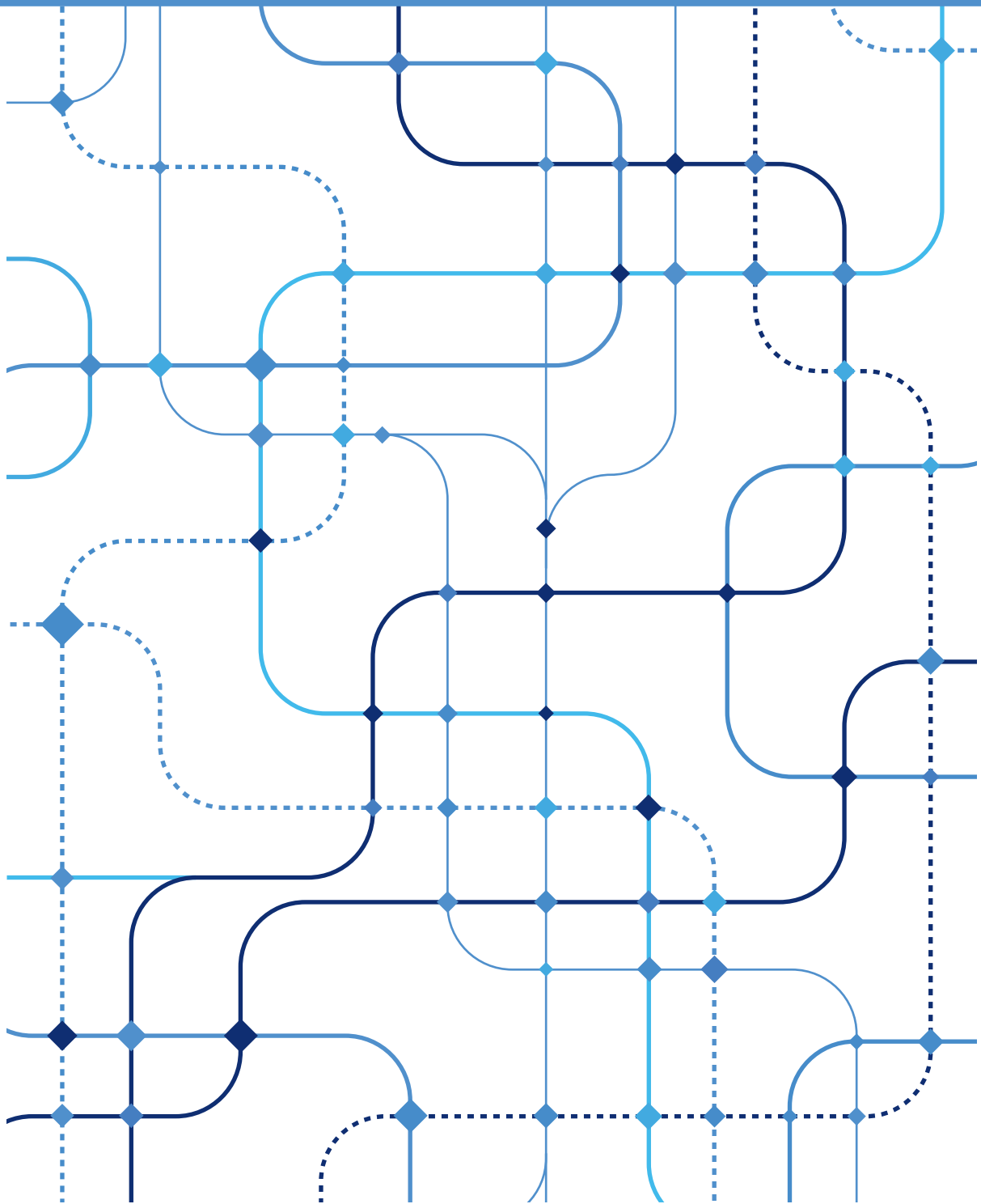


Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Education Assistants



This guide elaborates the roles and responsibilities of teachers and student support professionals as defined initially by, and within, the confines of British Columbia's *School Act* and *School Regulation*; the Ministry of Education and Child Care document *Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*; and collective agreements that apply to both the BCTF and CUPE BC members.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Education Assistants: a *BCTF/CUPE BC Guide*

Context

The BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) and Canadian Union of Public Employees BC division (CUPE BC) recognize that teachers and student support professionals play a key role in programs for students with disabilities or diverse abilities. This document is intended to assist teachers and student support professionals in establishing a co-operative, respectful working relationship to ensure the success of all students.

“Teacher” in this document refers to all teachers, including classroom teachers, inclusive education support teachers, learning support teachers, and other non-enrolling or specialist teachers.

“Student support professionals” may also be referred to in this document as education assistants and paraprofessionals who are working with teachers to support all students with disabilities or diverse abilities. These terms are used interchangeably in this document. Some school districts have alternative terms for these roles. The [School Act](#) refers to this role as “teacher assistant.”

Student support professionals are supervised in regard to their employment relationship (e.g., evaluation reports and discipline) by the principal or vice-principal—not the teacher with whom the student support professional works.

Shared Values

Teachers and student support professionals uphold professional standards, have deep and meaningful commitments to students and to school communities, and agree to work collaboratively to ensure the academic, social, and emotional growth of the students in their care. An agreeable and respectful relationship amongst adults in classrooms and schools is one of the foundations of a successful educational journey for students. As such, all professionals in the school endeavour to co-operate in the shared interest of supporting students.

Within the provision of public education services, there are countless opportunities for collaboration between student support professionals and teachers. This document is not prescriptive but rather a set of general guidelines that support this collaborative relationship.

Guidelines

1. Inclusive education policies, procedures, and guidelines

The following excerpts are taken from the Ministry of Education and Child Care document *Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines* (Section B.3):

“The teacher responsible for a student with disabilities or diverse abilities is responsible for designing, supervising, and assessing the educational program for that student.”

“Teachers are expected to design programs for students with disabilities or diverse abilities. Education Assistants play a key role in many programs for students with disabilities or diverse abilities, performing functions which range from personal care to assisting the teacher with instructional programs. Under the direction of a teacher they may play a key role in implementing the program.”

“While education assistants may assist in the collection of data for the purpose of evaluating student progress, the teachers are responsible for evaluating and reporting on student learning to parents.”

2. Collective agreements

Teachers and student support professionals are covered by collective agreements between the unions that represent them and their employer. Many of these agreements have provisions that establish conditions relevant to roles and responsibilities. Collective agreements must be followed and take precedence over this document.

3. The roles of the Ministry of Education and Child Care and school districts in ensuring conditions for success of students with disabilities or diverse abilities

Teachers and student support professionals agree that the Ministry of Education and Child Care and the school district are responsible to ensure the necessary conditions for students with disabilities or diverse abilities can succeed in schools. These conditions include but are not limited to:

- provision of adequate resources to maintain an appropriate learning environment.
- availability of a suitable workspace to accommodate the learning activities of those working with students with disabilities or diverse abilities.
- access to appropriate information regarding the student and the Individual Education Plan (IEP), as well as techniques and strategies necessary to carry out the responsibilities for each in relation to student programs.
- the provision of appropriate in-service instructional and behavioural techniques and strategies.

- adequate release time for members of the school-based team, and adequate time within the school day for members of the student specific support team, including the teacher and the student support professionals, to participate as required in the process of developing, implementing, and monitoring the IEP.

4. Teachers' and student support professionals' working relationship: general responsibilities

Inherent in the *School Act* and the Ministry of Education and Child Care document *Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines* is the teacher's responsibility for designing, implementing, and evaluating the educational program. The student support professional's role is to assist teachers in this responsibility. Both the teacher and the student-support professional facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities or diverse abilities.

In order to foster a co-operative, respectful working relationship, student support professionals must be aware of the responsibilities that are specific to teachers.

Similarly, teachers must be aware of job descriptions and the parameters of the responsibilities of student support professionals.

To provide effective support for students with disabilities or diverse abilities, teachers and student support professionals work together and share responsibility to:

- develop a positive, respectful working relationship.
- meet standards of professional and ethical conduct in relation to students, parents, and colleagues.
- follow guidelines established by the school, district, and WorkSafeBC to protect the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.
- maintain positive, supportive, professional relationships within the education community.

5. Collaboration

Teachers and student support professionals can collaborate to:

- co-operate in the development of IEPs by discussing learners' strengths and weaknesses and considering best possible areas of program focus.
- participate in school-based team meetings.
- discuss adaptations and modifications to curriculum and resource materials.
- keep a regular and ongoing discussion about student progress.
- jointly review learning resources to clarify and share experiences and expectations of each other.
- discuss and clarify classroom expectations for students.

- discuss what instructional learning resources are needed to reach IEP goals (e.g., flash cards, social stories, abacus, etc.).
- contribute to and participate in the creation of positive behaviour support plans and individual safe work instructions.
- share professional development opportunities where appropriate.
- advocate for conditions of success for students with disabilities or diverse abilities.
- advocate for the protection of the legal and human rights of students and their families.

6. Glossary

Adaptations: teaching and assessment strategies made to accommodate a student's disabilities or diverse abilities and may include alternate formats (e.g., braille, books-on-tape), instructional strategies (e.g., use of interpreters, visual cues and aids) and assessment procedures (e.g., oral exams, additional time, assistive technologies).

Individual Education Plan: an individual education plan designed for a student that includes one or more of the following:

- learning outcomes that are different from, or in addition to, expected learning outcomes set out in the applicable educational program guide
- a list of support services
- a list of adapted materials, instruction, or assessment methods.

Individual Safe Work Instructions: a written document that provides clear and concise information to support safe work when working with individuals.

Modification: are instructional and assessment-related decisions made to accommodate a student's educational needs that consist of individualized learning goals and outcomes, which are different than learning outcomes of a course or subject. Modifications should be considered for those students whose disabilities or diverse abilities are such that they are unable to access the curriculum (e.g., students with limited awareness of their surroundings, students with fragile mental/physical health, students medically and cognitively/multiply challenged.) Using the strategy of modifications for students not identified as disabilities or diverse abilities should be a rare practice.

Positive Behaviour Support Plan: a framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health.

School-Based Team: an ongoing team of school-based personnel that has a formal role as a problem-solving unit by assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to co-ordinate support resources for students with disabilities or diverse abilities within the school.

See more definitions in the [*Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*](#).

Sources

1. *School Act*



2. *Inclusive Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines*



