

Teacher Assistant Guidelines



Student Services

Teacher Assistant Guidelines

Website References

Website references contained within this document are provided solely as a convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by the Department of Education of the content, policies, or products of the referenced website. The department does not control the referenced websites and subsequent links, and is not responsible for the accuracy, legality, or content of those websites. Referenced website content may change without notice.

School boards and educators are required under the department's Public School Network Access and Use Policy to preview and evaluate sites before recommending them for student use. If an outdated or inappropriate site is found, please report it to links@EDnet.ns.ca.

Teacher Assistant Guidelines

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2009

Prepared by the Department of Education

The contents of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part provided the intended use is for non-commercial purposes and full acknowledgment is given to the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Photographs may not be extracted or reused.

Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Main entry under title.

Teacher assistant guidelines / Nova Scotia. Department of Education. Student Services.

ISBN: 978-1-55457-319-6

1. Teachers' assistants—Nova Scotia 2. Teachers' assistants—training of.
I. Nova Scotia. Department of Education. Student Services.

Acknowledgments

The Teacher Assistant Guidelines Review was mandated in Recommendation 4 of the *Minister's Review of Services for Students with Special Needs* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2007) and in the *Response to the Minister's Review of Services for Students with Special Needs* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2007) as follows:

“The Department of Education will review and update *Teacher Assistant Guidelines* (1998). The Department will work with school boards to develop a framework for the evaluation of teacher assistant assignments, as well as guidelines for the allocation and monitoring of teacher assistant utilization.”

The Teacher Assistant Guidelines Review Committee in collaboration with the Student Services Co-ordinators developed the 2009 *Teacher Assistant Guidelines*. The Department of Education would like to thank the following review committee members for their contribution to the development of these guidelines:

Allan Boudreau, *Directeur régional responsable des services aux élèves*
Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

Anne Marie Melnyk, *Facilitator of Programs and Student Services*
Halifax Regional School Board

Annie Baert, *Learning Disabilities Consultant*
Department of Education, Student Services

Cathy Viva, *Coordinator of Student Services*
Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board

Daniel Demers, *Special Education Consultant*
Department of Education, Student Services

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Don Glover, *Acting Director, Student Services*
Department of Education

Jeannie Stone, *Principal, Mountainview/ East Bay Complex and Student Services Consultant*
Cape Breton-Victoria Regional School Board

Joan Conrad, *Teacher, Dr. John Hugh Gillis Regional High School*
Strait Regional School Board

Joan Westoll, *Coordinator of Student Services*
Chignecto-Central Regional School Board

Kelly Unsworth, *Teacher, Bayview School*
South Shore Regional School Board

Lesley MacDonald, *Coordinator of Employee and Labour Relations*
Annapolis Valley Regional School Board

Lisa Doucet, *Coordinator of Student Services*
Tri-County Regional School Board

A special thank you to Rebecca Mosher, graduate student at Acadia University, who generously shared her key findings and her literature review, as well as commented on an earlier draft of these guidelines.

The committee would also like to acknowledge the original members of the 1998 Teacher Assistant Guidelines Committee. Their foundational work was used to develop the current guidelines.

Background

The purpose of this document is to define the roles and responsibilities of teacher assistants in supporting delivery of the Nova Scotia Public School Program. These guidelines will provide direction to regional and provincial school boards and serve as a reference to stakeholders.

The role of teacher assistant has evolved since the *Teacher Assistant Guidelines* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 1998) were first released.¹ The *Special Education Policy* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008) requires boards to develop policies and procedures relating to students with special needs (see policy 2.2, Program Planning Process, and 2.3, Program Planning Teams, in appendices A and B).

“The demand for and [the] role of the teacher assistant has substantially changed and grown ...” (Ashbaker, Young, and Morgan 2001, p. 22)

“The employment of paraeducators has occurred with limited research. Therefore, it has become important that issues related to their roles and responsibilities in contemporary classrooms be addressed.” (Winzer 2005)

“It is our hope that schools in countries that are already relying heavily on the utilization of teacher assistants to include students with disabilities will closely scrutinize their practices to ensure congruence with their inclusive aims.” (Giangreco and Doyle 2007)

“The Nova Scotia Department of Education recognizes and endorses the basic right of all students to full and equal participation in education,” (*Special Education Policy*, p. 3). Planning and promoting independence is the primary objective of the program planning process.

1 Teacher assistants have been specifically mentioned in many Department of Education documents, including in the *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee*, Recommendations 2 and 3 (2001), *Learning for Life: Planning for Students* (2003), *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together* (2005), and the *Minister’s Review of Services for Students with Special Needs* (2007).

The role of the teacher assistant continues to evolve under the “only as special as necessary” guiding principle of inclusive education. Student independence and self-reliance are to be promoted and expected in order for students to reach their potential. However, the complexities of responding to the diverse strengths and challenges of our student population may require trained and qualified teacher assistants to support a continuum of programming options established by the program planning team. Teacher assistant support should be considered only when the student cannot perform prescribed outcomes independently, as determined by the program planning process.

As regional and provincial school boards continue to promote a continuum of inclusive practice, the support services that are designed to meet students’ diverse education needs must be co-ordinated to ensure a quality approach to program delivery. Teachers have responsibility for planning, programming, teaching, evaluating, and reporting for all students in the class. The support of a teacher assistant is one of the many potential resources that can assist or support the teacher, or the program planning team, in meeting the needs of students.

A teacher assistant is defined as a paraprofessional, who is not licensed to teach, but who performs duties both individually with students and within the classroom, as determined by the teacher through the program planning process. As such, the teacher assistant is a valued member of the school community.

“Teacher assistant” in this document includes all other titles associated with this position. The guidelines presented in this document are subject to collective agreements presently in place and will not amend or supersede collective agreements in any way.

Teacher Assistant Guidelines addresses the following areas:

- qualifications, key attributes, and demonstrated competencies
- allocation and management
- job description and performance expectations
- roles and responsibilities of teachers and principals
- supervision and performance appraisal

Contents

Section 1: Qualifications, Key Attributes, and Demonstrated Competencies... 1	
Qualifications	1
Key Attributes and Demonstrated Competencies.....	2
Section 2: Allocation and Management	3
Section 3: Job Description and Performance Expectations.....	5
Job Description	6
Performance Expectations.....	7
Section 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Principals.....	9
Teachers' Responsibilities.....	9
Principals' Responsibilities.....	10
Section 5: Supervision and Performance Appraisal.....	11
Appendix A: Nova Scotia Special Education Policy, Policy 2.2.....	15
Policy 2.2: Program Planning Process	15
Appendix B: Nova Scotia Special Education Policy, Policy 2.3.....	21
Policy 2.3: Program Planning Teams.....	21
Appendix C: Teacher Assistant Pre-Service Competencies	23
Teacher Assistant Pre-service Competencies.....	23
Competency Area	23
Appendix D: Sample Teacher Assistant Request Form	27
Appendix E: Guidelines for the Administration of Medication to Students.....	29
Appendix F: Sample Teacher Assistant Performance Appraisal Form.....	31
Bibliography.....	35

Section 1: Qualifications, Key Attributes, and Demonstrated Competencies

Teacher assistants provide support to students who are identified through the program planning process as requiring support with medical and personal care and/or safety/behaviour management. It is expected that teacher assistants are able to provide the required support at the time of assignment. Suggested pre-service competencies can be found in Appendix C. In addition to the formal educational requirements of this position, teacher assistants may be required to have specific skills and training related to supporting the specific needs of students.

Qualifications

- high school completion certificate or equivalent
- recognized diploma or certificate program from a recognized post-secondary institution including a formal practicum placement
- bona fide occupational requirements as identified in the job posting (e.g., American Sign Language, Picture Exchange Communication System, braille, ability to lift and position)
- specific health-care support training or certification as required (e.g., first-aid certification, cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR or CPR-C], Non-Violent Crisis Intervention)
- completion of a Child Abuse Registry Search Form and a Criminal Records Check in accordance with board policies and procedures
- ability to perform physical requirements of the position

Key Attributes and Demonstrated Competencies

- stages of child and youth growth and development
- effective interaction and development of a positive rapport with children and youth
- exceptionalities (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy)
- basic computer applications
- assistive technology
- effective communication skills
- behaviour management strategies
- problem-solving abilities
- contribution as a positive member of the school community
- confidentiality and privacy protocols
- sensitivity and respect for diversity

In addition to the basic qualifications and key competencies, teacher assistants will be expected to engage in training and development opportunities that will enhance their ability to satisfy the requirements of their assignments. These training and development opportunities will be self-initiated or identified through the program planning process, principal, student services personnel, or human resources.

As duties often include personal and physical care, applicants must have the ability to perform the physical requirements of the position. They are encouraged to participate in wellness initiatives in order to stay safe, healthy, and engaged in the workplace.

Teacher assistants must also demonstrate their ability to meet the expectations outlined in Section 3 of these guidelines, Job Description and Performance Expectations.

Section 2: Allocation and Management

School boards, through their annual staffing allocation process, determine the initial allocation for teacher assistant support. Assignments are then made by the board after careful consideration of school-level requests outlining the specific support needs of students who require personal care and/or safety/behaviour management support as identified through the program planning process. Every school board in Nova Scotia has established policies or procedures related to this process. (See Appendix D: Sample Teacher Assistant Request Form.)

Identified student needs may change over time, depending on the interaction between the demands of the environment and the individual student strengths and challenges. These variations may occur within a school year or from school year to school year, affecting the allocation and/or assignment of teacher assistants. For example, a teacher assistant might be allocated on a short-term or temporary basis to assist through a period of student transition that may affect their ability to remain engaged in the learning process. This support would be strategically reduced to foster independence.

“... the decision-making model ... attempts to have all stake-holders on the same page and focused on goals that are objectively determined. Its focus is to determine the role of the paraeducator in relation to:

- The specific support needs of the students
- How independence can be progressively furthered
- What natural supports are to be used
- How social acceptance can be increased”

(Mueller and Murphy 2001)

Teacher assistants are assigned to a school to meet specific needs and work under the direction of the teacher(s) while under the supervision of the school administrator. Deployment of a teacher assistant within a school, once the school has the allocation, is under the direction of the principal. It is

good practice and therefore recommended that school administrators allocate teacher assistants to foster students' growth and independence.

Teacher assistant support is one of many strategies a school may consider in supporting learning. Program planning for students with special needs must foster skills for independence and self-advocacy and facilitate their ongoing successful transition needs as outlined in *Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years through to Adult Life* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2005). Teacher assistants have an important role in this process.

Teacher assistants may support one or more students in the classroom or in the school, as directed by the teacher(s) and/or the principal. Although the primary responsibility of a teacher assistant is to work with students identified through the program planning process, it is good practice, so as not to isolate particular students, that the teacher assistant is seen as a resource to all students in the classroom.

“Teachers were more engaged in situations where the teacher assistant supported the entire class under the direction of the teacher.”
(Giangreco and Doyle 2007)

Section 3: Job Description and Performance Expectations

The job description and performance expectations outlined below are not meant to be exhaustive; rather, they provide a list of the major responsibilities and expectations for teacher assistants. Duties are assigned by the school administrator as identified through the program planning process and under the direction of the teacher(s). Teacher assistants are responsible for communicating with the teacher(s) about observations of daily routines, issues, and concerns.

“Paraeducators have different responsibilities than teachers and are accountable in a different way.” (Winzer 2005)

“... teams must ensure that whatever roles are identified is educationally appropriate. This requires congruence between the skills of the paraprofessional, the needs of the student, and the roles of other team members ... ensure that paraprofessionals are not being asked to assume responsibilities that are appropriately those of teachers, special educators...” (Giangreco, Edelman, Broer, and Doyle 2001)

This section contains the following information:

Job Description

- Personal Care
- Safety/Behaviour Management Support

Performance Expectations

- Expected Job-Related Conduct
- Rapport with Students

Job Description

Personal Care

As identified through the program planning process and under the direction of the teacher(s), when a student cannot, or should not, perform these activities independently, the teacher assistant will, as required,

- assist students with physical and mobility challenges by lifting and positioning, exercising, transferring from or to transportation, as specified in their program plan
- ensure a safe and respectful environment when meeting personal care needs of students
- assist students with routines, i.e., toileting, dressing, feeding, and personal hygiene
- assist in the operation of support equipment, including lifts and assistive technology
- administer medication and oral inhalant according to the Guidelines for the Administration of Medication to Students (Appendix E)
- carry out medical procedures (e.g., catheterization, tube feeding) when trained and authorized, according to board policies and/or guidelines
- assist with program support when specifically directed and monitored by teacher(s)

Note: It is also recommended that when a student with special needs requires hygiene assistance, the teacher assistant, if possible, be the same gender as the student.

Safety/Behaviour Management Support

Under the direction of the teacher(s) and/or the program planning team, the teacher assistant will support the implementation of identified behaviour management outcomes. When a student is unable to self-regulate his or her behaviour, the teacher assistant will

- use appropriate physical interventions in accordance with the Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training Program, the student's plan, and board policies
- encourage students to respect the school's code of conduct guidelines and positive and effective behavioural support (PEBS) initiative

- model and encourage respect for self and others
- promote or facilitate positive interactions among all students
- record data and observations as directed (e.g., frequency of a particular behaviour, on/off task data)
- assist with program support when specifically directed and monitored by teacher(s)

Teacher assistants must neither be given responsibility for nor engage in

- program planning activities such as planning and initiating learning activities
- program planning team meetings except when requested by principal in consultation with Student Services board personnel to provide specific information not otherwise available
- selection of learning materials or learning activities
- substitute teaching
- evaluation of school programs
- evaluation of student work or assessment of their progress
- evaluation of other staff
- reporting to parents and guardians or outside agencies
- accessing or recording information in students confidential records (as set down in *Student Records Policy*, Nova Scotia Department of Education 2006)
- participation in activities contrary to board conflict of interest policies

Performance Expectations

Expected Job-Related Conduct

Teacher assistants are expected to work co-operatively as members of a school community by

- demonstrating ethical behaviours
 - addressing conflicts, first with teachers, second, at the administration level, and third, at the board staff level, according to board policies
 - promoting respect for students and adults
 - respecting and promoting the rights of the students
- understanding the role of the teacher assistant

- modelling appropriate problem solving and conflict resolution
- referring all requests for information to appropriate personnel
- relaying information regarding the student(s) to teacher(s)
- participating in training and certification as required to support the implementation of such interventions as Picture Exchange Communication System, Pivotal Response Treatment, assistive technology, specific personal/medical care, etc.
- respecting privacy and confidentiality
- communicating effectively with teachers, appropriate personnel, and students
- being knowledgeable of and following board and provincial policies and administrative procedures

Rapport with Students

Teacher assistants are also expected to develop and maintain a positive rapport with students by

- treating students in a respectful, dignified, and fair manner with due consideration to the students' physical, social, and psychological development
- promoting independence and self-advocacy through appropriate wait time, prompting, reviewing, and reinforcing
- respecting the strengths and challenges of students
- maintaining effective and collaborative relationships
- demonstrating patience and understanding towards students
- demonstrating appropriate responses to student-initiated interactions

“It is our contention that students with disabilities are best served when schools: (a) provide appropriate supports for their existing assistants (for example, respect, role clarification, orientation, training, supervision); (b) establish logical and equitable decision-making practices for the assignment and utilization of assistants; and (c) select individually appropriate service delivery alternatives to teacher assistant supports (for example, peer supports, increasing ownership and capacity of teachers, improving working conditions for teacher and special educators.” (Giangreco, Halvorsen, Doyle, and Broer 2004)

Section 4: Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers and Principals

Teachers' Responsibilities

“Teachers are responsible for teaching all students who are placed under their supervision and care. This includes responsibility for safety and well-being, as well as program planning, implementation, and evaluation. This is not a responsibility that can be transferred or delegated to non-teaching staff.”
(*Special Education Policy*, Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008)

Teachers working with a teacher assistant have the following responsibilities:

- collaborating with the teacher assistant, providing regular feedback, discussing and clarifying specific job functions based on the needs of the student(s)
- ensuring ongoing communication with the teacher assistant (e.g., through communication books, logs, and discussions according to board policy or practice)
- informing the teacher assistant of classroom procedures and the established school matrixes according to positive and effective behavioural support (PEBS)
- informing and modelling confidentiality practices pertaining to home-school relationships
- resolving conflicts with the teacher assistant with the teacher assistant first, administration second, and school board third, reflecting board policies
- serving as primary contact with parents and guardians
- informing the school principal or designate when students whom the teacher assistant is supporting are absent so that the teacher assistant's schedules or assignments can be adjusted
- collaborating with the principal regarding identified job functions and performance appraisal of the teacher assistant(s)

“... teachers must be willing to operate under a new set of assumptions, to redesign curriculum, to be imaginative in creating classroom environments, be innovative in instruction, and to be cooperative in collaborating with peers, special education personnel, and paraeducators.” (Winzer 2005)

Principals’ Responsibilities

“The principal of a public school is the educational leader of the school and has overall responsibility for the school, including teachers and other staff.” (*Education Act*, Section 38(1))

Principals have the following responsibilities:

- daily management, supervision, and evaluation of all school personnel including teacher assistants
- scheduling, assigning responsibilities to, and supervising teacher assistants in collaboration with teachers and student services staff
- providing information to teacher assistants about relevant legislation, provincial and board-level policies, procedures, and practices, including union contracts
- meeting the training needs of teacher assistants in collaboration with their school board; specific training needs may be required for personal/medical or safety/behaviour management support
- supervising teacher assistants and communicating with teachers and teacher assistants, verbally and in writing, regarding the teacher assistants’ schedules, specific job functions, and performance expectations of the assignment
- ensuring that teacher assistants work the hours established and that scheduling, including lunch breaks and before and after school time, is based on the goal of meeting the specific program needs of identified students

“... policies and systems are needed that reflect these changes in both teacher and paraeducator roles. Equipping teachers, administrators, and paraeducators with the skills necessary to meet the needs of an increasingly heterogeneous student population lies at the core of changing practices and improving access. School systems must confront in-service training for teachers and paraeducators, the clear delineation of support roles, and appropriate supervisory modes.” (Winzer 2005)

Section 5: Supervision and Performance Appraisal

Supervision and evaluation of a teacher assistant should be linked to the job description, including the specific duties of the assignment as determined through the program planning process.

Principals should consult with the teacher assistant, the teacher(s), or other student services staff to provide opportunities to review the teacher assistant's performance, as well as to review any recommendations regarding job performance and training.

It is imperative that each teacher assistant be informed of their specific job assignments. Teacher assistants must be provided with ongoing feedback on their job performance.

It is the responsibility of the principal to complete a formal annual performance appraisal of the teacher assistant.

It would be beneficial for this process if the principal supervises the teacher assistant in the early stages of employment, providing the first evaluation prior to the end of the probationary period, as mandated by existing contracts and board policies.

The evaluation process is collaborative and as such includes the teacher assistant, the teacher(s), and student services staff, under the direction of, and including, the school principal.

The goals of supervision include

- evaluating the performance of the teacher assistant's duties and expectations and the contractual agreement of their job description
- reflecting on qualifications, key attributes, and competencies (Section 1)
- identifying performance strengths and areas needing improvement

- identifying and providing opportunities for personal and job-related development
- providing opportunities for open communication regarding evaluation

The intent is to have an evaluative process that ensures the position defined is performed with competency and the evaluation process is carried out with respect for the employee.

Effective supervision and evaluation models include the setting of mutually agreeable goals and supervisory/evaluation outcomes. Evaluation is an ongoing process that is planned in advance, and communicated clearly to all concerned. (See Appendix F: Sample Teacher Assistant Performance Appraisal Form.)

Appendices

Appendix A: Nova Scotia Special Education Policy, Policy 2.2

Policy 2.2: Program Planning Process

Each school board is responsible for establishing a process of identification, assessment, program planning, and evaluation for students with special needs.

Guidelines

The school board is responsible for the implementation of this process; therefore, each procedural step should be documented in the school board's special education policy. School boards are encouraged to refer to the appropriate sections of the Department of Education's *Special Education Policy*.

Procedure

On the following pages is an outline of the program planning process.

Identification, Assessment, and Program Planning Process

Stage 1: Screening and Identification

This stage may be initiated by a variety of people. Some children and students may come to school with assessments and programming information from other agencies or from another school. Some students may have been in school for a number of years, and their special needs may be identified at a later stage. The planning process can be initiated at any time, based on student need.

If a student has been identified as needing an individual program plan before entry to school, the team may wish to start the process at Stage 3, Referral to Program Planning Team, to avoid delay.

Parents are expected to be involved at the beginning of the process. Classroom teachers, parents, students, and outside agency personnel and resource teachers are all possible initiators at this stage. The principal should be aware of any communication concerning students at this stage.

Stage 2: Exploration of Instructional Strategies

After a student has been identified as requiring additional planning to meet his or her needs, the classroom teacher uses available material and human resources to explore a variety of strategies in the learning process. In all schools there is a wealth of experience to draw upon. In exploring alternative methods of working with students, teachers may also wish to consult coordinators, school psychologists, speech-language pathologists, or other available personnel. The key at this stage is to be as creative as possible in determining a wide variety of behavioural and/or instructional strategies to meet student needs while ensuring accurate record keeping in terms of the outcomes of utilizing these approaches. Determining why a method does not produce the desired outcome can yield as much information as one that does. Co-operation and collaboration among professionals and parents are essential at this stage.

The identification, assessment, and program planning process may not go beyond this stage for many students, as their needs may be met through adaptations that support them in achieving provincially approved curriculum outcomes. However, adaptations will require review at least once annually, as student needs change over time. It is also necessary to ensure that the adaptations are supporting student success in meeting the outcomes.

Stage 3: Referral to Program Planning Team

If a student's needs are not met as outlined in stage 2, the classroom or subject teacher and/or parent should make a referral to the principal to establish a program planning team for the student. In some boards there are school teams that provide peer support for problem solving and creative suggestions for meeting student needs. This team may also be involved in prioritizing referrals. If either the teacher or parent disagrees on the need for a referral, the matter should be referred to the principal. Guidance counselors and resource teachers may provide valuable insight on student strengths and challenges at this stage.

The *Education Act* outlines the responsibility of school boards in this regard: “A school board shall, in accordance with this Act and the regulations ... develop and implement educational programs for students with special needs within regular instructional settings with their peers in age, in accordance with the regulations and the Minister’s policies and guidelines...” [Section 64(2)(d)].

The responsibility of teachers to engage in the process is also outlined in the act: “It is the duty of a teacher in a public school to ... implement teaching strategies that foster a positive learning environment aimed at helping students achieve learning outcomes; ... participate in individual program planning and implement individual program plans, as required, for students with special needs...”[Section 26(1)(c)(g)].

The format of the referral depends on school and school board procedures. The initiator of the referral may be required to have certain types of information available for the principal in order to make an informed decision about whether or not to select team members and set a date for the program planning team meeting. Information required could include anecdotal information, observation records, informal assessment, interviews with the student and involved agencies, school records, or any other information available that may be of help in program planning. Care should be taken not to use outdated or irrelevant assessment data. (See policies 2.4 and 2.5.)

Stage 4: Program Planning Team Meeting

The program planning team must ensure that the problem or difficulty facing the student and/or teachers and parents is clarified before proceeding with the planning. The reason for referral does not always match the team’s clarification of the problem, and careful problem solving at this stage can prevent unnecessary or inappropriate steps being taken.

Team members are those who have responsibility for the student’s learning. The team includes the principal or vice-principal, teachers directly involved in teaching the student, and parents (see Policy 2.4). These members form the core of the student’s program planning team. The selection of additional members depends on the needs of the students and on the personnel resources of the school board and community. In some cases, students may have ongoing involvement with health or community agency professionals. These professionals may be invited to a program planning team meeting

to share their understanding of the student's learning needs, and written reports can also be shared—with parental consent—if they are not able to attend a meeting. It should be noted that the school retains responsibility for programming and implementation decisions. In cases where there are many teachers involved, as in high school, reports can be gathered from teachers for presentation at the team meeting; however, key personnel should be present. In some cases, this may include the student, especially at a high school level when career/transitional decisions are being discussed. Every attempt should be made to encourage parents to feel comfortable in presenting their views of the student's strengths and challenges.

The team meeting provides an opportunity for members to come together to clarify, given all available information, the student's strengths and challenges and to decide on future actions to be taken in terms of program planning.

The meeting should not be a forum for teachers, administrators, and other agency personnel to present a completed program to the parents.

If this is done, the parents become outsiders to the process and do not have the opportunity to affect decision making in any meaningful way. Together, the members should discuss the information each has observed and collected. Concerns should be expressed openly and information presented, without judgmental rebuttal. However, in cases where differences of opinion occur, the chairperson acts as mediator in the process.

The team decides whether or not to proceed with the development of an IPP. The meeting may highlight the need for adaptations while maintaining the outcomes of a prescribed course. When this occurs, adaptations must be documented and stored in the student's cumulative file. [See the *Adaptations: Strategies and Resources fact sheet*, and *Supporting Student Success: Resource Programming and Services* (2002).] However, when the outcomes of the provincially approved curriculum must be changed or additional outcomes are needed to meet the needs of the student, an IPP becomes necessary. An IPP may focus on behavioural as well as curriculum outcomes to address student behaviours that may inhibit learning. At this point, the chairperson designates responsibility areas to the team members to develop the IPP according to the priorities, outcomes, and strategies set at the meeting or to collect further information if necessary. Minutes of the program planning team meetings are distributed to team members by the chair.

Stage 5: Individual Program Plan Development

The student's program planning team uses information gathered to write the individual program plan. Those who have responsibility for implementation of any part of the IPP should be involved in developing the outcomes, and deciding on strategies and evaluation procedures. The IPP includes the following (Policy 2.6):

- a summary of student strengths and challenges
- annual individualized outcomes
- specific individualized outcomes
- strategies and resources
- responsibility areas
- reviewing and reporting dates
- signatures

Stage 6: Implementation of Individual Program Plan

Team members are assigned responsibility areas and monitor student progress. The teacher responsible for teaching the student is also responsible for evaluating and reporting to parents the student's progress in that curriculum area (policies 2.5 and 2.6).

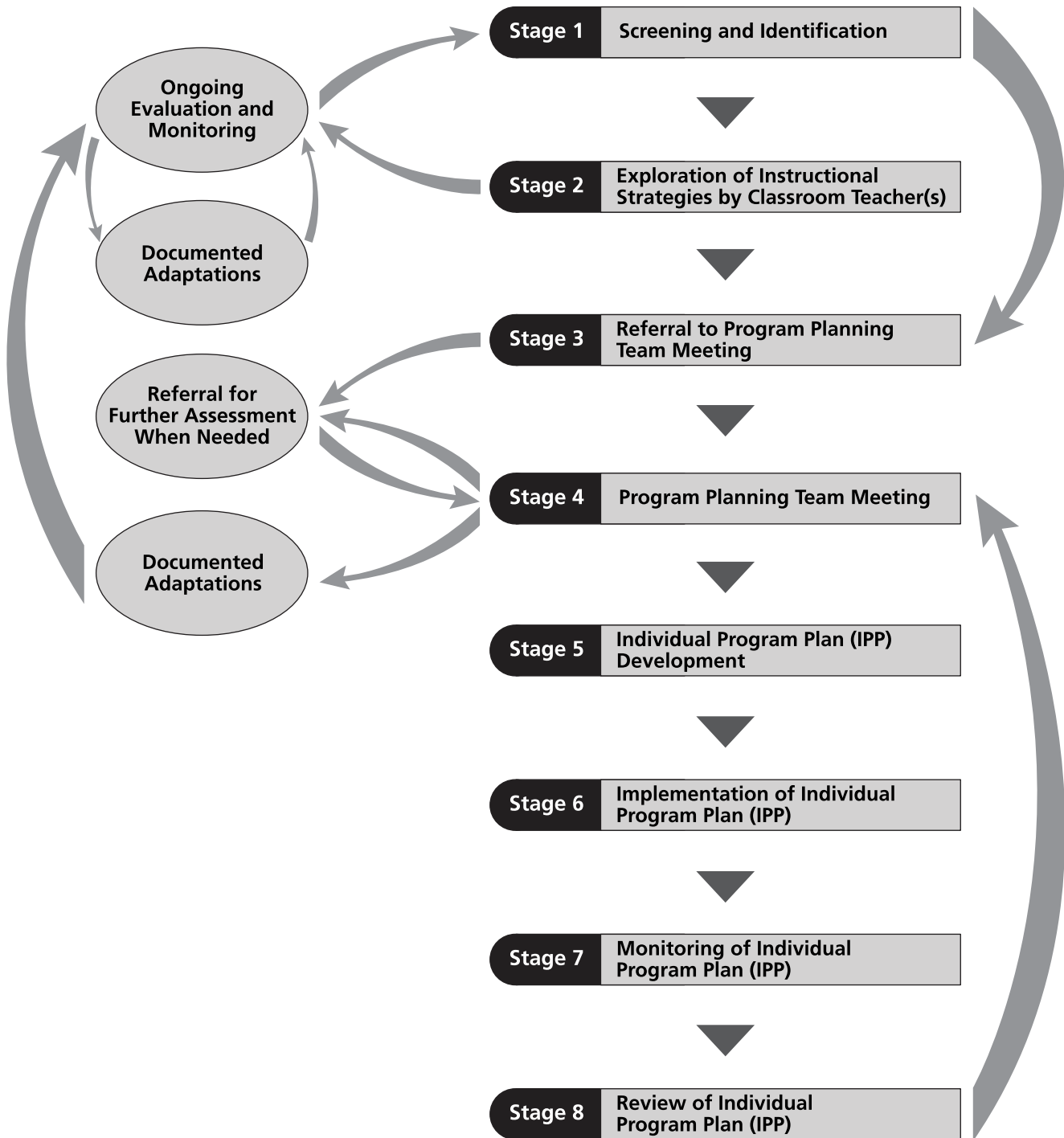
Stage 7: Monitoring

Teachers and other designated professional team members are required to evaluate individual program plans in order to continually assess student progress.

Stage 8: Review of Individual Program Plan

The program planning team is responsible for reviewing the student's progress toward meeting the outcomes of the IPP and meeting to discuss changes when necessary. The individual program plan should be reviewed prior to each reporting period.

Identification, Assessment, and Program Planning



Appendix B: Nova Scotia Special Education Policy, Policy 2.3

Policy 2.3: Program Planning Teams

Each school board is responsible for ensuring that individual program planning teams are established at school level to develop, implement, and monitor programming for students with special needs.

Guidelines

The responsibility for ensuring that appropriate programming is developed and implemented for students with special needs lies with the principal. The planning and implementation of individual program plans is accomplished through a team process. The student's program planning team comprises the school principal or vice-principal, teachers directly involved in teaching the student (e.g., classroom teachers, resource teachers), parents, and the student, as appropriate. Selection of additional members will depend on the needs of the student and on the personnel resources of the school board and the community.

For example, additional members may include

- student services co-ordinator/facilitator/consultant
- guidance counsellor
- school psychologist
- speech-language pathologist
- itinerant teacher
- representatives of involved community agencies

Appendix C: Teacher Assistant Pre-Service Competencies

Teacher Assistant Pre-service Competencies

1. Understanding of the Teacher Assistant Position

- understands the roles and responsibilities of teacher assistants (Section 1, *Teacher Assistant Guidelines*)
- demonstrates knowledge of ethical standards/codes of conduct and confidentiality
- can differentiate roles and demonstrate understanding of the distinctions between roles and responsibilities of professionals, teacher assistants, and support personnel

2. Overview of Child Development

- demonstrates knowledge of the stages of child and youth growth and development
- demonstrates knowledge of the stages of development of personality and social/emotional behaviour
- can implement and use techniques and materials designed by teachers and other professional staff for students with special needs

3. Overview of Children with Special Needs

- demonstrates an awareness of and respect and sensitivity for diverse strengths and needs of children and youth
- demonstrates an awareness of the similarities and differences among the cognitive, communicative, physical, social, and emotional needs of individuals with and without special needs
- demonstrates an awareness of the effects that special needs have on an individual's life and family in the home, school, and community

4. Introduction to Health, Hygiene, and Safety

- demonstrates knowledge of and ability to administer first aid/CPR
- can provide personal/physical care and health-related support to students
- can assist students with feeding, as needed
- can assist students with toileting needs, as needed
- can assist students with personal hygiene
- can administer medication and carry out medical procedures under the direction of principals and in accordance with regional policy and the Department of Education's and Department of Health's policies and protocols on administering medication to students
- can assist students in moving about during the school day including lifting and positioning students, exercising and supporting as outlined in the individual program plan or physiotherapy/occupational therapy plan, embarking and disembarking from transporting vehicles, and accompanying students to community-based educational programs when necessary
- can supervise students to ensure a safe environment
- can assist a student in the operation of support equipment, as needed
- can assist students in dressing and undressing, as needed
- demonstrates an understanding that assistance should be provided only when the student cannot perform activities independently; promote and accept independence and self-management

5. Overview of Behaviour/Discipline

- demonstrates an understanding of co-operative discipline principles
- understands the principles of non-violent crisis intervention
- uses observational skills and records observations in accordance with professional direction
- assists in promoting student emotional growth, well-being, and independence
- encourages the development of student dignity and self-esteem
- facilitates positive interactions among all students
- helps motivate students and encourages student participation
- assists in the implementation of behaviour management plans as developed by the teacher and/or school team
- motivates children and youth

6. Collaborative Skills

- works collaboratively with members of a team
- communicates effectively with colleagues
- assists in maintaining a safe, healthy, learning environment that includes following prescribed policies and procedures of the board and Department of Education
- follows instructions of professional staff
- demonstrates sensitivity to diversity in cultural heritage, lifestyles, and value systems among children, youth, and families
- functions in a manner that demonstrates the use of effective problem solving

7. Overview of Technology and Assistive Technology to Support Students with Special Needs

- demonstrates awareness of ways in which technology and assistive technology can support students with special needs
- uses technology and assistive technology to support student learning

8. Supervised Field Placement

- Demonstrates application and translation to practice of competencies 1 to 7. The pre-service core competencies will likely be able to be completed over a one-year period.

Appendix D: Sample Teacher Assistant Request Form

School Name
Request for Teacher Assistant Support
Month Year

Student: _____ Grade: _____

Provincial student ID #: _____

School address: _____

Teacher: _____

Telephone: _____

Principal: _____ School board: _____

Level of support requested: _____% of FTE Shared

Rationale for Request (list personal care; safety/behavioural management support needs)

Services Currently in Place

<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____
<input type="checkbox"/> _____	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

Attach the following documents, if available and applicable:

- Individual Program Plan (IPP)
- Other document(s) _____

Form completed by: _____ Date: _____

Appendix E: Guidelines for the Administration of Medication to Students

The following guidelines regarding the administration of medication during the school day have been developed through consultations by the Department of Education with Doctors Nova Scotia, the Pharmacy Association, the Nova Scotia Nurses Union, and school boards.

These guidelines outline procedures for the administration of oral or inhaled medication that requires, by law, a prescription by an authorized health-care professional or is prescribed by a physician, and must be administered by school board personnel during school hours in order for the student to attend school.

Guidelines

- The Education Act states “... students should have a right and a responsibility to participate fully in learning opportunities ...” In recognition of this right and responsibility, schools/boards are responsible to develop, in partnership with appropriate health care professionals, a plan for the administration of medication when medication must be administered during school hours.
- Administration of medication by any other route is deemed to be specialized health care requiring an individualized plan in order to be performed by persons designated in the plan with the appropriate training. Parties in the planning process should include parents and guardians, school board personnel, and appropriate health care professionals.
- When a health care professional has deemed that medication must be administered during school hours in order for the student to attend school, a request for the administration of oral and inhaled medication must be made in writing by the parent or guardian to the school board. Accompanying the request must be copies of any written information provided by the pharmacy including, but not limited to, the name of

the medication, the dosage, the frequency, the time and method of administration, storage and safekeeping requirements, the possible side effects, if any, and the dates for which the parental authorization applies. The parent or guardian is responsible for ensuring that the school board receive new documentation any time a medication change occurs.

- The medication must be in an original container provided by the pharmacy with the pharmacy label.
- A record of administration of medication shall be maintained, which includes
 - the pupil's name
 - parent(s) or guardian(s) name(s) and home and emergency telephone numbers
 - name and telephone number of the health care professional prescribing the medication
 - dates and times of provision
 - dosage given
 - name of the person administering and supervising
- Medication must be administered in a manner that allows for sensitivity and privacy and that encourages the student to take an appropriate level of responsibility for his or her medication.

Appendix F: Sample Teacher Assistant Performance Appraisal Form

School Name
Teacher Assistant Performance Appraisal
Term/Date

Teacher assistant: _____ Employee number: _____

Assignment type: Permanent Probationary Other: _____

Date of hire: _____

Supervisor: _____ Principal: _____

Goals for this performance appraisal period:

Assignment Details

For each item indicated below, indicate the rating that best describes the teacher assistant's performance. Relevant comments can be provided in the space allocated on the back of this form.

Performance Rating Scale

1. Below Job Requirements: Performance is clearly below the standards expected in the position being evaluated. If overall performance is below job requirements, a clearly defined plan for development is to be initiated in order to improve performance.

2. Requires Development: Performance indicates that individual could benefit from additional development in this area. Performance may still be in the developmental stage in some aspect(s) of the job and may not necessarily be considered as a negative assessment of the employee's abilities.

3. Meets Job Requirements: Designates a level of performance that meets the requirements of the position with normal management support.

4. Exceeds Job Requirements: Designates a level of performance that is well beyond the normal requirements of the job. Performs additional duties and demonstrates initiative as a highly qualified and experienced staff member.

Professional Key Attributes and Demonstrated Competencies				
Has knowledge of and experience with exceptionalities	1	2	3	4
Is willing to discuss and recognize areas requiring work	1	2	3	4
Displays a commitment to job requirements	1	2	3	4
Accepts constructive criticism	1	2	3	4
Conducts self professionally	1	2	3	4
Is punctual and reliable	1	2	3	4
Shows initiative within their area of responsibilities	1	2	3	4
Has effective rapport with students	1	2	3	4
Demonstrates good behavioural management	1	2	3	4
Demonstrates problem-solving abilities	1	2	3	4
Has effective communication skills	1	2	3	4
Contributes to the school community	1	2	3	4
Respects confidentiality and privacy expectations	1	2	3	4
Carries out activities as assigned	1	2	3	4
Ability to perform physical requirements of the position	1	2	3	4
Observes students closely enough to report to teacher	1	2	3	4
Provides students with appropriate chances to perform independently	1	2	3	4
Provides appropriate feedback and praises	1	2	3	4
Understands "only as special as necessary"	1	2	3	4
Specific other expectation:	1	2	3	4
Specific other expectation:	1	2	3	4
Specific other expectation:	1	2	3	4

Notes/Comments: _____

Areas of Performance for Improvement / Additional Training and Development Required

This area of the appraisal is to be completed in collaboration with the teacher assistant and his or her supervisor.

Development Required:

Have previously set goals been met? Yes No

Job-Related Goals for Next Performance Appraisal Period:

Appraiser: _____ Date: _____

Date of Next Appraisal: _____

I have read this appraisal and discussed it with the appraiser.

Signature of teacher assistant: _____ Date: _____

Bibliography

- Ashbaker, B., J. Young, and J. Morgan. "Paraeducators: Their Roles in the Instructional Process." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. Dallas, TX, 2001.
- Broer, Stephen M., Mary Beth Doyle, and Michael F. Giangreco. "Perspectives of Students with Intellectual Disabilities about Their Experiences with Paraprofessional Support." *Council for Exceptional Children* 71, no. 4 (2005): 415–30.
- Giangreco, Michael F., and Stephen M. Broer. "School-Based Screening to Determine Overreliance on Paraprofessionals." *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities* 22, no. 3 (2007): 149–58.
- Giangreco, Michael F., and Mary Beth Doyle. "Teacher Assistants in Inclusive Schools." *SAGE Handbook of Special Education*, edited by Lani Florian. London: Sage, 2007.
- Giangreco, Michael F., Susan W. Edelman, Stephen M. Broer, and Mary Beth Doyle. "Paraprofessional Support of Students with Disabilities: Literature from the Past Decade." *Exceptional Children* 68, no. 1 (2001): 45–63.
- Giangreco, Michael F., Anne T. Halvorsen, Mary Beth Doyle, and Stephen M. Broer. "Alternatives to Overreliance on Paraprofessionals in Inclusive Schools." *Journal of Special Education Leadership* 17, no. 2 (2004): 82–90.
- Mueller, Patricia H., and Francis V. Murphy. "Determining When a Student Requires Paraeducator Support." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 33, no. 6 (2001): 22–27.

- Nova Scotia. *Education Act*. Statutes of Nova Scotia 1995–96, Section 38(1).
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Learning for Life: Brighter Futures Together*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2005.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Learning for Life: Planning for Students*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2003.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Minister’s Review of Services for Students with Special Needs*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2007.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Program Planning Process: A Guide for Parents*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2006.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Special Education Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2008.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Student Records Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2006.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Teacher Assistant Guidelines*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 1998.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Transition Planning for Students with Special Needs: The Early Years through to Adult Life*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2005.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Report of the Special Education Implementation Review Committee (SEIRC)*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2001.
- Nova Scotia Department of Education. *Student Records Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia, 2006.
- Porter, Gordon L. “Making Canadian Schools Inclusive: A Call to Action.” *Education Canada* 48, no. 2 (2008): 62–64.
- Winzer, M. A. “The Dilemma of Support: Paraeducators and the Inclusive Movement.” *Exceptionality Education Canada* 15, no. 2 (2005): 101–123.