

EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

in Manitoba Schools



2024



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This resource is available on the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning website at
www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/ed_assistants/.

Available in alternate formats upon request.

LAND TREATY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognize that Manitoba is on Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 Territories and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Ininiwak, and Nehethowuk Peoples. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

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INTRODUCTION

Responsibilities and rights related to education in Manitoba are defined in The Public Schools Act and The Education Administration Act. Appropriate Educational Programming, an amendment to The Public Schools Act, confirms in legislation that all students in Manitoba—particularly those with diverse learning needs—are entitled to receive appropriate educational programming that fosters student participation in both the academic and social life of the school.

Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (2022) clarifies the obligation and responsibilities of classroom teachers to teach all students in safe, caring, and inclusive school and classroom learning environments. Reinforcing Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion, it is through appropriately differentiated and student-centred learning experiences that Kindergarten to Grade 12 classroom teachers meet the diverse learning needs, abilities, and interests of their students. When teachers plan effectively for the full diversity of their class, students who learn differently have increased opportunities to learn in ways that meet their needs, together with their classmates.

This document elaborates on the roles and responsibilities of educators in appropriate educational programming, and on the role of educational assistants as one resource from a continuum of available resources and supports in inclusive schools and classrooms. Under the direction of the classroom teacher and under the supervision of the principal, educational assistants support the implementation of appropriate educational programming. This professional relationship is built on a shared vision of meaningful inclusion, open mindsets, strong communication, and teamwork to foster student acquisition of functional independence across living and learning environments. (See *Standards for Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/aep/pdf/standards_for_student_services.pdf.)

Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion

The Public Schools Act reinforces Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion, which states the following:

Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship.

In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.

In Manitoba, school divisions are responsible for establishing

- hiring practices
- orientation and training requirements
- the provision of training opportunities
- financial allocations for training
- the allocation of educational assistant time
- the supervision and evaluation of educational assistants by professional staff
- the process for assigning an educational assistant to a classroom or to a particular student

What It Means to Be an Educational Assistant in Manitoba

Historical Perspectives

Manitoba's education system has evolved over the last 60 years, shifting from exclusion to inclusion. Until the 1960s, students with disabilities in Manitoba, as in many places, were excluded from the public school system. The gradual progression from segregation to integration saw students with disabilities educated in special schools, and then in special programs and classrooms within public schools (Blais and Van Camp; Duchesne and Aucoin; Lutfiyya and Van Wallegghem). As Manitoba moved away from segregation, students with disabilities were increasingly integrated into classrooms of same-age peers. By 1989, Manitoba's public education system had adopted a policy of providing the most enabling environment to students with special needs and was experiencing an influx of educational assistants across schools and school divisions in response to this development (Duchesne and Aucoin).

Integration resulted in increased learning and social opportunities for students during the 1980s. This raised expectations in the 1990s for all students to participate in the social and academic life of school. During these decades, parental advocacy for children with disabilities to have equitable opportunities in education increased (Community Living Manitoba), and there were further advancements in human rights. Nationally and internationally, school systems experienced a shift away from a care and social support model for students with disabilities. In its place, an inclusive model was developing, and educational assistants increasingly became part of a range of services for all learners in the classroom (Causton and MacLeod).

In Manitoba, the renewal of curriculum in the mid-1990s changed curricular expectations for students with disabilities. Curriculum now focused on expected learning outcomes, which brought about high expectations for learning for all students and led to the disappearance of streaming in high school. At the same time, Manitoba's Special Education Review (1995–1998) was underway, paving the way to an inclusive model of service delivery in Manitoba schools.

The *Follow-up to the Manitoba Special Education Review* (Manitoba Education, Training and Youth) brought about the adoption of Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion and concluded that the best "special education" policy was one that was inclusive and provided a range of services for students.

Under an inclusive policy, the first choice is to educate students in regular classrooms in neighbourhood schools with students of the same age. This approach recognizes that all students require supports at some point during their education.

As a result of the Special Education Review, it was proposed that the Manitoba government amend The Public Schools Act to give all students the right to an appropriate education. The Public Schools Amendment Act (Appropriate Educational Programming) was proclaimed in 2005, making it law in Manitoba that students receive appropriate educational programming in a classroom of their peers.

Definition of an Educational Assistant

Educational assistant is a broad term that encompasses all paraprofessionals hired to assist teachers in the access and delivery of educational programming in schools. Their responsibilities are determined by the needs of the school division. School divisions use a variety of job titles, descriptions, and categories to delineate specific functions and training requirements to respond to local context and needs. Therefore, the day-to-day responsibilities of an educational assistant can vary depending on their job title, description, and assignment, which must align with Manitoba Regulation 23/2000.

Persons Having Care and Charge of Pupils Regulation, M.R. 23/2000, under The Education Administration Act, establishes that paraprofessionals are supervised directly by the principal or a teacher designated by the principal. Duties assigned by the principal may not include organizing or managing the classroom, planning teaching strategies, or directing the learning experiences of students, including assessing individual needs, selecting materials to meet those needs, and evaluating progress.

<https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/023-2000.php>

THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

Inclusive Schools

Inclusive schools provide a learning environment that is accessible to all students as a place to learn, grow, fully participate in their school community, and enjoy all the benefits of citizenship. Educational assistants make a significant contribution to the work of the school and toward the education of all students.

School divisions and schools provide a continuum of services and resources responsive to the needs and abilities of all students, which includes services provided by educational assistants. Discretion and skill on the part of teachers and those in support roles are key to ensuring access to high-quality instruction (Causton and MacLeod; Giangreco). Inclusive learning experiences and related activities require professional planning, organization, scheduling, and coordination on the part of the teacher. Educational assistants may enhance certain aspects of this work at different points in the learning process. This “extra pair of eyes and hands” can be invaluable to the smooth functioning of the classroom, with teacher as lead and educational assistant as support.

Teachers coordinate a high volume of activity and change in the dynamic environment of a typical classroom. Educational assistants play an important role in supporting learning by encouraging participation and engagement, modelling and reinforcing skills and attitudes facilitated by the teacher, and recording observations and other objective data as directed by the teacher. This may include, at times, assisting the classroom teacher with clerical tasks or preparatory work.

When educational assistant support is deemed appropriate, it is important to monitor that support to ensure students are not becoming overdependent on adults or that they are not being linked to adults in ways that might be detrimental to their personal autonomy, identity, and/or sense of belonging. Identifying and implementing strategies that promote academic success and positive peer perceptions and interactions are critical to appropriate educational programming (AEP).

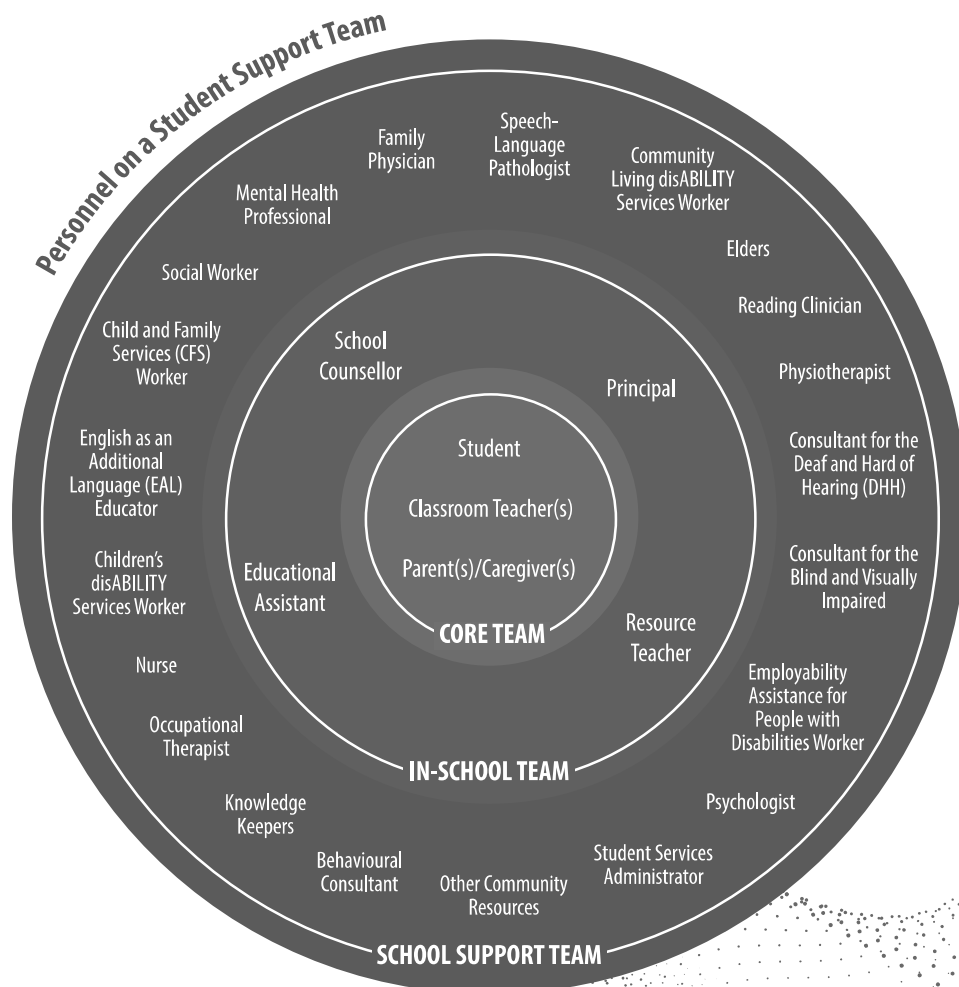
Educational assistants supervise students under the oversight of the principal, which involves following supervision timetables and plans based on school guidelines and procedures.

The In-School Team

Any student may require student-specific planning, programming, and documentation, including those who have identified diverse learning needs and abilities. In Manitoba, AEP is a collaborative school-family-community process that focuses on creating learning environments and providing responsive resources to address the learning, social, and emotional needs of all students. Student support teams plan for any student attending school in Manitoba who needs care and support for a short time, a longer time, or throughout their entire school career.

AEP for most students is the provincial curriculum. Some students may require additional supports to access the curriculum, and a smaller number of students may require highly individualized learning outcomes in addition to or instead of the provincial curriculum.

Educational planning for all students begins with a core team, and reflects holistic, student-centred approaches and inclusive values from the outset. This core team is made up of the student, the student's classroom teacher(s), and the student's parent(s)/caregiver(s), which may include extended family such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles.



Student-Specific Planning

All team members are part of a broader delivery system designed to enhance the success of all learners. The in-school team works within divisional service delivery model(s) that reinforce Manitoba's Philosophy of Inclusion and facilitate an effective distribution of a range of services at the school level. It is helpful for educational assistants to understand the service delivery models used and their role in them.

Under the direction of teachers and with training from other professional staff, educational assistants may help implement plans developed specifically for students by the student support team.

For students who require a student-specific plan, a professional member of the in-school team is designated as case manager. Case management is a collaborative process of assessment, planning, facilitation, and advocacy for options and services to meet a student's needs. It is the case manager's responsibility to oversee the coordination and implementation of the plan, and to facilitate meaningful agreement where team members see themselves as

respected participants in the planning process and are committed to their role and responsibilities in implementing the plan. It is essential to clarify the responsibilities of team members within the planning process. Decisions about process may include who will attend meetings, how information will be communicated, and how the plan will be monitored. The support role of the educational assistant should be clearly articulated and understood by all team members.

For example, the classroom teacher might attend meetings involving decisions about education programming, with the educational assistant reporting their observations about students to the teacher before the meeting. Educational assistants may receive training and instruction to ensure effective implementation of strategies, tools, and technologies recommended by other professionals, such as school clinicians, mental health practitioners, or educational consultants for students who are Deaf and hard of hearing, or who are blind or visually impaired. The classroom teacher, as the core team member, is ultimately responsible for the educational programming of all students in the class. The classroom teacher provides daily oversight of the student and direction to the educational assistant supporting the implementation of the plan.



A student-specific plan is a document that functions as a planning, record-keeping, and communication tool. Students with different strengths and needs can be served through student-specific planning, and each resulting plan is specific to the student for whom it is designed.

To ensure clarity about shared processes, decisions, and responsibilities, it is important that team members communicate openly, honestly, and respectfully (Alberta Teachers' Association; Manitoba Teachers' Society; Elk Island Public Schools). Taking time for all team members to review and understand division/school communication norms, protocols, and structures can strengthen team efficacy and problem-solving.

Communication and collaboration are essential to AEP. Being familiar with inclusive classroom practices, student-specific planning processes, and terminology helps to clarify educational assistants' responsibilities. This also supports more effective communication with students, teachers, and other team members. Ongoing, regular communication with educational assistants ensures they are informed of work expectations and any changes to these expectations.

The Daily Plan

Student-specific planning is most effective when programming decisions are reflected in daily instruction and when implementation strategies are employed consistently. A daily plan links the student's plan explicitly to ongoing daily instruction. It specifies how, when, and by whom each strategy and support is put into practice. A daily plan reflects the student's timetable and daily activities, and is revised when changes are made to their school day.

Each team member involved in the implementation of a student-specific plan, including educational assistant(s), has a copy of the daily plan. As team members implement the daily plan, they make observations, communicate regularly, and collect data on an ongoing basis. It may be useful to provide space on the plan for team members to record observations. The daily plan is an effective communication and recording tool for the teacher to coordinate student-specific planning and oversee the supports in place in relation to whole-class planning and scheduling.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS

General Responsibilities

Educational assistants are responsible for demonstrating knowledge and skills in keeping with their support role within the learning process and their scope of practice. Responsibilities assigned to educational assistants within a school are fluid and flexible, based on the needs of the school. Support to individual students may vary over the course of the year as needs change.

School/school division administrators provide educational assistants with job descriptions and orientation information before they begin work, outlining general responsibilities that are common to all educational assistants employed by the division. Some school divisions provide this information in the form of a handbook, which also references provincial legislation and divisional policies pertinent to their role.

The responsibilities of educational assistants must be consistent with provincial legislation, standards, and policy directives, including AEP, respect for diversity, safe and caring schools, and *Mamàhtawisiwin: The Wonder We Are Born With—An Indigenous Education Policy Framework* (Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning).

Other foundational responsibilities of educational assistants may include demonstrated understanding of the following:

- the difference in responsibilities of professional and non-professional staff, including the boundaries of their roles (Persons Having Care and Charge of Pupils Regulation, M.R. 23/2000)
- school/school division policy and practices as they apply to current work assignment(s)
- workplace health and safety expectations and procedures
- conduct appropriate to a school environment, including applicable standards of behaviour or staff code of conduct
- day-to-day preparedness, and attention to schedules and school procedures, including daily plans for students
- confidentiality requirements concerning student information
- appropriate communication with teachers, other professional staff, family, and community members
- the benefits of actively engaging in staff development opportunities
- indicators of and requirements/protocols for reporting child abuse

School division administration typically oversees the hiring of educational assistants and the allocation of educational assistant time in schools. Consultation with school principals and teaching staff identifies the knowledge and skills required for educational assistants' individual work assignment(s).

Classroom Responsibilities

In inclusive schools, teachers maximize access to learning by using universal design principles and differentiated instruction to meet the diverse learning needs and abilities of all students in their classes. Teachers plan for the full diversity of their class, designing learning experiences that enhance peer interaction and allowing all students to work with all adults in the classroom.

This planning creates a dynamic between teacher and educational assistant that is both student-centred and seamless, while providing access to a greater variety of academic and social learning opportunities for all (Causton-Theoharis; Stockell; Giangreco and Sutter; Giangreco). Activities may be academic, social, or related to specific student needs and plans. They can take place in a variety of situations and settings, ranging from universal support in the classroom, to targeted support or group work, to, on occasion, working with a student individually.

Sometimes students require more time, guided practice, or sustained encouragement to feel that they can perform a task. Educational assistants should be familiar with students' specific learning strengths, needs, and preferences, and be perceptive of individual differences such as emotional responses. This can help reduce barriers to learning, build positive relationships with students, and foster a sense of belonging and well-being, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the support.

Under the direction of a teacher, the day-to-day tasks of educational assistants often overlap and include consistent modelling of expectations. This requires organization and the ability to multi-task. Examples of classroom responsibilities are listed in Table 1. These examples are intended to be neither exhaustive nor prescriptive. They illustrate the types of concurrent tasks that are within the scope of best practice for an educational assistant in Manitoba.

Table 1: Examples of Classroom Responsibilities of an Educational Assistant

Domain	Skill Set
Safety and Belonging	• foster a climate of physical and cultural safety and respect • establish positive and respectful relationships with students • facilitate positive peer interactions • promote a sense of belonging for all; assist students to be included and engaged in all aspects of the school day • assist students in resolving interpersonal conflict, following school-wide, classroom, and student-specific processes and strategies • prepare students for transitions throughout the school day • respond to urgent student needs as directed by administration
Academic Learning	• honour students' strengths, interests, and prior knowledge • engage students in a variety of learning experiences in school and community settings, including functional academics and vocational settings • assist students to work toward individual goals while participating in the classroom with age-appropriate peers • demonstrate new skills clearly and accurately • observe and record student responses objectively and report to the teacher • operate, maintain, and supervise student use of specialized devices, equipment, and technologies
Communication	• model and use language and tone appropriate to the student and situation • encourage student participation respectfully and unobtrusively • allow time for the student to respond before intervening • discreetly prompt communication with auditory, non-verbal, or visual cues • model the use of visual schedules and systems to enhance communication • model the consistent use of communication devices and assistive technologies • understand non-verbal communication, such as behaviour
Emotional Regulation and Well-Being	• model and facilitate social-emotional well-being and the development of positive relationships with staff and peers • calmly communicate and observe clear limits and expectations • prepare students for and facilitate safe transitions • understand how students' ability to function in school is affected by stressors/triggers in their environment • model and strengthen self-regulation strategies and techniques (co-regulation) • model and implement de-escalation strategies and techniques, and crisis response, following school/school division policies and procedures

Domain	Skill Set
Independence	• provide time and space to allow for independence • model and encourage students to make choices and communicate their needs • assist in the development and use of materials to promote independence (e.g., visual supports, alternative formats, independent tasks) • assist students to generalize new skills across environments (e.g., between classes, on work experience) • fade supports under the guidance of teachers and according to student-specific plans, as applicable
Other Duties	• provide student/school-wide supports during non-instructional times (e.g., supervision duties, alternative recess programs, clubs, breakfast program, etc.) • use equipment to the proficiency level required for current work assignment(s), following safety requirements • administer first aid • administer medication completing all documentation using appropriate format and terminology* • complete accident/injury/incident forms as necessary

**A school division may assign the responsibility of administering medication to an educational assistant.*

Responsibilities Related to Student-Specific Planning

When deemed necessary by the in-school team, students with diverse learning needs and abilities may require specialized services or programming due to intellectual, social-emotional, behavioural, sensory, physical, communication, or complex health-care needs.

Educational assistants have a support role in the implementation of student-specific plans that enable student access to AEP. Recommended by clinicians, consultants, nurses, or other specialists, this specialized programming is detailed in the student-specific plan (e.g., adaptation plan, individual education plan, individual health care plan), and corresponds to the training or skill development of educational assistants.

Table 2 provides examples of skill sets that may be required of an educational assistant so they are able to assist students in accessing AEP in school.

Table 3 provides links to additional resources and specialized services to strengthen skill sets.

Table 2: Examples of Educational Assistant Responsibilities in Student-Specific Planning*

Domain	Skill Set
Social-Emotional Learning	- consistently model and reinforce positive social-emotional knowledge, skills, and behaviours identified in the student-specific plan (e.g., turn-taking, listening skills, empathy) - consistently model and implement regulation strategies and processes as outlined in the student-specific plan - monitor and document, as required, verbal and non-verbal signs of emotional regulation or dysregulation - respond proactively to changes in behaviour using predetermined student-specific strategies to prevent further dysregulation or escalation
Communication	- accurately record student speech-sound, vocal, and language productions in an appropriate format - adjust spoken language to accommodate student ability and need - model and use strategies and techniques to develop and strengthen language production and comprehension - model, facilitate, and support student use of augmentative/alternative communication devices (low- and high-tech) - maintain digital applications and perform basic troubleshooting on augmentative/alternative communication devices - support the development and implement the use of communication materials (e.g., articulation books, tactile schedules, social stories)
Personal Care**	- maintain students' physical well-being by proactively attending to their personal care - model and maintain privacy, dignity, and consent when providing care - position and assist students with toileting, feeding, or dressing routines following appropriate safety and respect guidelines - change diapers or other personal hygiene products using safe and appropriate positioning and relaxation techniques
Physical**	- position and secure students safely and appropriately in equipment - operate mechanical lift safely and appropriately when moving a student from a wheelchair or standing frame to a toilet, commode, or change table equipment - transfer or lift students in and out of equipment using safe and appropriate techniques - demonstrate to students how to use assistive and adaptive equipment, and assist students in its safe and appropriate use (e.g., a walker, standing frame, braces, bicycle, stroller, adapted/motorized wheelchair, adapted class chair) - use strategies and techniques to facilitate independent movement/walking - implement strengthening/balance-development programming - use strategies and techniques for specific muscle stretches, strengthening activities, and programming to enhance physical development - use appropriate strategies and techniques to assist students to sit on the floor or at a desk

**It is essential that student dignity is maintained when providing personal assistance.*

***The educational assistant must be physically able to safely perform activities that require lifting and transferring students.*

Table 3: Resources

Domain	Resources
Blind or Visually Impaired	Services for Students Who are Blind or Visually Impaired Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning provides support services province-wide to students who are blind or visually impaired (BVI), such as student-specific support for direct teaching in Braille, assistive technology, and consultation support to school teams for students who have visual impairments. Consultants for BVI work with students, schools, and families to support the Manitoba curriculum specifically for students who are blind or visually impaired to ensure their active participation in the school, home, and community. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/blind/index.html
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	Services for Students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing This web page provides an outline of the Manitoba services and resources that are available to students who are Deaf or hard of hearing. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/dhh/index.html
Health Care	Unified Referral and Intake System (URIS) URIS supports children with special health needs to safely participate in eligible community programs. URIS provides a standard means of classifying health care needs based on their complexity, and of determining the degree of professional qualification required by people who support children with special health care needs. URIS Group B are health care procedures or needs that may be delegated to non-health care personnel who receive training and monitoring by a registered nurse. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/uris/group-b.html <i>Routine Practices: Guide to Creating a Healthy Environment and Preventing Infections within Child Care Facilities and Schools</i> These infection prevention and control guidelines were developed to serve as a standard reference for staff of child care facilities, schools, and school divisions, as well as boards of directors, public health inspectors, and child care coordinators, to help protect the health, safety, and well-being of children, students, and staff in situations where germs can spread. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/routine_practices/docs/routine_practices_eng.pdf

Domain	Resources
Safety	Respect in School Certification Respect in School Program Certification is being offered through a partnership between Respect Group Inc. and the Province of Manitoba. https://mbed-school.respectgroupinc.com Low Arousal Approach Autism Awareness Centre Inc. is offering a train-the-trainer course in the low arousal approach in Winnipeg. https://autismawarenesscentre.com/shop/conferences-training/training/low-arousal-approach-train-the-trainer-course-winnipeg-mb-2024/ Working Effectively with Violent and Aggressive States (WEVAS) WEVAS offers courses that provide strategies on restoring safety, security, calm, and peacefulness within yourself and your environment. www.wevas.net/ Non-Violent Crisis Intervention (NCI) The Crisis Prevention Institute offers NCI instructor certification training programs to help prevent and de-escalate medium- to high-risk behaviour. www.crisisprevention.com/Our-Programs/Nonviolent-Crisis-Intervention
Social-Emotional Learning	Safe and Caring Schools Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning is committed to supporting schools in planning for the provision of safe learning environments for all children and youth. With parents/caregivers as partners, educators strive to ensure all children and youth feel safe, confident, and capable as they interact with others and develop as learners. This website provides an overview of Manitoba initiatives, and related links and resources for parents/caregivers, students, and educators. www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/safe_schools/index.html

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