



Standards of Practice for Education Assistants in British Columbia

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EA Standards of Practice Working Group

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Preamble

Standards of Practice for Education Assistants in British Columbia

Provincial standards for Education Assistants (EAs) guide professional learning and best practice, and contribute positively to the public standing of the profession. Standards of Practice articulate the necessary knowledge and skills for EAs in the K-12 education system in British Columbia.

The Role of The Education Assistant

The role of the EA is multi-faceted and becoming increasingly complex (*Maggin, Wehby, Moore-Partin, Robertson & Oliver, 2009*). Under the direction of the teacher, EAs work with a broad range of students in a wide variety of educational settings (BCTF/CUPE 2009). EAs are required to have knowledge about specific disabilities, instructional strategies, implementing technology, communication and/or personal care protocols, as well as understanding how to support positive behaviour and prevent or de-escalate challenging/severe behaviour (*Malcolmson, 2008 & 2009; Maggin et al., 2009*). Another critical role of the EA is to facilitate inclusion and independence for students with special needs without the student becoming too dependent on adult support (*Giangreco, 2010*). Often, these job demands occur in several environments while working with many different professionals and students during the course of a day. In order to fulfill the demands of an EA position, Education Assistants need specialized knowledge and ongoing training.

Background

The landscape in British Columbia today shows that there are over 10,000 Education Assistants (*Fewster, 2008; Malcolmson, 2009*) and currently there is a wide disparity in the level of training among EAs. The issue of lack of educational preparation for the EA role is reflected in Malcolmson's BC research report published in 2009 by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) following a provincial survey of 4,000 of its members, titled "Recognition and Respect: Education assistants in British Columbia: An Educational Profile and Agenda". This study indicates that only 48% of those people employed have specific training and education for the role of EA. With the roles and responsibilities (BCTF/CUPE 2009) that are placed upon EAs and the work demanded of them in supporting the most vulnerable students in our school system, it is clear there is a need to move toward standardizing EA practice and training. Having Education Assistants who are well educated will improve the likelihood that students receive the best educational support.

In 2012, a "White Paper: Call for Standards of Practice for Education Assistants in BC" (*Hoyano, Woodyard & Koch, 2012*) was produced and circulated among key

stakeholders in British Columbia. This paper recognizes the critical role of EAs in the school system and states that it is essential that EAs be well prepared with thorough and high quality education and training, and calls for a professional set of standards of practice for Education Assistants.

Process

In order to address the concerns arising from the Malcolmson report and “The White Paper”, a provincial working group was established, comprised most importantly of Education Assistants themselves, and also school district administrators of special education, post-secondary educators of EAs, consultants and parents. The stated purpose of the Education Assistants Standards Working Group is:

To engage in broad ranging discussion and consultation among interested parties in order to articulate our shared understanding of core standards of practice (knowledge and skills) of Education Assistants in K-12 education in British Columbia.

The working group defines standards of practice as the minimum expected levels of practice for entry-level competency for Education Assistants in British Columbia. Standards of practice are realized through application in pre-service education, the workplace and other educational contexts. The standards will inform both existing or emerging education and training programs. They will also guide school districts and Human Resource personnel responsible for hiring EAs. Professional standards for Education Assistants will help attract, develop, recognize and retain quality Education Assistants.

The Education Assistant Standards Working Group has developed a draft set of standards and related competencies for EAs ready for discussion and feedback. It is our intent that this document serves as the first step toward provincial standards of practice for Education Assistants in British Columbia.

Standards of Practice of Education Assistants in BC

Standard 1: Professionalism

- 1.1 Possess the knowledge and skills to perform the duties of an EA in a manner consistent with acknowledged best practice and in accordance with legal responsibilities
 - Work within the EA role in an educational setting (i.e. school, district, provincial)
 - Demonstrate necessary literacy, numeracy and technology skills
 - Use theory to guide practice
 - Have an awareness of legal responsibilities regarding students at risk of abuse, neglect, self-harm and/or suicide
- 1.2 Act in an ethical and respectful manner
 - Respect the diversity of all individuals
 - Treat students, families and colleagues in a respectful, safe and fair manner with consideration of physical, psychological, social and emotional needs
 - Maintain appropriate boundaries, privacy and confidentiality of student and family information
- 1.3 Be responsible and accountable
 - Demonstrate effective use of time in the workplace
 - Demonstrate appropriate use of technology in the workplace
 - Demonstrate reflective practice within own range of competencies and self-identify gaps in knowledge and skills
 - Participate in ongoing learning activities
- 1.4 Promote the purpose, principles and values of inclusion
 - Appreciate the history of supporting individuals with exceptionalities (institutionalization to inclusion).
 - Foster a climate of belonging and acceptance within the school and community.

Standard 2: Collaboration and Communication

- 2.1 Utilize effective communication and interpersonal skills
- Use clear verbal communication to inform, instruct, problem solve, resolve conflicts, seek information, ask questions (clarify)
 - Use clear written communication to maintain notes and documentation to share with the school team
 - Maintain confidentiality and follow the protocols of communication set out in the school act and board policy
- 2.2 Work within a team to support students in planning and implementing educational goals
- Work respectfully with diverse teams
 - Collaborate in the planning and/or implementation of documents such as individual education plans, behaviour plans, care plans and safety plans
 - Seek the advice of appropriate team members when needed

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Standard 3: Supporting learning and development

- 3.1 Work within a team to support academic and cognitive development
- Employ a range of systematic instructional strategies
 - Be aware of provincial learning outcomes and resources
 - Work with teachers to adapt or modify learning activities and support differentiated instruction
 - Demonstrate an understanding of the role and use of technology, including adapted and assistive technology, and software programs to support student learning
- 3.2 Work within a team to support social and emotional development
- Employ principles of behaviour and emotional support systems
 - Implement strategies to support pro-social behaviour, self-regulation and social skills
 - Employ measures to prevent and de-escalate challenging behaviours
 - Recognize the signs and protection strategies related to abuse, neglect or potential mental health issues
 - Encourage peer interaction and relationships
- 3.3 Work within a team to support students with physical and medical needs
- Support students with personal care needs in a safe, ethical and respectful manner
 - Make accommodations to support the physical and medical needs of students
 - Demonstrate familiarity with the implementation of health care protocols
- 3.4 Work within a team to support and develop student communication
- Support the development of receptive and expressive communication
 - Make accommodations to support students with communication needs
 - Demonstrate an understanding of augmentative and assistive communication systems to support students
- 3.5 Work within a team to support self-determination and independence in school, community and transition into adult life
- Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and principles of independence, self determination and transition planning
 - Support the development of meaningful and contemporary functional skills in the classroom and community settings that will support a transition to life as an adult in the community
 - Foster individual self determination and self advocacy skills

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