



***At-a-Glance* Information for Parents** about
students receiving Education Assistant (EA) Services

Revised January 2022

A note to parents of students receiving support from Education Assistants (EA)

Some parents may learn that their children will be receiving some form of support from an Education Assistant. Although some parents may be familiar with the role of Education Assistants, we hope that a review of district practice will be helpful.

The support of Education Assistants is one way that schools are able to assist students with various special needs. The Ministry of Education provides supplemental funding to school districts to assist with services that support the needs of students with low incidence designations. This funding comes to the district as a global allocation; the funds are not targeted to specific students. The district uses this funding to provide services such as Resource or Skill Development teachers, Education Assistants, and other district Learning Services personnel. Specific qualifications are required to apply for the position of Education Assistant. Education Assistants work under the direction of a teacher to support the health, safety, and educational needs of students with special needs. There is no requirement in policy or legislation that mandates the use of Education Assistants.

Each student is unique and may or may not benefit from EA support. This decision is most often determined by the School-Based Team. Schools receive an allocation of EA hours based on a district-wide needs-based process. The number of hours a school receives is limited; thus the deployment of EA support must be flexible. There is no exact science on how to assign EA support. The first priority is health and safety needs; self-regulation, emotional needs, communication, and social interaction are also considered. Schools make the very best decisions possible within their resource allocations.

A primary goal for the majority of students with special needs is to help students acquire skills that will enable them to increase independence. All students will have a program that will inform goals outlined in a student's Individual Education Plan with the overriding goal of increased independence. Although some students will require individual support throughout their school careers, the usual practice will be to rely less on EA support as the student progresses through the school system. In any given year, the level of support can vary or be reduced after a certain period of time.

In any discussion of special education, it is also important to understand the nature of an inclusive philosophy and how various supports within the system facilitate inclusion. The BC Ministry of Education (1995) stated that "The practice of inclusion transcends the idea of physical location, and incorporates basic values that promote participation, friendship and interaction." Support from an Education Assistant is one of a variety of services that facilitates inclusion. Resource and Skill Development Teachers are key players in the goal of inclusion. In addition to support from school resources, family and community resources are critical in any child's development.

Within the SD43, students have access to a variety of services based on their needs: School Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists, Vision and Hearing services, Inclusion Support Team, Teaching & Evaluation Centres, district Challenge Centres for gifted programming, and a district Language Class. Although the supplemental funding that the district receives to support an individual student covers only a portion of the cost for services, considerations for the provision of services and programs is based on student need.

SD43 welcomes parents as partners in the education of their children with special needs. Given the high level of needs and expenditures within the area of special education, there are limited resources that school and district personnel have to draw upon. Each person involved in the life of a child will see things from a unique perspective. We hope that this information will provide a context for parents to understand the complexity of determining services for students with special needs. It is more important than ever that everyone in a student's support network pull together to find the optimum point of resource utilization.

Questions or concerns regarding your child's needs and programs should first be directed to school personnel. For questions of a broader nature, the district staff within the Learning Services Department can be reached at Winslow Centre - Telephone: 604.937.6386