

Teachers and Educational Assistants: Roles and Responsibilities



The Alberta Teachers' Association

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Introduction

The integration into regular classes of students with special needs, behaviour disorders and learning disabilities of all sorts has not only expanded the duties of teachers but also increased the amount of information that they need to carry out those duties effectively. Teachers have welcomed the assistance provided by other professionals, paraprofessionals, untrained personnel and volunteers.

The skills and expertise that educational assistants bring to their jobs often enable students to attend school who would not otherwise be able to do so and enhances participation in inclusive classrooms. By helping teachers implement activities and make effective decisions, assistants can greatly enrich the educational experience of students. The contribution of educational assistants may be both varied and specialized; for example, some have health-related skills, some have language skills and still others—notably lab assistants—have specialized knowledge in the areas of science and technology.

Although the skills and knowledge that educational assistants have are of invaluable assistance to teachers, the presence of assistants in the classroom has, at the same time, raised questions about their role and its relation to that of teachers. Teachers expect their professional association to provide guidance in matters relating to the role of educational assistants in the classroom.

This publication is intended to answer some of the questions that arise from time to time in schools about the nature of teaching, the value of teacher qualifications and the respective roles of professional and paraprofessional staff in making decisions.

Members who find themselves in situations that involve practices contrary to those recommended in this publication should not rush to file grievances and complaints. Instead, they should first raise the matter, in a non-confrontational manner, with the appropriate school personnel to discuss the possibility of having the practice changed. After all, practices often develop over time and with the best of intentions. For example, some schools, as a gesture of respect for the hard work that educational assistants do, have allowed them to participate fully in staff meetings and decision making, a practice that fails to take into account that educational assistants have different responsibilities from teachers and, as a result, are accountable in a different way. Only if discussion fails to make the situation appropriate should members consider stronger approaches.

This publication is not intended to be a how-to manual, nor does it attempt to address all the issues that may arise in the interaction between teachers and educational assistants. Teachers who have questions about this publication or who need advice about specific situations should contact Member Services at Barnett House at 780-447-9400 or 1-800-232-7208 (toll free in Alberta). A presentation of this material with time for questions is also available.

Who Are Educational Assistants?

Educational assistants constitute part of what, in the education community, is known as support staff, a term designating personnel who help teachers carry out the educational mission of the school and who make the educational experiences of children more rewarding. Some support staff are highly qualified professionals who provide such specialized services to students as diagnostic testing, speech therapy and physical therapy. Others have non-professional credentials earned through college studies. Still others have no post-secondary qualifications at all. The duties that support staff are assigned depend on their qualifications and competencies and on the provisions of the *School Act* and other legislation.

Typical Duties of Educational Assistants

Under the direction of a teacher, support staff may work directly with students individually or in small groups to deliver activities that reinforce and advance the educational program. They also provide teachers with advice and suggestions. For example, they may assess how well students are functioning, administer standardized tests (but not make judgments on test results), observe and document behaviours as students participate in learning activities and, where appropriate, help plan the educational program. Together with teachers, educational assistants enrich the educational program by helping students gain the knowledge and skills they need to function in the classroom, the school and the larger community.

In making decisions about the educational program, teachers count on input from other professionals, parents and classroom-based educational assistants. Professionals such as psychologists, speech therapists and physical therapists draw on their expertise to provide teachers with specialized reports and suggestions about particular students. Teachers use this input to develop and implement educational programs for which they are ultimately responsible.

There is no definitive list of the duties that support staff are expected to carry out. Instead,

their duties are determined by such factors as their qualifications, the needs of the students and the information required by the teacher. The following scenarios illustrate some of the ways in which teachers may draw upon the advice of support staff to modify the educational program.

Scenario 1: A physical therapist reports that a student is unable to raise his arm above his head without hurting himself. The teacher asks the therapist to suggest activities that the student can carry out safely. Using the therapist's advice, the student's physical education teacher modifies the unit on basketball to incorporate drills and exercises that the student can perform safely and that meet the objectives of the curriculum.

Scenario 2: A psychologist reports that a student has difficulty recalling information that is presented in visual form only. Upon receiving such a report, the student's teacher modifies her style of instruction to ensure that all information is presented in more than one modality.

Scenario 3: An educational assistant reports that a student is having difficulty understanding classroom assignments. Drawing on the assistant's observations, the teacher carries out appropriate tests, diagnoses the problem and designs activities and exercises to meet the child's learning needs.

A Question of Accountability

The primary responsibility for the educational program that students receive falls upon teachers, who are expected to maintain a high standard of conduct, care and instruction. These expectations are outlined in the *Teaching Profession Act* and in the *School Act*, excerpts from which can be found in Appendix 1. The high standards expected of teachers are also described in the Teaching Quality Standard (Ministerial Order #016/97), which 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."

Section 117 of the *School Act* authorizes school boards to employ non-teaching employees, including educational assistants, to help teachers realize the educational mission of the school

board. However, no legislation, not even the *School Act*, defines the duties and responsibilities of non-teaching employees and specifies to whom they are accountable. Although their duties are not defined in legislation, educational assistants nevertheless are accountable, as this publication will attempt to demonstrate.

Who Assigns Duties to Support Staff?

In general, teachers are responsible for assigning duties to support staff. For example, external professional staff such as psychologists, physiotherapists and nurses who test students and provide other specialized services to meet their individual needs should do so in consultation with teachers and at the teacher's request. Similarly, educational assistants who work directly with students are supervised by the teacher to whom they are assigned. However, some assistants, especially those who provide medical, hygienic or welfare-related services that enable students to access the education system, may also report to a person other than the classroom teacher. An assistant who is responsible both for attending to students' medical needs and for helping a teacher in the classroom may report to two people. In some cases, such an assistant might report to two teachers, one for each aspect of his or her assignment. In other cases, an assistant might report to a teacher and to a health-care professional such as a nurse or therapist.

Over the years, the Association has adopted a number of policies on the role of educational assistants. These policies, which are listed in Appendix 2, specify, among other matters, that

- a teacher should be assigned an assistant only if the teacher so requests,
- assistants are responsible to the teachers to whom they are assigned,
- the supervising teacher is responsible for determining the assistant's specific duties, and
- the tasks that a teacher assigns to an assistant should not include duties for which the teacher is professionally responsible, such as diagnosing learning needs, prescribing educational programs and evaluating student progress.

All members of support staff should have a written role description that specifies their general duties, establishes to whom they are accountable and sets out what is expected of them in terms of conduct.

The respective duties of teachers and educational assistants are further elaborated in the Association's position paper on educational assistants, which is reproduced in Appendix 3. The position paper emphasizes that educational assistants are deployed most effectively when their duties are assigned by classroom teachers rather than by personnel external to the classroom.

Following are two scenarios. The first describes a situation in which an educational assistant is deployed effectively. The second describes a situation in which the working relationship between the educational assistant and the classroom teacher is flawed.

Scenario 1: A Grade 5 class includes four special needs students, one of whom has Down's syndrome. Under the supervision of the classroom teacher, an educational assistant works with these four students and, on occasion, with the other students. From time to time, the classroom teacher calls on the services of a special education teacher to help test the students and to suggest appropriate activities and resources. The classroom teacher retains the responsibility for developing the students' individual program plans (IPPs) and for assigning duties to the assistant.

Analysis: This scenario illustrates the proper working relationship between a teacher and an educational assistant.

Scenario 2: A special education teacher is responsible for assigning assistants to all classrooms in a school containing special needs students and for determining the duties of those assistants. The individual classroom teachers continue to write the IPPs for the special needs students in their care.

Analysis: This approach is flawed because the person ultimately responsible for the outcome of the education program—the classroom teacher—is not responsible for assigning the duties of his or her assistant. Such an organizational structure may inhibit the classroom teacher's ability to provide the best educational program for all students.

What Duties Can Be Assigned to Educational Assistants?

The Association's Code of Professional Conduct (reproduced in Appendix 4) defines the duties for which teachers are responsible. The code explicitly prohibits teachers from delegating those duties to non-teachers. At the same time, the code specifies that teachers may delegate "specific and limited aspects of instructional activity" to educational assistants, provided that teachers supervise and direct those activities.

School boards that assign educational assistants to tasks for which they are inadequately trained or unqualified not only place students in danger but risk being sued for malpractice on the grounds that students are being denied the right to be taught by qualified professional teachers.

Educational assistants who are assigned teaching duties should inform their own union or association and should protest any assignment that exceeds their training and experience. Even qualified teachers who are employed as educational assistants should be careful not to carry out tasks that fall outside the role for which they were hired.

Educational Needs of Students

In general, teachers should avoid asking educational assistants to undertake activities that require them to make professional judgments. For example, it would be inappropriate for a teacher to ask an assistant to plan a student's educational program or to mark short-answer or essay questions that involve an element of interpretation. On the other hand, it would be appropriate for a teacher to ask an assistant to suggest (subject to the teacher's approval) resources and exercises that might be suitable for a student; to mark tests and exercises that involve multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank and other right-or-wrong kinds of questions; and to photocopy handouts, make displays and create other materials under the teacher's direction.

The following scenarios illustrate the appropriate and inappropriate deployment of educational assistants.

Scenario 1: An educational assistant works with a teacher who is often called out of the class to attend to other duties. During her absences, the teacher delegates to the assistant the task of completing the lesson and helping the class work through planned exercises.

Analysis: Because assigning such duties contravenes the *School Act* and the Code of Professional Conduct, it constitutes an inappropriate educational practice. Students are entitled to receive instruction from qualified personnel. Although teachers who must attend meetings or be away from the classroom briefly for some other reason may ask an assistant to supervise a class in their absence, they should not call on the assistant to provide more than limited instruction. If teachers must be away for longer periods than required for the class to complete an assignment under the supervision of an assistant, they should arrange for a properly qualified substitute teacher. Assistants are not substitute teachers.

Scenario 2: An educational assistant works with an individual student on a modified program of studies. The student's parents want frequent progress reports. The assistant reports her observations of the student's behaviour to the teacher who, in turn, interprets those behaviours and reports to the parents.

Analysis: The educational assistant is right in reporting to the teacher rather than to the parents directly. The teacher is responsible for consulting frequently with the assistant, incorporating the observations of the assistant into his own analysis of the student's progress, diagnosing the student's learning needs and discussing those needs with the parents. If the parents call the educational assistant directly, the assistant should refer them to the teacher.

Scenario 3: In discussions and e-mail messages, an educational assistant constantly refers to herself as an education assistant. This term confuses the teachers in the school because they interpret it to

mean that the assistant has duties in addition to those assigned by the teacher.

Analysis: The issue here is not the title by which the assistant refers to herself but the fact that staff in the school seem unclear about the role of educational assistants and how it differs from that of teachers. The respective roles of teachers and educational assistants must be clearly defined and broadly understood.

Scenario 4: A parent phones an educational assistant at home, in the evening and on weekends, to seek information about his child's behaviour and program and to give instructions on how the child is to be handled. Although the educational assistant accepts the calls, she resents the hours of unpaid time she spends on the telephone and feels that she is becoming an intermediary between the parent and the teacher.

Analysis: The educational assistant should tactfully but firmly ask the parent to direct his calls to the teacher. She should also ensure that school officials are aware of the situation and support her decision not to deal directly with the parent.

Health-Care Needs of Students

Many educational assistants work with students who have special medical concerns and need health-related care throughout the day. Teachers should develop careful plans detailing what needs to be done in routine and emergency situations and who is responsible for approving and for carrying out each action. The approval for delivering any health-related services, including medications to a student, must come from a health-care professional, not merely from the parents. In developing these plans, teachers should adhere scrupulously to school board policy. If the school board has no policy or if teachers are asked to attend to a student's health-care needs in a way that violates school board policy, they should register a protest. Furthermore, if they are in a position of responsibility, they should insist that the situation be corrected. If they are not in a position of responsibility, they should distance themselves from the decision.

Duties of Teachers and Educational Assistants: A Summary

	Duties of Teachers	Joint Activities	Duties of Educational Assistants and Advisory Personnel
Diagnosing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> diagnose learning needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss student abilities, strengths and weaknesses attend program-planning meetings (if the teacher requests that educational assistants be present) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> observe student behaviour and provide information to teachers
Prescribing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prescribe solutions, choose from available alternatives prepare individual program plans (IPPs) maintain current student profiles and IPPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss desired outcomes for the student discuss educational, behavioural and emotional goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> within the scope of their own professional qualifications, suggest possible courses of action for the teacher to follow and provide direct services such as speech therapy
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> plan lesson activities and choose resources choose appropriate modifications to meet IPP specifications establish priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepare materials, including modifications to the curriculum provide advice on available resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> assist in preparing materials, creating displays and undertaking other supportive activities

	Duties of Teachers	Joint Activities	Duties of Educational Assistants and Advisory Personnel
Disciplining	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a clearly understood classroom management structure, classroom rules and expectations for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> meet regularly to discuss student progress discuss and clarify expectations for student discipline and classroom rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work within established structures, including classroom management structures, behavioural rules and IPP expectations
Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement lesson plans and direct teaching related to those lesson plans supervise and facilitate student learning model techniques and appropriate language provide resources for the assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify and share outcomes and experiences discuss specific strategies, activities and outcomes discuss workplace location 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify elements of the lesson for students who are having trouble supervise reinforcement activities implement specific techniques, strategies and language as directed by the teacher document, monitor and report to the teacher
Evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate student progress ensure that students are adhering to the IPP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss observations exchange information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collect data for use in student evaluation mark objective tests for the teacher to review
Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> report to parents both formally and informally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss student information as appropriate maintain confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> report to teachers on students' strengths, achievements and needs report to teachers on observed student behaviours and outcomes
Staying current	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep up to date on school, district and provincial policies keep up to date on professional matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> follow policies and guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> keep up to date on school, district and provincial policies
Evaluating assistants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate professional and non-professional staff document and share concerns seek training for assistants as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discuss strengths and concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise on training and other needs
Evaluating programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate programs document and share concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify program needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> advise teachers about the degree to which the program structure promotes or inhibits the best use of the educational assistant's skills

How Can Teachers Support Educational Assistants?

As the role of support staff increases in scope and complexity, so does the need to ensure that such staff have the tools to do their jobs. Although the need for staff development is perhaps most obvious in the case of highly specialized educational assistants such as physical therapists, occupational therapists, educational psychologists and nurses, all staff who support teachers in working with students have staff development needs.

Too often, school boards simply invite support staff to participate in professional development activities that have already been organized for teachers rather than arrange staff development activities specifically tailored to the needs of support staff. Joint professional development can be valuable, but it should not be used as a substitute for staff development designed specifically for support staff.

Staff development for support staff should relate to the specialized role that they play in the education process, should be geared toward helping them meet student needs and should be directly applicable to their work situation. Although educational assistants will likely require specialized training to carry out their tasks effectively, teachers can facilitate the work of assistants by implementing the following practices:

1. Ensure that time is set for assistants to meet with teachers on a regular basis.

Teachers should press their school boards to set aside time to enable them to confer with their assistants. It is especially important that a meeting be set up early in the year or shortly after an educational assistant is hired to enable the teacher and the educational assistant to clarify their respective roles and to establish clear channels of communication. In addition, school boards should provide time for teachers and their assistants to confer on a regular basis throughout the year to engage in planning, exchange feedback and discuss individual situations. Such conferences can take place before or after school hours or, ideally, during joint release time, within the school day.

2. Establish effective lines of communication.

To have a healthy working relationship, teachers and educational assistants need to communicate

effectively. A starting point to doing this is to ensure that both parties understand their respective roles and responsibilities and feel free to discuss them openly on an ongoing basis. Effective communication also depends on both parties listening and accepting feedback.

3. Ensure that educational assistants are kept informed about school directives and activities. Principals should ensure that support staff have mailboxes so that they can receive notices about school events and directives and have an opportunity to participate in portions of school staff meetings that are relevant to them.

4. Help educational assistants develop data-collection skills. To be effective in the classroom, educational assistants must be aware of the teacher's objectives for each student as set out in the individual program plan (IPP), be able to recognize when students are achieving the desired outcomes and understand how to report their observations to the teacher. More specifically, they must know

- a) what data needs to be collected;
- b) what forms and checklists to use in documenting the behaviours and achievements they observe;
- c) how to further qualify the behaviours they observe in terms of such factors as length, frequency and intensity; and
- d) how to write clear incident reports using plain language.

5. Model basic behaviour management strategies. Teachers are ultimately responsible for managing the classroom and disciplining students. However, anyone working with children individually or in groups can greatly benefit by learning such basic strategies as remaining close to students when interacting with them, using low-key responses and urging students to communicate rather than engage in conflict. Because teachers use these strategies all the time, they should consider teaching them—through role modelling or direct training—to educational assistants and others who work with children.

The Role of Volunteers

Volunteers are a special category of educational assistants. Many parents find spending time in the classroom a comforting and rewarding experience both for themselves and for their child. Teachers and educational assistants, in turn, depend on volunteers to perform routine housekeeping tasks in the classroom, thereby allowing paid staff more time to focus on children's learning needs. Volunteers can also help teachers carry out enrichment activities in the classroom and can accompany students on field trips.

As valuable as volunteers are in the classroom, they are accountable neither to a professional association (as are teachers) nor to an employer (as are paid staff). This situation can create problems unless the school board establishes guidelines governing the role of volunteers in its schools. All school boards should have policy governing the selection and activities of volunteers and should require volunteers to complete and sign a form attesting that they have read the policy and understand what is expected of them. If boards do not have policy on the role and responsibilities of volunteers, teachers should

encourage them to develop one.

Because a classroom is a work site, adult visitors to the classroom are expected to be part of the working team for the time that they are present. The classroom teacher is ultimately responsible for determining how frequently parents can visit and how extensively they can become involved in classroom activities. Volunteers who are allowed into a classroom gain access not only to the children themselves but also to confidential records. In addition, they may witness interactions of a confidential nature. For that reason, volunteers should have access to classrooms only under the following circumstances:

1. They meet district criteria to be a volunteer.
2. They work under the direct supervision of a teacher.
3. They agree to respect the confidentiality and personal integrity of the students, the teachers and all staff.
4. They focus on helping students attain goals set by the teacher.
5. They agree to help all children as needed and assigned, not just their own.

Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers and Educational Assistants: A Summary

	Responsible to	Responsible for	Right to
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • employer • profession • public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • diagnosing learning needs • prescribing remedies • planning lessons • implementing lessons • evaluating students • reporting to parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be treated with courtesy and fairness • have professional expertise recognized • enjoy access to all relevant provisions of the 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 that are consistent with professional qualifications and expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be treated with courtesy and fairness • have a clear job description • enjoy access to all relevant provisions of the 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"> • be treated with courtesy and fairness • have a clear job description • enjoy access to all relevant provisions of the collective agreement (if one exists)
Volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • teacher 	<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"> • be treated with courtesy and fairness • have expectations clearly outlined

Meetings

Whether an educational assistant working with a student should attend and participate in a school meeting depends on the purpose of the meeting and who is accountable for the decisions made during the meeting. For example, because teachers are ultimately responsible for developing educational programs for students, teachers would likely attend meetings involving decisions about education programming. The involvement of educational assistants in the process would be limited to reporting their observations about students to the teacher before the meeting begins. On the other hand, given their professional expertise and responsibility, other educational assistants such as psychologists and speech therapists might be asked to attend the meeting.

Student Program Conferences

In general, only people directly responsible for determining an individual student's program should attend a student program conference. As a result, attendance at a program conference is usually restricted to the parents, the teacher(s), a school administrator and other professionals who provide direct professional services to the student. People who provide service to the student under the direction of another person (usually the teacher) generally do not attend student program conferences. People who fall into the latter category include educational assistants, sign language interpreters and special needs assistants.

If a student program conference becomes a planning conference to discuss specific learning activities and strategies and how they are to be implemented, the people who will be carrying out

these services should be present. Such meetings should include educational assistants, sign language interpreters and special needs assistants.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Regular parent-teacher conferences usually include the teacher and the parents only. Even if the educational assistant and other members of the team working with the student attend a conference, the teacher is the final decision maker and spokesperson. Educational assistants should never comment on a teacher's professional expertise. If asked to do so by parents, educational assistants should simply state that it is not their role to make such judgments. Reporting to parents is a teaching function. Teachers have a professional responsibility to come to the conference prepared to give the rationale for decisions that have been made concerning the student's program. Therefore, they should seek input from their assistants before attending the conference.

Staff Meetings

All staff should be treated with courtesy and respect and be made to feel that, as part of the team, they have an important role to play in achieving the mission of the school. As a result, all support staff in the school should be invited to attend portions of staff meetings that are devoted to providing information and planning social activities. However, because teachers are ultimately accountable for a school's education program, non-teachers should not normally participate in decisions about the education program and budget.

Conduct Issues

The activities of nonteaching personnel are governed by the employer–employee relationship. Teachers—even those who supervise non-teaching personnel—are not in a position to discipline or terminate the services of such personnel. However, teachers do have responsibility for evaluating the performance of nonteachers assigned to them and for reporting the results of those evaluations in accordance with board policy and the Code of Professional Conduct.

To help them perform this supervisory function, teachers should urge their employers to ensure that all contracts of employment for nonteaching personnel include the following elements:

1. a 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 and
6. a statement to the effect that the employee will comply with district policies.

School boards should have policy that clearly outlines, among other matters, the lines of authority governing all employees and the prescribed channels of appeal.

Liability

Sections 18 and 20 of the *School Act* assign the responsibility for supervising students to

certificated professionals. The standard of care expected of teachers is very high. In fact, it is higher than the legal expectation of an average parent. Nonteachers who supervise students on the school grounds or on field trips must do so under the direction of a teacher, from whom they can expect reasonable help and support.

Legally, educational assistants are generally held to a lower standard of care than teachers unless they have other professional or specialized education. Whenever assistants act as supervisors, they should have access to a teacher with whom they share accountability to the employer. Volunteers are not employees and cannot, for the most part, be held accountable for problems arising from their actions. Instead, teachers and principals are largely accountable for the actions of volunteers, whom they must supervise accordingly.

In the event that an accident or other incident results in sickness or injury, section 60 of the *School Act* indemnifies those persons authorized to act on behalf of the school board. Although indemnification insurance may spare employees from having to pay a court award, it does not spare anyone from a tragic and traumatic experience in court or from having to answer to the employer. If an accident or incident results in legal action, the court will focus on the duty of care, the standard of care, whether the incident was foreseeable and, if so, whether adequate precautions were taken to prevent it. These precautions will include matters for which the school board is responsible as well as matters for which the teacher is responsible—matters such as checking records, reviewing the procedures to be followed and ensuring that students are adequately supervised.

Making the Relationship Work

Making the relationship between teachers and educational assistants work is a shared responsibility. Teachers are well placed to improve the effectiveness of those assigned to help and advise them. To ensure that the relationship is as productive as possible, teachers should

1. discuss roles with the educational assistant;
2. establish clear parameters;
3. stress the importance of confidentiality;
4. discuss their educational philosophy and their approach to teaching and classroom management;
5. schedule regular meetings with the assistant to discuss his or her observations about students, obtain feedback and reports, hear concerns and discuss implementation strategies; and
6. introduce the assistant to other people in the school, district or community who may be able to provide assistance.

Much of the responsibility for making relationships work falls on the principal. As educational leader in the school, the principal must ensure that the integrity of the teaching profession is maintained. Two ways in which the principal can facilitate this process are developing clear job descriptions for all support staff and showing teachers how to evaluate educational assistants.

Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision must be based on clearly understood job descriptions. Assistants should receive frequent feedback about their performance. This combination of feedback, positive reinforcement and self-assessment makes formal supervision easier for teachers. Teachers should have direct input into the performance evaluations of their assistants.

The expectations for educational assistants, unlike those for teachers, are set almost entirely within the school and the school jurisdiction rather than through provincial statutes or regulations. As a result, educational assistants need to be closely supervised in the early stages of their employment and should receive a written evaluation after the first few months. The purpose of supervision is to

1. ensure that educational assistants are performing effectively within the established

- standards,
2. encourage educational assistants to grow professionally and improve their skills,
3. increase the effectiveness of school programs and
4. ensure that the educational services provided correspond with the needs of the student.

Teachers should clearly understand the process of supervision and evaluation, including the use of ongoing documentation and observation and the receipt of regular feedback regarding such performance criteria as:

1. punctuality,
2. strengths and weaknesses,
3. ability to follow instructions,
4. communication skills,
5. attitude toward work,
6. time management,
7. work and organizational skills,
8. ability to accept suggestions and criticisms,
9. initiative and resourcefulness,
10. attitude toward students and
11. dependability.

When Concerns Arise

The Association believes strongly in the principles of natural justice and the duty of fairness. The openness, fairness and honesty that the Code of Professional Conduct requires teachers to exercise in their interactions with one another should be extended to encompass all relationships. Accordingly, when teachers encounter difficulties in their relationships with non-teaching personnel, they should always attempt to resolve those concerns by discussing them directly with the person involved. Only if direct discussion fails to resolve the concern should teachers consider involving other people in the direct line of authority. Teachers should summarize their concerns in a brief written document that is based on observable incidents and facts rather than on subjective interpretation.

Just as teachers should speak directly to the educational assistant about whom they have a concern, so, too, should educational assistants who have a concern about a teacher begin by

discussing those concerns directly with the teacher. Only if discussion fails to resolve the issue should they consider discussing the situation with an administrator.

For their part, administrators should not ask an educational assistant to report on a teacher's performance. The integrity of both parties is on the line.

One word of caution—if either a teacher or an educational assistant has grounds to believe that a member of staff or a volunteer is engaging in a criminal action such as physical or sexual abuse, he or she should report the matter directly to the appropriate authorities.

In summary, because current legislation contains little to govern the interaction between teachers and educational assistants, the onus is on teachers to make the relationship as effective as possible. To some extent, the ideal relationship between a teacher and an educational assistant is always a work in progress. However, the many positive relationships that have been forged throughout the province demonstrate that, when the relationship works—when teachers and assistants are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are working toward a common goal—students can benefit enormously.

Appendix 1

Excerpts from the *School Act*

- 1 (1)(ii)** “teacher” means an individual who holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under this Act;
- 18(1)** A teacher while providing instruction or supervision must
- (a) provide instruction competently to students;
 - (b) teach the courses of study and education programs that are prescribed, approved or authorized pursuant to this Act;
 - (c) promote goals and standards applicable to the provision of education adopted or approved pursuant to this Act;
 - (d) encourage and foster learning in students;
 - (e) regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students, the students’ parents and the board;
 - (f) maintain, under the direction of the principal, order and discipline among the students while they are in the school or on the school grounds and while they are attending or participating in activities sponsored or approved by the board;
 - (g) subject to any applicable collective agreement and the teacher’s contract of employment, carry out those duties that are assigned to the teacher by the principal or the board.
- (2)** At any time during the period of time that a teacher is under an obligation to the board to provide instruction or supervision or to carry out duties assigned to the teacher by a principal or the board, a teacher must, at the request of the board,
- (a) participate in curriculum development and field testing of new curriculum;
 - (b) develop, field test and mark provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations;
 - (c) supervise student teachers.
- 20** A principal of a school must
- (a) provide instructional leadership in the school;
 - (b) ensure that the instruction provided by the teachers employed in the school is consistent with the courses of study and education programs prescribed, approved or authorized pursuant to this Act;
 - (c) evaluate or provide for the evaluation of programs offered in the school;
 - (d) ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister;
 - (e) direct the management of the school;
 - (f) maintain order and discipline in the school and on the school grounds and during activities sponsored or approved by the board;
 - (g) promote co-operation between the school and the community that it serves;
 - (h) supervise the evaluation and advancement of students;
 - (i) evaluate the teachers employed in the school;
 - (j) subject to any applicable collective agreement and the principal’s contract of employment, carry out those duties that are assigned to the principal by the board in accordance with the regulations and the requirements of the school council and the board.
- 60(1)** A board must
- (a) establish policies respecting the provision of educational services and programs;
 - (b) in respect of its operations
 - (i) keep in force a policy or policies of insurance,

- (ii) with the approval of the Minister, participate in an arrangement under Part 1, Subpart 3 of the *Insurance Act*, or
- (iii) with the approval of the Minister, participate in an alternative arrangement acceptable to the Minister, for the purpose of indemnifying the board and its employees and school councils in respect of claims for
- (iv) damages for death or personal injury,
- (v) damages to property, and
- (vi) damages to property owned by the board in respect of which the board has an insurable interest
 - (A) that the board has agreed to insure, or
 - (B) for which the board otherwise has or may have assumed liability;
- (c) maintain, repair, furnish and keep in good order all its real and personal property;
- (d) make copies of the rules made by it available to those of its employees who are affected by the rules;
- (e) make rules respecting the circumstances in which a student may be suspended or expelled and the circumstances in which an expelled student may be re-enrolled.

92(1) Unless otherwise authorized under this Act, a board shall employ as a teacher only an individual who holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under this Act.

(2) A board may employ a competent individual to teach a language or culture under the supervision of a teacher who holds a certificate referred to in subsection (1).

93 Unless a person holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under this Act, that person is not eligible to hold a supervisory position that directly relates to the teaching functions of a teacher.

112(1) Unless otherwise authorized under this Act, a board shall not knowingly employ a person as a teacher who does not hold a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under this Act.

(2) Unless otherwise authorized under this Act, a person shall not teach in a school operated by a board unless that person holds a certificate of qualification as a teacher issued under this Act.

(3) A person who is not permitted to teach is not entitled to recover any remuneration for his services as a teacher.

117 In addition to the employees referred to in sections 113 and 116, the board may employ other non-teaching employees that the board considers necessary for its operation.

Appendix 2

ATA Policy on Educational Assistants

Long-Range Policy

12.A.1 Educational assistants are persons who are not required as a condition of employment, to possess a teaching certificate and who directly assist individual or groups of teachers in achieving educational objectives. [1973/85/93/2011/13]

12.A.2 Permitting educational assistants to assume any professional responsibilities of teachers is educationally unsound. [1973/93/2011/13]

12.A.3 Teachers supervising an educational assistant should be able to provide input into the evaluation of the assistant's performance. [1999/2002/11/13]

12.A.4 Assignment of an educational assistant to a class as justification for increasing or failing to reduce class size is opposed. [1971/73/75/78/83/85/93/2003/11/13]

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

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

[1973/78/93/2003/11/13]

12.A.6 The assignment of an educational assistant must be made in conjunction with the teacher to whom the assistant is assigned, and such teacher shall determine the assistant's specific duties. [1973/93/2003/11/13]

12.A.7 The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes the utilization of educational assistants when such utilization may effect a reduction of certificated professional staff. [1985/93/2011/13]

12.A.8 Alberta public colleges should ensure that their education programs for educational assistants prepare them for the inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes. [1992/95/98/2002/11/13]

12.A.9 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school jurisdictions to provide appropriate and ongoing training for paraprofessionals and assistants employed by school boards. [2015]

Current Directives

12.B.1 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge school jurisdictions to develop enforceable standards of conduct for noncertificated staff and volunteers. [1996/99/2002/05/08/11/14]

12.B.2 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Department of Education to develop regulations that set standards for the role, supervision and evaluation of paraprofessionals or assistants employed by school boards. [2005/08/11/14]

12.B.3 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Alberta Teachers' Association urge the Government of Alberta to require that school boards provide training for educational assistants working with students with diverse learning needs. Such training would be required to take place during the educational assistant's first year of employment and would include first aid, nonviolent crisis intervention, managing student behaviours, literacy and workplace safety practices as well as competency in the language of instruction. [2015]

Appendix 3

ATA Position Paper on Educational Assistants [1973, revised 1985, 1993, 2003, 2013]

Growth of Noncertificated School Staff

By 1970 a number of circumstances had combined to put pressure on boards to increase the number of educational assistants and extend their functions in the schools.

Financial pressures encouraged boards to provide clerical and special services in a manner thought to reduce inefficiencies. Why pay higher-salaried teachers to take attendance, keep records of book rentals and issue audiovisual equipment? These duties could be assigned to other, less costly personnel.

The new financial avenue of federal Local Initiatives Program grants and the general public attitude toward education expenses also reflected a political force. Boards became concerned about threats to sources of funding such as the growing resistance of taxpayers to increases in property taxes. If parents could be encouraged to become more involved in the schools through voluntary and other money-saving programs, then the chances of boards for re-election and budget approval would improve. The hue and cry for accountability in education could be answered at least partially by a proliferation of volunteer projects, which would also give parents a task to do. This reinforces the view of the classroom as a worksite and helps the parent appreciate the overall complexity of the teaching process. Involved parents usually will be supportive of the school program.

There was also a social pressure for increased use of educational assistants. In a time of increasing leisure, volunteer tasks become significant as a means of releasing energy and achieving self-fulfillment. At precisely the time when the general population is becoming better educated, the number of satisfying jobs being developed is not keeping pace with the demand. Many citizens feel the need to give help in socially acceptable projects; volunteer social projects are a means for an individual's participation in society.

These economic, political and social forces combined to encourage boards to extend the possibilities for using noncertificated volunteer and paid personnel in the schools. Boards hired not only secretaries but media technicians, business managers, library technicians, coaches and tutors. Volunteer tutors and supervisors were also added to the list in increasing numbers. Although staffing the school with more adults was intended to alleviate problems, the resulting push in educational assistants staffing brought with it its own host of complex problems.

What Kind of Assistants Do Teachers Want?

We should not misinterpret the fact that teachers themselves have asked for the provision of special services (technical, clerical, supervisory) that teachers find themselves unable to perform in the available time without sacrificing the teaching role. Teachers did not seek to have their teaching duties taken over by "junior instructors." Teachers believe that every student is entitled to instruction from a highly qualified teacher.

While economic, political and social pressures and the desire of teachers to render better service in the teaching of students combined to produce an extensive and desirable use of educational assistants, some boards have used assistants in ways beyond those that teachers intended or can ethically accept. For instance, teachers did not expect assistants to interfere in teacher-student interchanges nor to act as another adult standing between the teacher and the student.

In at least two significant areas, assistants are undertaking work that should be performed by teachers: library and remedial services. When the situation called for teacher-librarians, some boards responded by supplying library technicians. In many cases, boards replaced teacher-librarians with library technicians. It was argued that, in the absence of financial provision for a teacher-librarian, a library technician was preferable to no library resource person at all. We must remember, though, that the library technician is not qualified to perform the same functions and cannot assume the responsibility of the teacher-librarian.

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

Defining Teaching Tasks

Part of the complexity of the educational assistants issue involves the nature of the teaching task. Before the advent of so many noncertificated adults in the schools, it was fairly easy to define teaching tasks as "... all those professional tasks encountered by teachers in the course of their activities concerned with the instruction of pupils. Included would be the actual conducting of classes and presenting of lessons, the preparation of lessons, requisitioning of audiovisual and other materials and equipment, evaluation of student progress and maintenance of such classroom order as is necessary to promote a healthy learning climate. Implied, as well, is a teacher's duty to carry out such general pupil supervision as is required by law, by regulation or by agreement, to assist to a reasonable extent with the extracurricular or cocurricular program agreed to by the staff, to cooperate with other teachers in the best interests of students and, generally, to act as an enthusiastic member of the school's educational team." (Source: *Teachers' Rights, Responsibilities and Legal Liabilities*, ATA 1978, 11)

Educational assistants make it possible to transfer the execution of some of these duties from the teacher and, although the responsibility may be retained, the teacher does not in all cases perform the tasks; instead, an assistant responsible to the teacher performs them. The fact that some duties have been taken over by educational assistants has contributed to role confusion in the mind of the public and, even among assistants and some teachers, many wonder what the duties of the teacher are and how the teacher is really different from the volunteer or paid assistant.

What a teacher does

Teachers are hired to perform professional service in certain areas regarded as teaching areas, with teaching defined as in Association policy and by statute. Most teaching activities involve the pupil directly with the teacher whether through lecture, leadership of classroom activity, direction of small groups or one-to-one contact. In addition there is much pre- and postclass activity on curriculum development and adaptation, evaluation and teaching strategies.

Core of the professional task

Without denying such aspects as motivating students, supervision, curriculum development and management of classroom resources, four aspects of the teaching function should be stressed: diagnosis of students' learning needs, prescription for those needs, implementing educational program, and evaluation of student, program and self. These four areas are the core of the professional task. The teacher is not only totally responsible for these activities but also, in large measure, must execute them. These tasks are defined by statute.

In order to acquire the information for making decisions about a student's educational well-being, a teacher must interact extensively with the student so that in no case could a teacher allow extensive instruction to be done by others such as assistants or even other teachers and still retain an ethical authority for making decisions about the student's well-being. Counsellors do not recommend for clients whom they do not interview; doctors do not prescribe for patients whom they have not examined. Neither can a teacher passively accept responsibility for students the teacher has not taught.

The intent of any modification in staff utilization must be the ultimate improvement of the educational program to the benefit of the student. The focal value of formal education is based on the quality of the direct interaction of teacher and students. Any innovation that serves to remove the teacher further from this direct interaction with the students inevitably leads to the debasement of the quality of education.

Delegating Tasks to Assistants

At all times the teacher is responsible for the educational program and must perform the professional duties associated with that program. Nonprofessional tasks may be delegated to assistants and an assistant might at times perform a demonstration role, comment on slides or talk to students about some topic in which the assistant has special knowledge. That is, the assistant might at times take a role in the instructional component of education. But the assistant would do so under the direction of and in conjunction with the teacher in the same way as a teacher brings in a guest speaker from the community. The assistant would not diagnose, prescribe or evaluate with regard to the students, because these are teaching tasks defined by statute. And a teacher utilizing an assistant for the instructional component must be mindful of the teacher's need for a database for diagnosis, prescription and evaluation. The teacher must, in order to achieve the interaction with students necessary for getting the data for proper educational decisions, carry out the major share of instruction in person.

Assistants may play roles in other aspects of the teaching function. Both paid and volunteer assistants can assist in motivating students. Assistants employed as instructional assistants, although capable of performing occasional instruction as described above, could find their primary duty in assisting to develop curriculum materials, especially when making learning packages for individualized instruction. Such assistants will have a specific area of expertise. There is also a role for assistants in supervision, but this role seems limited by legal liability requirements to maintain the standard of care of a certificated teacher employed as a teacher. Assistants can assist in management of classroom and school resources of all types including texts, library materials and audiovisual equipment.

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

Appendix 4

ATA Code of Professional Conduct

The Code of Professional Conduct stipulates minimum standards of professional conduct of teachers but is not an exhaustive list of such standards. Unless exempted by legislation, any member of The Alberta Teachers' Association who is alleged to have violated the standards of the profession, including the provisions of the Code, may be subject to a charge of unprofessional conduct under the bylaws of the Association.

In relation to pupils

- 1 The teacher teaches in a manner that respects the dignity and rights of all persons without prejudice as to race, religious beliefs, colour, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical characteristics, disability, marital status, family status, age, ancestry, place of origin, place of residence, socioeconomic background or linguistic background.
- 2 (1) The teacher is responsible for diagnosing educational needs, prescribing and implementing instructional programs and evaluating progress of pupils.
(2) The teacher may not delegate these responsibilities to any person who is not a teacher.
- 3 The teacher may delegate specific and limited aspects of instructional activity to noncertificated personnel, provided that the teacher supervises and directs such activity.
- 4 The teacher treats pupils with dignity and respect and is considerate of their circumstances.
- 5 The teacher may not divulge information about a pupil received in confidence or in the course of professional duties except as required by law or where, in the judgment of the teacher, to do so is in the best interest of the pupil.
- 6 The teacher may not accept pay for tutoring a pupil in any subjects in which the teacher is responsible for giving classroom instruction to that pupil.
- 7 The teacher may not take advantage of a professional position to profit from the sale of goods or services to or for pupils in the teacher's charge.

In relation to school authorities

- 8 The teacher protests the assignment of duties for which the teacher is not qualified or conditions which make it difficult to render professional service.
- 9 The teacher fulfills contractual obligations to the employer until released by mutual consent or according to law.
- 10 The teacher provides as much notice as possible of a decision to terminate employment.
- 11 The teacher adheres to agreements negotiated on the teacher's behalf by the Association.

In relation to colleagues

- 12 The teacher does not undermine the confidence of pupils in other teachers.
- 13 The teacher criticizes the professional competence or professional reputation of another teacher only in confidence to proper officials and after the other teacher has been informed of the criticism, subject only to section 24 of the *Teaching Profession Act*.
- 14 The teacher, when making a report on the professional performance of another teacher, does so in good faith and, prior to submitting the report, provides the teacher with a copy of the report, subject only to section 24 of the *Teaching Profession Act*.
- 15 The teacher does not take, because of animosity or for personal advantage, any steps to secure the dismissal of another teacher.
- 16 The teacher recognizes the duty to protest through proper channels administrative policies and practices which the teacher cannot in conscience accept; and further recognizes that if administration by consent fails, the administrator must adopt a position of authority.

- 17 The teacher as an administrator provides opportunities for staff members to express their opinions and to bring forth suggestions regarding the administration of the school.

In relation to the profession

- 18 The teacher acts in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession.
19 The teacher does not engage in activities which adversely affect the quality of the teacher's professional service.
20 The teacher submits to the Association disputes arising from professional relationships with other teachers which cannot be resolved by personal discussion.
21 The teacher makes representations on behalf of the Association or members thereof only when authorized to do so.
22 The teacher accepts that service to the Association is a professional responsibility.

Approved by the 2004 Annual Representative Assembly pursuant to the Teaching Profession Act.

Please note:

- Items 13 and 14 of the Code of Professional Conduct do not pertain to reporting to the Association on the possible unprofessional conduct of another member.
- The *Teaching Profession Act*, section 24(3), requires members to report forthwith to the executive secretary on the unprofessional conduct of another member.

Appendix 5

Some Real-Life Scenarios

The following questions are based on real situations reported by teachers.

- Q** A teacher designed a phonics program to help meet the learning needs of a particular student. An educational assistant working one on one with the student believes that the program is inappropriate for the student and has said so to the student's parents. Can anything be done?
- A** There are two concerns here. First, the assistant does not have the qualifications to assess the program and, as a result, is overstepping her role in commenting on its appropriateness. The assistant may well have some valid concerns based on her observations of the student's experience with the program. However, she should discuss these concerns with the teacher to determine if some adjustments are appropriate. Second, the assistant, by discussing the issue with the parents rather than with the teacher, has undermined the credibility of the teacher with the parents. This course of action almost certainly violates the conditions of her contract of employment and merits a reprimand. Making this mistake again could be grounds for termination.
- Q** My educational assistant is a creative person who comes up with fun ideas for the student she works with. My concern is that she occasionally decides on her own to have a student shift from doing school work to carrying out a fun project such as a Christmas craft. How much latitude should an educational assistant have to change activities that a teacher has planned?
- A** The assistant may have felt that a shift to a more hands-on activity was necessary to address the emotional or behavioural needs of the student. However, the assistant should have checked with the teacher in advance not only to ensure that the alternative activities were appropriate but also to discuss how frequently such activities should be allowed to interrupt regular course work.
- Q** One of our educational assistants tolerates unacceptable language and behaviour from a student. Although the teacher has directed the assistant to enforce a higher standard of conduct, so far she has not done so.
- A** A primary educational goal for many special needs students is learning to recognize which behaviours are socially acceptable and which are not. The teacher should not only ask the assistant once again to require a higher level of conduct from the student but also explain to her how to respond to unacceptable behaviour. If the assistant continues to tolerate unacceptable behaviour from the student, the teacher should put the directive and suggested responses in writing. If the assistant still does not comply, the teacher should ask the principal to intervene.
- Q** When is the school administration responsible for training an educational assistant?
- A** There is no simple answer to this question. Ideally, training should be undertaken jointly by the school and school board administration, the supervising teacher and the assistant. The administration is responsible for (1) hiring assistants with proper qualifications, (2) providing assistants with a clear description of their roles and responsibilities and (3) making training opportunities available to them as needed. Teachers should ensure that they communicate their expectations clearly to assistants and provide them with appropriate feedback and support. Assistants should strive to meet and exceed teachers' expectations.
- Q** My educational assistant recently complained to the principal that I was not using her abilities to their fullest. She also told the principal that she could produce better student materials than the ones I had provided and that I was not giving the students enough fun activities. What can I expect from the principal?
- A** You can expect the principal to reprimand the assistant for violating her contractual duties by discussing her concerns with your superior rather than with you directly. The principal should explain

to the assistant that the approach she has taken is destructive to morale and counterproductive to a good working relationship.

- Q** The speech therapist has told me that requiring a child to participate in oral reading activities is counterproductive. I do not agree. She has taken her complaint to the principal. What support can I expect from the administration?
- A** None. The speech therapist is a highly trained professional who has sophisticated ways of determining whether or not a child is making progress. If the therapist believes that your classroom approach is impeding a child's speech development, she has a professional obligation to insist on a change.
- Q** A hospital that is providing therapy to one of my students sends information about the student directly to my educational assistant. Recently, the hospital invited the assistant to attend a case conference at the hospital. Shouldn't schools have guidelines in place governing their relationship with external agencies that provide therapy or other services to students?
- A** Yes. At minimum, schools should insist that the contact person at the school be a member of the professional staff, generally the classroom teacher. Educational assistants should be aware of this expectation and should refer all contacts from external agencies to the appropriate member of professional staff.

Appendix 6

Scenarios for Discussion

The scenarios described below are based on questions that the Association has received from teachers concerned about the circumstances in which they find themselves. Can you identify the problem, if any, in each scenario? How should the situation be resolved?

Scenario 1: An educational assistant reports to a teacher that, for three days, a student has not completed his homework assignments and does not understand the unit. The assistant has created a fill-in-the-blanks exercise from the text and allows the student to work on it rather than the assignment during class time. The student went right to work and seems happy.

Scenario 2: A fully qualified teacher is unable to find employment as a teacher in her community and accepts a position as an educational assistant. She is quite prepared to accept the responsibility for diagnosing student learning needs and for preparing material for the students with whom she works. Indeed, she is pressing the teacher to provide her with a program of studies and a unit plan and then leave her on her own so that her group can work at the same pace as the rest of the class. The teacher, who feels overworked, is considering the request.

Scenario 3: Although graduates of a college educational assistant program are available for work, a school district decides to hire, instead, a parent to serve as an educational assistant. The parent is the mother of three troubled students who attend the school. The relationship between her and the supervising teacher becomes strained. Without discussing her concerns with the teacher, the educational assistant goes directly to the principal.

Scenario 4: One student in a large class requires a heavily modified program. The teacher prepares a program for the student and then instructs her assistant to work with the student in a quiet area beneath the stairs. The assistant and the student spend much of the day in that area without interruption or supervision.

Scenario 5: Members of a school staff learn that, as the result of a budgeting change, they actually have \$50,000 more available than they previously thought. They hold a staff meeting to discuss how this money should be used. Several possibilities are suggested including field trips, textbooks, science resources and sports equipment. The school secretary is particularly persuasive in arguing that the money be spent to hire an educational assistant for the Grade 1 classroom.

Scenario 6: Students at a junior high school are enrolled in a number of Career and Technology Studies (CTS) options that are under the direction of members of the public. The school principal is nominally the supervisor for the programs but is not on site and, in fact, often has conflicting duties.

