minutes in direct instruction with the student with special needs
- assign a variety of duties to the EA to help encourage independence in the student with special needs

Tips for educational assistants

- be prepared to take time to plan with the teacher and take direction from the teacher
- be prepared for an initial period of adjustment on your part and the teacher's as you learn to work together
- expect polite treatment and respect from the teacher and students—be mindful that respect goes both ways
- let the teacher know about your strengths, experience and interests
- remember that the teacher is responsible for the students and learning in the classroom at all times
- always get the teacher's approval before trying something new
- express concerns to the teacher first
- provide feedback to the teacher on student progress—the teacher is responsible for reporting and communicating with parents
- use your best judgment—when in doubt, ask in a respectful manner

Action plan

The action plan is used when teachers and educational assistants meet to:
- review the team's set up
- describe their understanding of their roles
- outline next steps or make note of items to follow up

As well, the action plan can be used to record everyone's understanding of how the team will work together.

> ⭐ *Activity*
>
> **Fill in** the applicable sections in the action plan under *"What does this look like for us?"*
>
> Both teachers and EAs should consider all these issues, so that each can better understand each others' roles.

Schedule	*What does this look like for us?*
Start and end times Examples: ● the school day ● EA's time ● when students arrive ● routines ● other	
Bussing Examples: ● where ● routes ● attendance on the bus ● other	
Breaks Examples: ● break times (lunch, midday) ● coverage for students ● other	
Meeting/collaboration/planning times Examples: ● before or after school ● early Thursday	

● professional development days ● other	

Communication protocol
Examples:
    ● absences
    ● coverage
    ● other	

Individual student program needs	*What does this look like for us?*

Learning outcomes
Examples:
    ● Individual Program Plans (IPPs)
    ● how to communicate with each other and parents
    ● strategies
    ● behaviour management
    ● other	

Specific adaptations
Examples:
    ● physical
    ● emotional
    ● academic	

Instructional support options
Examples:
    ● resources (including individuals)
    ● equipment
    ● other	

Curriculum planning	*What does this look like for us?*

Upcoming units
Examples:
    ● proactive planning
    ● student readiness
    ● assessing students
    ● other	

Support options
Examples:
    ● inclusive learning
    ● assessments	

● support workers ● other	
Changes in instruction (either anticipated or unexpected) Examples: ● special events ● emergencies ● other	
Field trips Examples: ● responsibilities ● how breaks are covered off ● who's the backup ● other	
Communication	*What does this look like for us?*
Class composition changes Examples: ● welcoming new students ● preparing for departure ● monitoring student personalities ● emotional needs ● changes in behaviour ● other	
Visits from partners Examples: ● consultants ● community supports ● pre-service teachers ● volunteers ● other	
Parent questions and concerns Examples: ● when it's appropriate ● how to respond ● when to share ● who's responsible ● other	

Action plan sign-off

Completed by: *make sure you note the direct supervisor*

_____   _____
Name   Teacher

_____   _____
Name   Educational Assistant

_____   _____
Name   Position

Dates to review:

Initial_____

Review date _____

Review date _____

Frequently asked questions (FAQ's)

How often should this document be reviewed?
Building Collaborative Teams should be reviewed if there's a classroom composition change (e.g., an increase in students or a change in staff). In general we recommend that teams review this document at the beginning of each year as well as the middle of the year.

As an educational assistant, am I entitled to breaks?
Article 9 of the Collective Agreement speaks to hours of work. All 3550 members are encouraged to review the agreement.

If I have to work beyond my scheduled work hours am I entitled to compensation?
Article 9 of the Collective Agreement speaks to hours of work. All 3550 members are encouraged to review the agreement.

If we're experiencing conflict as a team, how can we reach a resolution?
Conflict between staff can be addressed through:
- good communication—private, respectful, resolution-focused conversations between the individuals involved can resolve most conflict situations
- seeking assistance from a supervisor
- requesting support from Human Resources through a facilitated conversation or mediation process
- seeking advice from Human Resources, Staff Relations, about serious matters that may violate District administrative regulations on respectful working environments, code of conduct or workplace violence

What happens if my duties as an EA change?
The principal is responsible for completing a position description update in PeopleSoft.

What is the difference between an administrative supervisor and a direct supervisor?
An administrative supervisor is the decision unit (DU) administrator.

A direct supervisor, assigned by the DU Administrator, oversees a staff member if that staff member doesn't report directly to the DU administrator. Supervisors can include line supervisors who help fulfil day-to-day supervision needs including providing direction and monitoring staff under their supervision in areas like work quality, production and attendance.

What is the recommendation for cell phone use during class time?

Using your personal cell phone during work hours is only for emergencies or if your direct supervisor directs you to. Staff are to use personal time (breaks) for personal issues. Staff must not take pictures of students on personal devices.

As an EA, how do I assess students?

The teacher will guide you in assessment practices as you work with a student or a group of students. The teacher is responsible for offering direction on how your assessments are communicated to students. Teachers direct instruction and assessment, and communicate this to parents.

Should I be concerned about social media?

If you run a social media account for a District school or program or use a personal account to comment on District matters, review the District Social Media Guidelines for Staff. These guidelines help us model positive online behaviour. Use social media tools effectively and manage the risks that come with them. Learn more about using social media as an Edmonton Public School staff member.

If I'm an EA who works in four different classrooms, who do I take direction from?

Follow the direction of whoever is your direct supervisor. We recommend that all four teachers and the EA contribute to this document.

Activity

Planning for student success is key. Take time to **discuss** the relevant plans for students that the EA supports.
- ❏ Individual Program Plan
- ❏ Individual Behaviour Support Plan
- ❏ Student Safety Plan
- ❏ Medication Management Plan

References and resources

District plans, policies and regulations

District Strategic Plan
FA.BP Human Resources Framework
CNA.AR Security of Personal and District Information
HO.AR Student Records

District resources

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act
Medication Management course for District staff
Protecting Student Privacy – Facts Facts for Educational Assistants
Workplace Hazard Assessment for Educational Assistants
Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)

Locals resources

The Alberta Teachers' Association Local 37
CUPE Local 3550