



Photo Credit: Diana Gargan



# Support Assistant Handbook

## Section 5: Inclusive Schooling Handbook

DRAFT 2023

Government of  
Northwest Territories

If you would like this information in another official language, call us.  
English

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Si vous voulez ces informations dans une autre langue officielle, contactez-nous.  
French

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Kīspin ki nitawihtīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.  
Cree

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Tłı̨chǫ yati k’èè. Dı wegodı newq dè, gots’o gonede.  
Tłı̨chǫ

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ʔerih̨t̨l̨’is Dëne Sųłiné yati t’ a huts’elkér xa beyáyatı theʔq ɬat’ e, nuwe ts’en yólti.  
Chipewyan

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Edı gondı dehgáh got’je zhatié k’éé edatłéh enahddhę nide naxets’é edahłi.  
South Slavey

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K’áhshó got’ne xədə k’é hederı ɬedıħtl’é yeriniwę nídé dúle.  
North Slavey

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Jii gwandak izhii ginjìk vat’atr’ijahch’uu zhit yinohthan jì’, diits’at ginohkhìi.  
Gwich’in

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Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.  
Inuvialuktun

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Ċ̨d̨l̨ ɻ̨l̨n̨b̨d̨ ɬ̨r̨l̨j̨ąr̨ ɬ̨d̨ ɻ̨l̨n̨ ɬ̨l̨n̨, ɬ̨q̨n̨ ɬ̨c̨ ɬ̨q̨n̨ ɬ̨c̨. Inuktitut

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Hapkuā titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.  
Inuinnaqtun

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# Introduction

Support Assistants work in the school to support teachers in meeting the needs of *all* students.

Support Assistants work under the direction and supervision of a classroom/subject teacher. They assist in the delivery of education program(s) and services to support all students in their learning, while ensuring the safety and comfort of students through physical and personal care. Please refer to the *Support Assistant Job Description* ([Appendix A](#)) for further details.

Support Assistants are a contributing member of the School-based Support Team (SBST). This team consists of a variety of school-based personnel who collaborate to plan for student support. For more information on the SBST, refer to the [NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling \(2016\)](#).

The duties of a Support Assistant may be many and varied, depending on the situation; however, the Support Assistant's duties do not replace the teacher(s)' professional responsibilities, nor do they relate only to the needs of a specific student.

Under the guidance of a teacher, a Support Assistant aids in the implementation of instructional and non-instructional plans, assists with classroom management and student supervision, and provides instructional and non-instructional support to students.

When any support is provided to a student, the goal must always be the student's development of independence with that support. Teachers and Support Assistants must keep this goal central to planning and assistance given to foster student independence.

## Purpose of the Support Assistant Handbook

Within Northwest Territories (NWT) schools, the role of a Support Assistant reflects the principles of the [NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling \(2016\)](#). The purpose of this section is to provide clarity to the Support Assistant role, expectations, and duties. This section contains tools and guidance for Support Assistants and their colleagues to work collaboratively and communicate openly to best support all students.

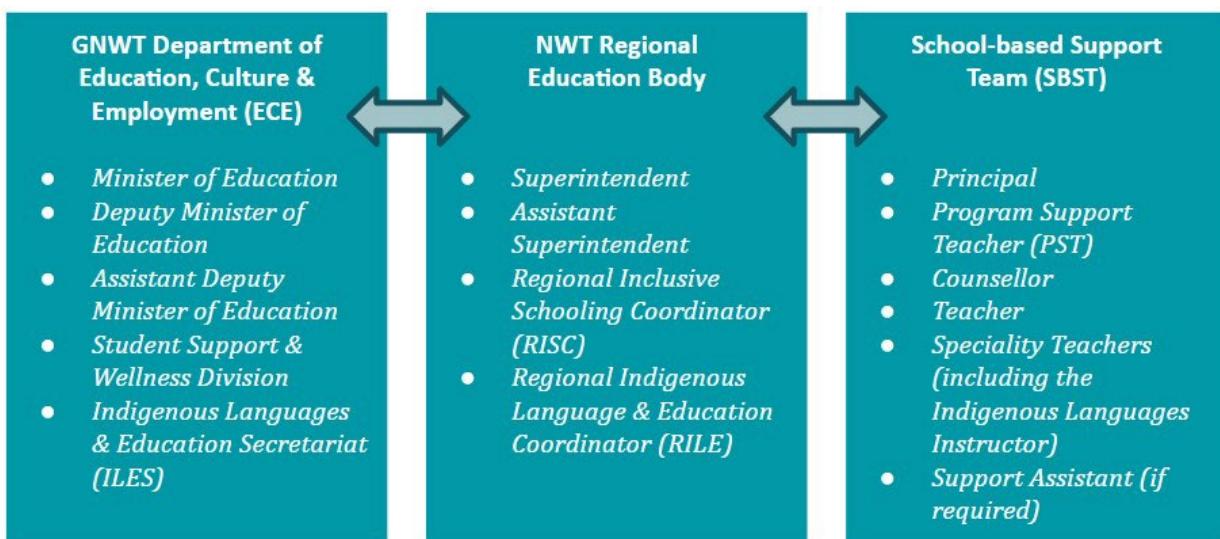
# Inclusive Schooling in the Northwest Territories

As stated in the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (2016), inclusion in the NWT ensures access to quality education for all students by effectively meeting their diverse needs in a way that is responsive, accepting, respectful and supportive.

Inclusive education means every student's skills, gifts, and talents inform all decision-making and recognizes that:

- All students can learn and are capable of participating in the learning environment with their peers.
- Students learn in different ways, at different rates and in different places.
- Students come from diverse backgrounds, which are to be respected and embedded within the student's planning.
- Students have the right to an appropriate education program and required support.
- Parent/guardian/caregiver involvement is essential.

## Inclusive Schooling in the NWT includes many roles at many levels across the education system:



# The NWT Capable Person



The NWT education system must centre, respect, and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures, and languages of the community in which the school is located and allow all learners to express themselves and explore their different needs (GNWT ECE, 2013). Support Assistants play a role in supporting students' skills, gifts, and talents as a capable person.

The concept of a capable person described in Elders' teachings, found throughout the *Dene Kede* (2003) and *Inuuqatigiit* (1996) curricula, teach that there are two worldviews that exist in the NWT: the Indigenous and the Western worldviews. Both worldviews have strengths and exist in an interconnected relationship, which affords a more complete understanding of the world. Individuals who live in ways that combine and appreciate both worldviews develop the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of an NWT capable person.

Tł'cho Elder Elizabeth Mackenzie explained the strength in knowing and walking in both worlds: *"If we worked according to his [Chief Jimmy Bruneau's] word... one person would be like two persons: one, knowing everything of the white culture and one, knowing of our ancestors' culture. That person would become very strong, if we know everything like two persons, though we are only one person, there may be no one greater than us."* (Dene Kede, 2003, p. 3)

All Northern students must have the opportunity to grow and develop as a capable person. All students benefit when they form an intercultural understanding, respect, and value for both worldviews.

Being and becoming a capable person requires students to develop a deep understanding of the land on which they live and the ways and languages of the Indigenous people of the NWT. The support required for every person in the NWT to fulfill their potential as a capable person can be drawn from the following relational elements, as highlighted in the *NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages & Education Handbook: Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages* (2021):

**Our Land:** Connecting to the land and understanding one's relationship to the land is crucial for a capable person to understand their history, find their place in the world, and make informed decisions for the future.

**Our Ways:** Drawing from a solid foundational understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, being, and believing empowers a capable person to make informed choices when navigating contemporary issues.

**Our Languages:** Supporting language reclamation and revitalization efforts, as a speaker and/or as an advocate, recognizes the importance of Indigenous language as an integral aspect of identity and culture.

The *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (2016) states that "education bodies must welcome students within a common learning environment in the community in which the student resides and provide support through the School-based Support Team to enable teachers to meet the diverse needs of students, including those who experience significant barriers to learning."

The [NWT Junior Kindergarten to Grade 12 \(JK-12\) Indigenous Languages and Education Policy](#) (ILE Policy) states that all schools must welcome "all students within learning environments that centre, respect and promote the Indigenous worldviews, cultures and languages of the community in which the school is located."

These two mandates cannot be met separately, and both require educators to work closely with families and the community to help all students in being and becoming a capable person.

*"Gifts from our Creator need to be developed, cherished, and shared. It is up to us as individuals and collectively as a community to help nurture that gift. We need to help those who have doubts as to their gifts and help them to grow."* (Lucy Lafferty, Dene Kede, 1993)

# Ways to Support Indigenous Languages and Culture in my Community

- Learn about, participate in and/or share local history, cultural protocols, traditions, and languages of the community.
- Become an active member in the community to demonstrate reciprocity.
- Complete and reflect on the learning and teachings from the GNWT's *Indigenous Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity Training*.
- Recognize the impact colonization continues to have on the education system; distrust, intimidation, and loss of voice to name a few.
- Participate in your community or regional cultural orientation days.
- Nurture students' connections to their communities, cultures, and environments to create positive partnerships between schools and communities.



- Invest time outside of the classroom to build relationships with Indigenous students, families, and community members.
- Learn or share the Indigenous language of the community. New speakers can begin their language journey by learning how to introduce themselves, common greetings, and phrases.
- Look for a local community or school mentor for advice and support to foster and maintain positive relationships.

## Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice is the fundamental belief that individuals are doing the best they can with the skills they have. A key to being trauma-informed is recognition that adults and students carry their own experiences and stories, which influences how they think, feel, and act in any given moment. The journey to becoming trauma-informed is one of self-reflection, to respond in a way that uses empathy and relationship-building to foster resilience in students, families, and staff.

Resilience incorporates culturally safe practices to empower children and youth to flourish as the capable people they are. It is about supporting adults in realizing, recognizing, and responding to students in distress, to prevent retraumatizing individuals while employing effective interventions and practices. It is looking past behaviour to understand the underlying unmet need to support that individual in feeling seen, heard, and valued.

The role of a Support Assistant is to be aware when a student is displaying signs of distress related to their needs not being met. These behaviours are a form of communication that must be approached in a sensitive manner to promote a safe and predictable environment while building a positive relationship. The Program Support Teacher (PST) can be a valuable resource when the Support Assistant is not sure about the cause of a behaviour.

## Education Programs

Inclusive schooling in the NWT ensures that students are provided the necessary support services to access education within the community they live. Education bodies are required to support the development, implementation and monitoring of student education programs and their related program plans through the School-based Support Team (SBST). The SBST uses a collaborative process that involves educators, parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) and, when appropriate, the student themselves, to identify student strengths and challenges, and document/record necessary supports, accommodations, or program changes in the appropriate plan.

Plans for students who have a Regular Education Program with Accommodations (REP-A), or a Modified Education Program (MEP) are documented on a Student Support Plan (SSP). Plans for students who require an individual education program are documented on an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Below outlines the types of programming in the NWT. For further information, refer to the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling* (2016).

### **Regular Education Program (with or without accommodations)**

A regular program in the NWT is for students who are working toward grade level curriculum expectations. A student may require accommodations to access the curriculum.

If a student requires support to access the grade level curriculum, the program type remains a Regular Education Program with the addition of accommodation. This regular program type is documented in a Student Support Plan (SSP).

Some accommodation examples to document would be a reader or scribe for formal evaluations,

speech-to-text, sensory diets, etc. The accommodations may also include recommendations from educational psychologists, occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, counsellors, etc.

### **Modified Education Program (MEP)**

A Modified Education Program is for a student who is working significantly above or below their grade level and is following the curricular programming of another grade level in one or more subjects.

Typically, two or more years above or below grade level is considered significant, as there is at least a one-year span of development among students within any classroom and, in consideration of this, curricula is designed with overlap.

A MEP ensures a student is accessing the content at their current level with targeted interventions aimed at closing the gaps, and ongoing assessment appropriately measuring student growth. A MEP is documented in a Student Support Plan (SSP).

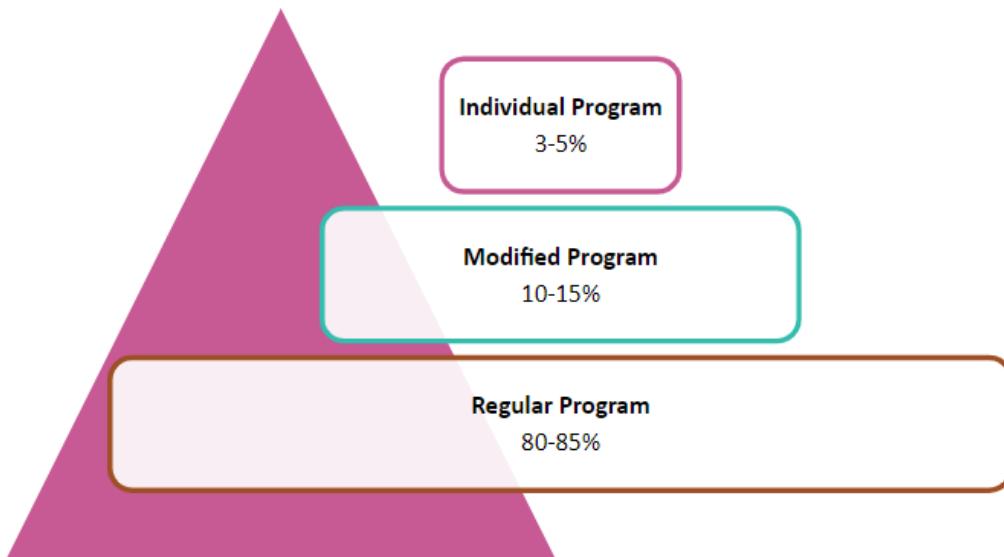
### **Individual Education Program (IEP)**

An Individual Education Program is student-specific programming documented in an Individualized Education Plan. It is growth-oriented and driven by the interests, strengths, and needs of the student. It may or may not include learning expectations set out in NWT curricula and is designed around building on the students' competencies. A student on an IEP may require specialized support, accommodations, facilities, resources and/or equipment.

Placing a student on an IEP requires assessments supporting the program change and there must be family involvement in the decision. The teacher and, when possible, Support Assistants collaborate with the SBST to develop, implement, and update the plan. It is a legal document and requires informed consent of a parent/guardian to implement.

## **Types of Programming in the NWT:**

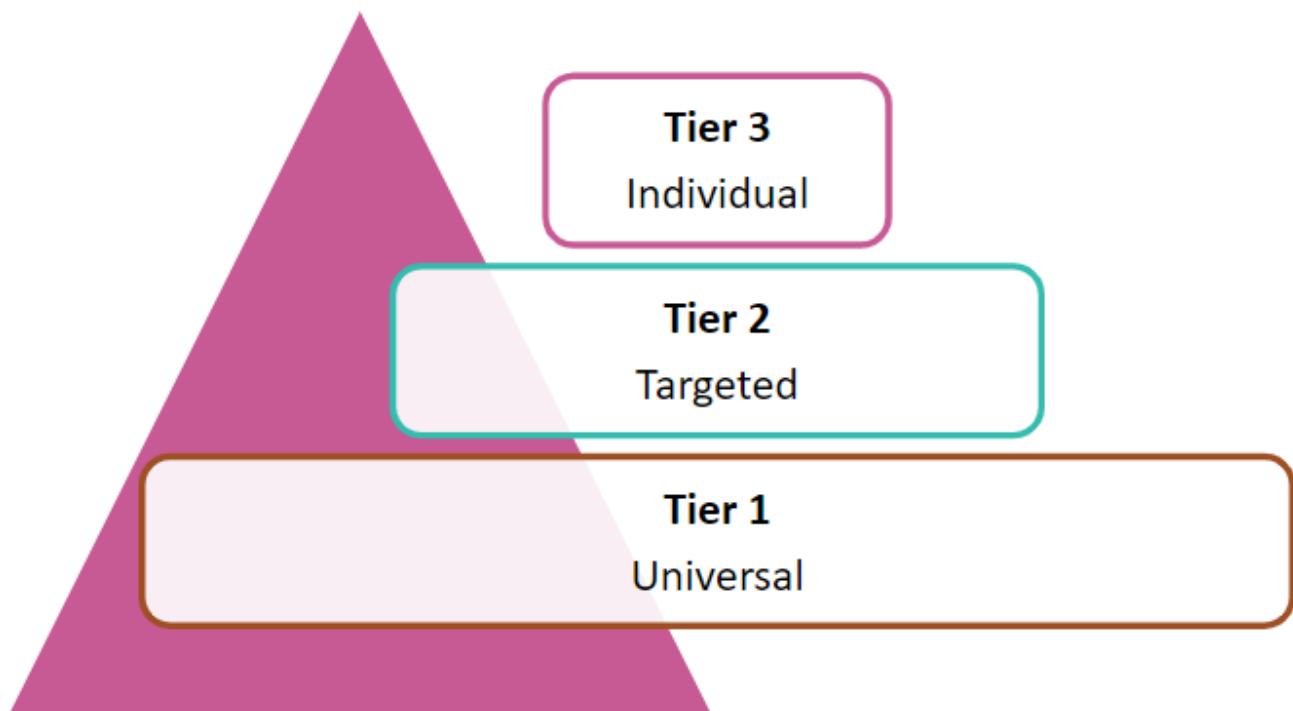
\*% typically represents students in each program



# NWT Models of Support

All student programming begins with the student's strengths. The goal is to support the student to achieve learning outcomes with an educational program designed specifically for their needs. In the NWT, educators use a tiered (or levelled) support model, based on the Response to Intervention Model – the practice of providing high-quality instruction and interventions matched to student need, monitoring progress frequently to make decisions about changes in instruction or goals, and applying response data to inform education decisions.

## NWT Tiered Levels of Support:



# Supporting NWT Students

## Support Assistant Responsibilities and Roles

**Support Assistants carry out responsibilities in the following areas:**

1. Professional behaviour
2. Relationships with students and educators
3. Instructional & non-instructional support
4. Implementation of student educational programs
5. Social & emotional support
6. Active member of the collaborative School-Based Support Team



**As part of the education team, Support Assistants have three roles:**

1. To support the classroom teacher in delivering educational programs to students.
2. To provide instructional & non-instructional support to students.
3. To support students in becoming more independent.

# Roles, Responsibilities & Expectations of Support Assistants

Support Assistants play a valuable role in assisting teachers to meet the needs of students to successfully access curriculum and services. Support Assistants assist in the implementation of educational programming, application of classroom management strategies, and providing instructional and non-instructional supports to students under the direct supervision of a teacher.

## School Community Members: Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Student</b>	All students are born capable. Students have responsibilities as part of the school community. They are expected to attend school, participate in their educational programming, follow school and classroom rules, and complete assignments or activities to the best of their ability. Students should be involved, when appropriate, in their program planning and help set their own goals whenever possible.
<b>Parent(s)/Guardian(s)/Caregiver(s)</b>	The family of a student plays an important role in supporting the student to discover and develop their gifts, skills and talents. The parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) can support the student to attend school, provide current home and medical information about the student, and follow up on any school concerns they may have. The parent(s)/guardian(s)/caregiver(s) should participate in ongoing communication between home and the school, directing questions or comments to the classroom teacher and attending School-based Support Team plan development and review meetings whenever possible. Families are the main advocate for the child(ren).
<b>Support Assistant</b>	Support Assistant responsibilities in the school community focus on assisting in the delivery of educational programs for all students; performing tasks that can range from helping with academic program activities, to reinforcing social/emotional plans, to providing personal care support. This may also include toileting, feeding, using mechanical lifts, etc. A Support Assistant may also be responsible for monitoring the class as the classroom teacher works individually or in small groups with students. Support Assistants primarily take direction from the classroom teacher, sometimes with input from the Program Support Teacher and/or the school principal.
<b>Classroom Teacher</b>	The classroom teacher is responsible for providing a quality education to all students. Primary responsibilities include designing, delivering, supervising, assessing, and reporting on educational programming, implementing strategies and providing support. The teacher directs the daily work of Support Assistants.

<b>Indigenous Language Instructor (ILI)</b>	<p>The Indigenous Language Instructor is responsible for providing Indigenous language instruction using the <i>Our Languages</i> curriculum (OLC). Primary responsibilities include designing, supervising, assessing and reporting. The ILI's classroom is designed to be an environment where language is used and heard through modelling. The ILI and Support Assistant work together to stay in the language.</p>
<b>Program Support Teacher (PST)</b>	<p>The responsibilities of the Program Support Teacher are to support the classroom teacher through the SBST and to collaborate around the organization, integration, development, and provision of additional services needed for successful program implementation for all students.</p> <p>The PST facilitates Support Assistant training in specific strategies needed to support students. PSTs also support the development of the working relationship between the Support Assistant and the teacher(s).</p> <p>The PST, in collaboration with the school principal, is responsible for Support Assistant scheduling, training, and supervision.</p> <p>The principal may delegate the following to the PST:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The scheduling of Support Assistants, including rescheduling of duties if a student is absent, or as priorities/needs change.</li> <li>• Supporting and providing development and training for school staff, including Support Assistants.</li> <li>• Supporting Support Assistants' learning of new skills or techniques by demonstrating or modelling strategies directly with students as a whole class, in small groups, or one-on-one.</li> </ul>
<b>Principal/ Vice-Principal</b>	<p>Principals are leaders of inclusion in the school. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure the Support Assistant receives training in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of the Support Assistant in Inclusive Schooling as per the <i>NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling and Guidelines</i> (see <a href="#">Appendix A</a> for complete job description)</li> <li>• What it means to be a paraprofessional</li> <li>• Confidentiality and professionalism</li> <li>• Cultural awareness</li> </ul> <p>Principals are responsible for the management of Support Assistants and perform formative evaluations by conducting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Classroom walk-throughs</li> <li>• Observations</li> <li>• Discussions</li> <li>• Growth Plans</li> <li>• E-performance, if applicable</li> </ul>

<b>Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinator (RISC)</b>	<p>The Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinator (RISC) is responsible for providing administrative and programming leadership to Support Assistants in meeting the needs of students.</p> <p>RISCs provide regional training and capacity building initiatives in inclusive schooling for staff, including Support Assistants.</p>
<b>Regional Indigenous Language &amp; Education Coordinator (RILE)</b>	<p>The Regional Indigenous Language &amp; Education Coordinator (RILE) works as a liaison between the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and regional education bodies. They support schools in the implementation of the <i>ILE Policy</i> and Indigenous language programming.</p>

Refer to the *NWT Ministerial Directive of Inclusive Schooling* for a full list of inclusive schooling roles and responsibilities.

# Professional Behaviour

As a vital member of the school community, there are many expectations and skills required of a Support Assistant. Expectations of Support Assistants around **professional behaviour** include:

- Promoting an atmosphere of respect for students and adults.
- Protecting confidential information.
- Using time wisely, requiring little supervision.
- Following the assigned work schedule.
- Resolving conflict with teachers at the classroom level, where possible.
- Participating in professional development.
- Contributing to school functions and activities within the workday.
- Seeking out opportunities for professional development and requesting training to increase on-the-job skills.
- Leaving personal challenges at home; if not possible, using appropriate leave and/or accessing the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) for support.
- Dressing appropriately as per the school culture/dress code.
- Discussing specific students in a confidential setting (not in staff room, hallways, or community).

## Cell Phone Usage

Cell phone use is a part of daily life, but they can also be a distraction in the work environment. Support Assistants should know their school's cell phone policy for staff and students. This will ensure Support Assistants follow the policies themselves and are able to support students to follow the policies. Support Assistants can find out about these policies by speaking to the administrative team at the school.

## Taking a Call

Refer to the school policy for guidance on this situation. When a Support Assistant is expecting a phone call, they should notify the teacher that their phone may be on and they may need to step out of the classroom briefly.

## Photos

Photos must **only** be taken for evidence of student learning and progression, as requested by the classroom teacher. Photos must only be used and shared through the discretion of the teacher. Photos must never be shared by the Support Assistant beyond the context of a classroom setting – this includes not sharing with parents or on social media. If photos are to be shared outside the classroom (i.e., school website), this is to be done through the school's assigned staff authorized to do so, not the Support Assistant. Once shared, photos should be removed from the device.

## Social Media

As a member of the school staff and union, Support Assistants are always a representative of the school, including beyond school hours. Posting on social media, distributing to the public, or discussing publicly any of the following may result in disciplinary action:

- Negative commentary about your job, school, colleagues, students, families, etc.
- Any school-related photos that include students and staff
- Bullying/harassment; online or in person
- School decisions and confidential information
- Political conversation that is linked to your role/school/regional divisional educational authority or divisional education council
- Using social media to friend, follow, or communicate with students and/or parents/guardians.

If unsure about social media use, talk to your supervisor.



*Photo Credit: Dina Lee*

## Confidentiality & Communication

### Confidentiality Guidelines

- Work-related discussions must remain among the staff directly involved and must not occur off school property.
- Student information must only be shared with staff that work with the student.
- Direct anyone asking for student information to the student's teacher.
- Be aware of the environment in which information is shared, as private information may be overheard. This is especially true of conversations that occur off school property.
- The review of student files or reports are the duty of teachers, Program Support Teachers

and administration. Ask to have a conversation with one of these staff members if you feel you are lacking information or require further clarity.

### **Communication Guidelines**

- Discuss any issues privately with the teacher as soon as possible.
- Regularly ask for your teacher's feedback on your participation in classroom routines and activities.
- Direct parents and other staff looking for information on a student to the student's teacher.
- Avoid conversations about work or students with parents and community members in public places. If approached in a public place, redirect to the school setting.
- Use trauma-informed communication practices (ask for training if required).
- Be mindful of potentially triggering language, actions, etc.

### **FAQs**

#### **Q: A parent has approached me with a question about their child. What should I do?**

*A: It is the role of the teacher to be the first point of contact to communicate any progress, concerns and updates to a parent. The role of the Support Assistant is to support the educational program of the student. If a parent approaches you for information, you should always direct a parent to the student's teacher.*

#### **Q: What do I do if I have a concern for a student or an issue in the class?**

*A: To maintain open and honest communication, it is vital that Support Assistants communicate directly with the teacher to discuss issues and plan next steps. There are processes and procedures outlined in union documents to address lines of communication.*

#### **Q: What can I do if the teacher is busy, but I am not sure what I am supposed to do?**

*A: It is the teacher's responsibility to provide guidance to the Support Assistant and plan activities. If a Support Assistant consistently finds they are not sure what they should be doing in the class, they can speak to the teacher or the Program Support Teacher to further develop plans. Ask the teacher to provide a daily written plan detailing your responsibilities/tasks for the day.*

#### **Q: I have a great idea about how to support a student with an activity – what should I do?**

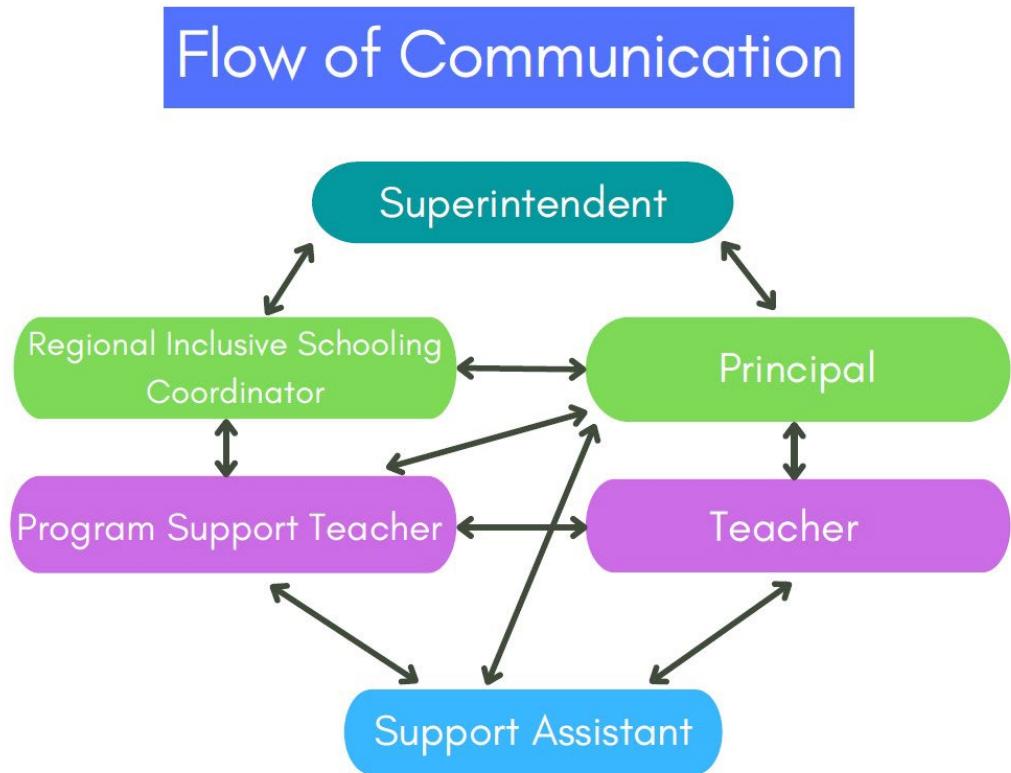
*A: A Support Assistant's voice is a valuable and crucial part of student planning and support. You can connect with the teacher about ideas for support, along with identified goals/outcomes that will be met with this activity.*

## **Classroom Communication**

The Support Assistant and classroom teacher should meet regularly to discuss:

- Carrying out instructional and non-instructional plans (SSPs and IEPs)
- Details of student support plans to ensure the Support Assistant has necessary information about the student(s) they work with without having to access the student's file.
- Classroom management and student supervision
- Providing instructional and other supports to students; and

- Providing information on student progress



# On-the-Job Orientation

Each school is unique, and therefore it is important for all staff members to become familiar with routines, codes of conduct and practices of that school. School orientation is the responsibility of the school principal or assistant-principal (unless otherwise delegated).

If a Support Assistant is new to the school and/or the role, it is important that they have an orientation of the school to find their way around, as well as an introduction to school staff and the School-based Support Team (SBST). Schools are busy and fast-paced environments; there can be quick turnover and changes to schedules. It is the responsibility of all staff members to help one another and create a safe and welcoming environment for all.

A SBST meeting should be arranged for Support Assistants working with students with complex needs to familiarize them with the students. This can include, but is not limited to:

- going over the student's file
- reviewing student support plans, if applicable
- receiving specific training
- planning with the classroom teacher
- becoming familiar with strategies that work for the student

Orientation to the school should be considered a process that takes place over time. Please see the suggested *Orientation Checklist* in [Appendix B](#), which can be changed to suit the needs of all schools.

## Strategies for Universal Support in an Inclusive Classroom

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a framework to improve the learning environment for all students. Incorporating UDL principles into classroom practice improves the accessibility of learning for all students. UDL helps the teacher make instruction more flexible and student-centered. It engages students in the learning process and allows them to make choices in acquiring knowledge and skills, and in how they demonstrate their learning. The planning of UDL supports is the responsibility of the teacher. The Support Assistant may make suggestions, as they often work closely with students.

**As a Support Assistant, some helpful UDL strategies in the classroom setting include:**

- Creating a space that can adapt to the needs of **all** students
- Positioning students in a specific area of the classroom according to their needs (i.e., closer to the teacher for hearing, with their back toward the window for vision)
- Minimizing distractions (visual and/or auditory)
- Organizing the desktop/learning space (schedule, timer, task list, etc.)
- Using a partition on the desk to reduce distractions
- Allowing for flexibility in how the students engage with, interpret, and express the course material
- Repeating instructions

- Breaking information into smaller pieces
- Repeating instructions for clarity and understanding
- Using manipulatives
- Completing first example
- Allowing for extended time
- Allowing for breaks
- Switching up the activity often
- Using less/simpler language
- Using visual supports
- Using self-regulation strategies
- Changing proximity to student(s)

## Fostering & Supporting Independence

The role of a Support Assistant is valuable and challenging. It takes time to develop relationships with students and to understand their needs, while identifying areas of strength that require less support. It is the role of a Support Assistant to foster and develop independence within the student(s) they work with. It is important for the Support Assistant to meet with the School-based Support Team to review the support(s) provided to students on an ongoing basis.

### Strategies to Foster Student Independence

Support Assistants should:

- To promote growth, provide support, giving students an opportunity to do an independent activity while balancing ability and challenge.
- Discuss with the teacher barriers to learning you have observed that limit the student's independence. Together, create a plan to directly address these barriers (i.e., teach a skill, introduce a new technology, etc.). In collaboration with the teacher, develop a plan to slowly reduce the amount of help a student is receiving through gradual release.
- Create opportunities for the student to be part of peer learning. Developing peer relationships promotes the growth of all students. While the teacher works with the student, lead a class activity to promote positive relationships, community and inclusion.
- Pause before answering or helping the student(s).
- Ask the student if they require help and model a response if they do not, such as "Thanks, but I'd like to try this by myself first."
- Be aware of proximity to the student. Is it necessary to sit next to the student or can you circulate the room and monitor student progress from a distance?
- Communicate with the teacher, other staff, and the student about why space is being given.

### Strategies for Developing Peer Relationships

Inclusive schooling principles are foundational to creating positive school and classroom environments. All students are capable and have skills to share and develop. To facilitate peer interactions and opportunities, Support Assistants should:

- Provide opportunities for all peers to work together and support each other
- Model inclusive behaviour and attitudes
- Support all students
- Promote students to participate independently with peers, without Support Assistant assistance, whenever possible

# Supports & Strategies

## ***Instructional Strategies***

- Give student additional instructions or break down instructions into simpler language
- Review required skills for new concepts
- Give immediate feedback so the student knows they are on right path
- Have student complete one task at a time, and chunk the work with breaks as needed
- Remove potential learning barriers (i.e., lack of flexibility or accessibility in the material)

## ***Visual Strategies***

- Calendar on student's desk
- Schedules with or without pictures
- Sequencing activities with pictures and/or sticky note depending on age and reading ability
- Checklists for desk or locker
- Rehearse routine or the transition to a new routine
- Use social stories/narratives to teach and reinforce skills and routine
- Clock or watch to follow schedule - digital may help

## ***Concrete to Abstract Strategies***

- Experience: let the student discover
- Objects: manipulatives
- Photos: student's own pictures, or photocopies. Allowing the student to be involved in creating their own visuals
- Picture symbols/line drawing: allow the student to choose
- Print: let the student write their understanding or analysis in their own words (could be supported with pictures)

## ***Structure Strategies***

- Clearly define areas for specific activities: one's own space, special working place, large group working place, reading space, independent space, etc.

## ***Predictability Strategies***

- Use a calendar to indicate upcoming events (always updated with changes)
- Give advance reminders of transitions and changes (an hour or a day in advance, always being proactive)
- Review daily schedule upon arrival and as needed throughout the day, as it should become a well-established routine
- Provide individual choice activities at specific centres - plan in advance; should align with goals and/or outcomes

### ***Consistency Strategies***

- Provide simple, clear instructions paired with physical cues and modelling
- Be clear and address expectations for both desired and undesired behaviours
- Provide opportunities for choices with clearly defined motivators/re-enforcers
- Gradually reduce prompting; the goal is to assist the student in becoming independent
- Follow through on expectations; it's good to go back and review with student, if need be
- Be flexible and reduce expectations as needed (i.e., partial participation) while always communicating these changes to the teacher
- When communicating with a student, it is best to be at eye level, maintain an even voice, be safely close in proximity when speaking to a student and be aware of what body language is communicating
- Follow the strategies and supports as outlined in student's support plan when behaviour/breakdowns occur

# Instructional & Classroom Support Roles

Teacher	Shared between Teacher and Support Assistant	Support Assistant
<p><b>Responsible for:</b></p> <p>Designing instructional programs.</p> <p>Developing students' educational program plans.</p> <p>Identifying responsibilities of professionals working with the student(s) to best meet their needs and learning goals.</p>	<p><b>Responsible for:</b></p> <p>Discussing the learner's strengths and challenges and considering the best areas of program focus.</p> <p>Attending meetings to collaborate when necessary.</p>	<p><b>Responsible for:</b></p> <p>Sharing relevant information about the evidence of learning and behaviour of individual students to support their educational program plan design, transition, and goals.</p>
<p>Planning learning activities.</p>	<p>Discussing objectives and goals.</p> <p>Discussing and clarifying the ways in which the Support Assistant can help the teacher with instructional/ behavioural programs, and classroom management for the students.</p>	<p>Collecting relevant information and evidence of learning through working with student(s) and providing feedback to the teacher for planning and assessment.</p>
<p>Deciding the accommodations and/or modifications that are best suited for the student(s).</p>	<p>Assisting the teacher to ensure accommodations/ modifications are effectively implemented for all students.</p> <p>Building on students' skills, gifts, and talents as a capable person.</p> <p>Considering culturally appropriate activities and strategies.</p>	<p>Adapting strategies to accommodate the individual learner's needs/styles.</p>

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Shared between Teacher and Support Assistant</b>	<b>Support Assistant</b>
Providing instructional learning resources.  Monitoring and advocating for the appropriate resources necessary for the Support Assistant to carry out their duties.	Collaborating to identify goals and priorities for resource development.	Assisting with development of resources for both learning and behaviour, as directed by the classroom teacher.
Developing class/school-based learning goals for individuals and groups.	Planning activities to meet the learning goals and outcomes.	Assisting students with learning activities.  Monitoring and reporting to the teacher/team on the implementation of the program.
Establishing work plan priorities.	Reviewing work plans daily and weekly.  Setting meetings to collaborate.	Carrying out work within developed structures and plans, being consistent with expectations of students' educational program plans.
Instructing, supervising, and facilitating student learning.	Discussing what is working and where changes are required to increase student learning.	Facilitating/assisting with student learning both individually and in small groups.
Ensuring assessment and learning profiles are current by keeping educational program plans and class reviews up to date.	Discussing information.	Assisting the classroom while the teacher performs functional (informal) assessment activities needed in developing individual and class-wide learning profiles.

Teacher	Shared between Teacher and Support Assistant	Support Assistant
Evaluating and reporting on progress according to the goals outlined on the education plan.	Exchanging information.	Observing and documenting learner strengths, achievements and needs through daily learning activities.
Reporting to parents/guardians on informal, ongoing, and formal written reports.	Discussing relevant confidential information with the teacher.	Giving information to the teacher for home/school and formal/informal communications.
<p>Sharing current student-related information on behaviour, social, emotional, and physical health on an as-needed basis.</p> <p>Requesting that necessary training is provided to Support Assistants.</p>	<p>Maintaining confidentiality.</p> <p>Supporting occupational and physiotherapists, speech language pathologists, vision and hearing-impaired specialists and other professionals in the delivery of required services.</p> <p>Following established protocol and collective agreements regarding administration of medicine and medical procedures.</p>	<p>Carries out students' personal and health-care routines as directed.</p> <p>Carrying out specific procedures <b>ONLY</b> if proper training has been provided and documents what has been provided.</p> <p>Following all established reporting procedures.</p>

\*Adapted from *Student Support Services Paraprofessional Handbook*, Kootenay-Columbia School District No. 20, 2017.

# Social/Emotional Support

Support Assistants work closely with all the students in a classroom. All students benefit from a positive, caring, and consistent approach when it comes to behaviour. Behaviour is a way of communicating when a need is not being met. Looking at behaviour through a self-regulation lens, as stress behaviour as opposed to misbehaviour, can go a long way in de-escalating and being proactive in ensuring the students' needs are met in a positive way. Training in self-regulation may be required for the Support Assistant.

## **Considerations to support social/emotional skills:**

- Discuss with the classroom teacher the behavioural approach and strategies to be used in the classroom.
- Develop positive behaviour strategies with the teacher at the classroom level, shifting focus to specific students only when necessary.
- Review any safety and/or behaviour plans that are in place as outlined in a student's education plan.
- Reinforce positive behaviour following the behaviour plan (review with classroom teacher), if one is developed.
- Redirect inappropriate behaviour in a positive way.
- Ensure that the expected behaviour is the same when the teacher is out of the room, or when the student(s) is working in a group.
- Where possible, give the student space, do not engage, give them time to process their feelings.
- Use non-verbal cues or code word(s) to communicate/redirect inappropriate behaviour.
- Have a 'back pocket pass' the student can use to leave the classroom when they would benefit from leaving (without having to ask permission).
- Observe student behaviour in different school settings.
- Observe and record student behaviour as discussed between Support Assistant and classroom teacher.
- Be aware of what your body is non-verbally communicating and what the body language of the students is communicating and adjust accordingly.
- Be aware of strategies that support your own self-regulation.
- When possible, participate in staff meetings where the whole school approach to social/emotional support is set.

# Non-Instructional Support

As a Support Assistant, you may be directed by the classroom teacher and/or Program Support Teacher to carry out any or all of the following duties, with appropriate training provided:

***\*This is not a full list, and you may be asked to do other things***

## **Health Care and Hygiene:**

- Review the student's education plan for critical health information
- Give medication and record that medication was given according to school policy and procedures
- Help with mobility
- Assist with positioning to promote independence and support health
- Assist with toileting/diapering
- Assist with the preparation of food and/or feeding
- Be aware of the procedures for seizure management, provide training as required
- Assist with personal care
  - dressing/changing soiled clothes
  - washing hands/face

When supporting health care and hygiene, it is important to respect and follow students' cultural and personal values. The amount of assistance given to the student must be agreed upon with the family. Please refer to your Education Body policies.

## **Assistive Technology Support:**

- Operate technology and equipment that the students use within the classroom.
- Learn assistive technology programs that students require.

## **Other Responsibilities/Duties**

- Help with school supervision.
- Make instructional materials, as directed by the classroom teacher.
- Supervise students in the school, on school grounds and in other locations as required.
- Maintain a daily log to inform all education staff who work with the same student.

## **Safe Schools and Emergency Response Plans**

Every school must have a Safe and Caring School Committee that updates the Safe Schools Plan and Emergency Response Plan for the school every year. Speak to the principal about the details of these plans, as every staff member must know them. A Support Assistant may have a role if the student(s) they work with require an individual emergency response plan.

### Individual Emergency Response Plans (IERP)

- Every student that requires extra assistance in responding to an emergency should have an Individual Emergency Response Plan (IERP). The plan identifies the student's abilities and needs related to communication, sheltering-in-place, lockdown, evacuation, transportation, and re-establishing independence. It also considers any assistive devices (including evacuation devices) and medications that the student requires.
- IERPs are created in consultation with the student, their parents/guardian, teachers, other support staff and, where necessary, medical professionals, usually as part of the development process for a Student Support Plan (SSP) or Individualized Education Plan (IEP). A Support Assistant may become part of the development of the IERP as well as hold responsibilities to ensure the plan is executed in the case of an emergency.

## References/Resources (NWT)

1. Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) (1996). *Inuuqatigiit: The Curriculum from the Inuit Perspective*.
2. Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) (2003). *Dene Kede—Education: A Dene Perspective [curriculum document, grade 8]*.
3. Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) (2013). *NWT Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: Directions for Change*.
4. Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) (2016). *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling*.
5. Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) (2021). *NWT JK-12 Indigenous Languages & Education Handbook: Our People, Our Land, Our Ways, Our Languages*.
6. Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) (2020). *Guidelines for Ensuring LGBTQ2S+ Equity, Safety and Inclusion in Northwest Territories Schools*.

## Other References (Outside NWT)

7. Cariboo-Chilcotin School District #27 (2015). *Education Assistant Handbook*.
8. Government of Nunavut Department of Education (2020). *Teaching Together: Student Support Assistant Handbook*.
9. Kootenay-Columbia School District No. 20 (2017). *Student Support Services Paraprofessional Handbook*.

# Appendix A: Support Assistant Common Job Description

Department	Position Title	
	Support Assistant	
Position Number	Community	Division/Region

## **PURPOSE OF THE POSITION**

The Support Assistant (SA) is responsible for assisting with instruction and providing support and encouragement to students diagnosed with exceptional needs and/or who are identified as needing additional services and resources. This position contributes to ensuring that all students have the opportunity for a successful and meaningful learning experience. The SA operates under the *Education Act* and the policies and procedures established by the district, region, and school.

## **SCOPE**

At the discretion of the Principal, the Support Assistant reports to the Principal, Program Support Teacher and/or Classroom Teachers. The Support Assistant is responsible for assisting with implementing specialized and modified learning and education activities to provide a positive learning experience for students with diverse needs. The position is responsible for working with designated students either individually or in small groups to provide academic assistance. The SA may work in the classroom or in other areas of the school.

Support services provided will have a direct impact on students and their families. It will increase the likelihood of students remaining in the education system and gaining the skills required to be successful in life. Support services will have a direct impact on students within the classroom by ensuring that students receive the required level of attention from the Classroom Teacher or another adult in the room.

The Classroom Teacher maintains final responsibility for the organization and management of a classroom, the planning of teaching strategies, the direction of learning or reporting experiences of

students, including the assessment of individual needs of students, the selection of materials to meet students' needs, and the evaluation of student progress and/or the discussion of students' work, behaviours, and/or problems with parents.

The specific tasks of the Support Assistant will be determined by the Principal, Program Support Teacher (PST) and/or Classroom Teacher(s) based on the needs of students within the school. These duties vary from year to year and from time to time.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 1. Deliver individualized and developmentally appropriate learning programs and activities based on students' needs to ensure students have an opportunity for a successful learning experience**
  - Assist the teacher in delivering specialized or modified programs and Individualized Education Plan (IEP)s under supervision of the teacher
  - Deliver teacher-prepared programs with individual students or groups of students
  - Provide assistance to designated students to ensure the highest possible degree of inclusion within the educational and social programs
  - Provide opportunities to develop students' skills, talents, and gifts as a capable person
  - Follow program support and classroom teacher manuals and instructions
  - Communicate student progress and challenges to the teacher using methods defined by the teacher or PST
  - Provide assistance to students based on individualized needs including assisting with transportation, orientation/mobility training, wheelchair access, physical challenges, etc.
  - Provide assistance for activities and exercises recommended by rehabilitation team (i.e., toileting, feeding, etc.), behaviour management, travel and/or mobility assistance and administering of medical procedures as appropriately trained
  - Perform general classroom duties as assigned by the classroom teacher
  - Reinforce classroom instruction with individuals and/or small groups
  - Assist in the management of the classroom environment
  - Ensure the safety of all students
  - Report on condition of all equipment and resources
  - Clarify teacher and school expectations, directions for students and vice versa
  - Encourage students to develop independent skills in working, thinking, and communicating
  - Administer appropriate tests
  - Operate equipment such as computers and media equipment
  - Keep records and logs of student activities and progress
  - Prepare activities and resources based on the teacher's plans
- 2. Assist with preparing specialized learning activities including Individualized Education Plans (IEP) for identified students**
  - Consult with Program Support Teacher and Classroom Teachers on student needs (i.e., medical condition, disability, learning delay, student at risk, etc.)

- Conduct research into areas of disability, learning delay, risk, etc.
- Consult with Program Support Teacher and Classroom Teachers on lessons plans and appropriate learning activities
- Consult with Specialists (i.e., Speech Therapists, Occupational Therapists, Psychologists) on appropriate learning activities
- Regularly plan with the Classroom Teacher or other designated supervisor
- Assist in the development and signing of IEP forms with the parent/guardian
- Identify and develop strategies to assist students who have complex/diverse needs
- Be aware of various learning styles and abilities
- Prepare and organize learning materials and resources

**3. Communicate student progress, achievements and limitations to supervisor(s) and parents to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed in a timely manner**

- Monitor and maintain a record of student progress, including achievements and limitations
- Consult with Classroom Teacher on student progress
- Prepare anecdotal reports for the Classroom Teacher on student progress as required
- Prepare reports for the Classroom Teacher on student behavior and behavioral problems as required
- Provide Classroom Teachers with summaries of test results
- Provide input for report cards
- Facilitate communication between the family, community, school, and students in consultation with the Classroom Teacher and/or supervisor(s)
- Explain school policies and programs to parents/guardians in consultation with the Classroom Teacher
- Participate in parent/teacher conferences as required

**4. Participate in supervisory and extracurricular activities to provide opportunities for all students to become active in cultural, sport and other activities and events**

- Supervise students in the school, on the school ground and in other locations as scheduled
- Supervise students getting on or off the buses as scheduled
- Monitor students on field trips and during extracurricular activities
- Participate in the school team as requested
- Participate in school committees (i.e., literacy, beautification, culture, etc.)
- Participate in staff meetings
- Take advantage of personal skills that could benefit students through participation in extracurricular activities
- Seek out work to be completed as time permits

**5. Participate in ongoing professional development activities**

- Attend teacher workshops when possible
- Participate in school professional development and activity days

- Seek out and share with administration opportunities for professional development that may be offered by agencies or online

## **6. Perform other duties as required during working hours**

- Attend school-wide special events as appropriate
- Perform assigned responsibilities during emergency drills and evacuations

### **WORKING CONDITIONS**

#### **Physical Demands**

The Support Assistant position is physically active. Students with diverse/complex needs often require physical assistance, such as dressing, feeding, toileting, etc. Students with behavioural or social/emotional disorders require monitoring and may require restraint or physical intervention to ensure the safety of the student and others. The SA spends a significant portion of time standing or walking in the school. The SA is expected to participate in student activities and must regularly lift or carry materials. In certain situations, the incumbent may be required to intervene in physical confrontations between students.

#### **Environmental Conditions**

The SA may be required to assist students with personal care activities such as toileting. The SA is exposed to a variety of weather daily. The SA must also deal with situations involving blood and injury and may need to provide basic medical attention.

#### **Sensory Demands**

Watching and observing students to ensure their safety and monitor their progress requires a need to concentrate on a variety of sensory inputs.

#### **Mental Demands**

SAs work with students who require additional assistance and support and who do not generally have the same targets of success in the classroom as the majority of students. Many of these students have diverse/complex needs and may not react in a typical manner. Certain students may display inappropriate behaviours such as abusive language and/or inappropriate physical behaviour.

### **KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND ABILITIES**

The SA should have fundamental knowledge of:

- child development
- disabilities and other challenges faced by students
- the effects of living with a disability or challenges
- formal and informal learning strategies
- inclusive schooling philosophies, community resources and services

- community cultural protocols and context

The SA must demonstrate the following skills:

- excellent interpersonal skills
- excellent planning and organization, and time management skills
- ability to read and understand instructions, IEPs, meeting minutes, and communications
- ability to write and maintain accurate student records
- effective verbal, written, and listening communication skills
- ability to work independently
- analytical, decision-making, and problem-solving skills
- conflict management and resolution skills
- stress management skills
- computer skills including the ability to operate word-processing, email, and internet applications

The SA must demonstrate the follow abilities

- ability to work in a multicultural setting with young people, staff, and parents/guardians.
- ability to work with students with exceptional needs.
- ability to provide instruction in core academic subjects (reading, writing, mathematics) to students in a wide range of grade levels.
- ability to read and comprehend appropriate materials, including reading and mathematics textbooks at a basic understanding of teaching, instruction, and classroom management techniques.
- ability to acquire knowledge of the goals, objectives and operations of the school and District Education Authority (DEA), as well as the local people and culture.

**Typically, the above qualifications would be attained by:**

The incumbent would normally acquire the requisite knowledge and skills through completion of Grade 12 and related experience in an educational environment.

Equivalencies will be considered.

An ability to communicate using sign language would be considered an asset for this position.

**ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

Must have or be prepared to obtain First Aid and CPR certification.

Ability to speak a local language may be a requirement based on students who have been identified.

**Position Security (check one)**

No criminal records check required

- Position of Trust – criminal records check required
- Highly sensitive position – requires verification of identity and a criminal records check

**French language** (check one if applicable)

- French required (must identify required level below)

Level required for this Designated Position is:

ORAL EXPRESSION AND COMPREHENSION

Basic (B)  Intermediate (I)  Advanced (A)

READING COMPREHENSION:

Basic (B)  Intermediate (I)  Advanced (A)

WRITING SKILLS:

Basic (B)  Intermediate (I)  Advanced (A)

- French preferred

**Indigenous language:** Indigenous Language - Not Specified

- Required

- Preferred

## **CERTIFICATION**

Title: Support Assistant

Position Number:

<p>Employee Signature</p> <p>Printed Name</p> <p>Date</p> <p><i>I certify that I have read and understand the responsibilities assigned to this position.</i></p>	<p>Supervisor Title</p> <p>Supervisor Signature</p> <p>Date</p>
<p>Principal Date</p> <p>Superintendent Date</p> <p><i>I approve the delegation of the responsibilities outlined herein within the context of the attached organizational structure.</i></p>	

**The above statements are intended to describe the general nature and level of work being performed by the incumbents of this job. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list of all responsibilities and activities required of this position.**

# Appendix B: Orientation Checklist

## Phase 1 (First DAY):

Connect with school community members, including:

- School principal and/or assistant-principal
- Program Support Teacher
- Administrative assistant
- Other Support Assistants

## Other General Information for the First Day:

- A copy of the bell schedule
- Supervision expectations and schedule
- Being provided a copy of the orientation checklist
- Designated smoking areas
- Where to park
- Daily schedule and breaks
- Location of staffroom and staff washrooms (may be provided with a school map)
- Contact phone numbers in case of emergency, or unable to make it into work
- Provide time to collaborate with the team members that will be working with your students to allow for an effective/smooth/appropriate transition

## Phase 2 (First WEEK):

- Review school's Safe School and Emergency Response Plans (for fire drills, lockdowns, etc.) and Individual Emergency Response Plans for students who require them (if applicable)
- Review the *NWT Ministerial Directive on Inclusive Schooling*
- Review other guidelines or documents from education body or government
- Work schedule with classroom and teacher assignments
- Designated staff computer
- Become familiar with how to call in sick, input time, or ask for leave
- Become familiar with required software, platforms, technology
- School keys (if required)
- Mailbox location
- Staff email account (with access)
- School-specific protocols (sign-in at the office, etc.)
- Staff meeting dates and expectations
- Professional development dates and opportunities
- When possible, shadow an experienced SA prior to working alone with student(s)
- Locate and review (as needed) your collective agreement (Union of Northern Workers [UNW] or Northwest Territories Teachers Association [NWTTA])

### **Phase 3 (ONGOING):**

- Potential training opportunities
- In-servicing
- Opportunities to meet and connect with professionals who work with other school staff e.g., Regional Inclusive Schooling Coordinator (RISC), Regional Indigenous Language and Education Coordinator (RILE), Occupational Therapist (OT), Speech and Language Pathologist (SLP), Territorial-based Support Team (TBST), etc.
- Schedule time with colleagues to communicate, clarify and share knowledge and experiences
- Ask questions at any time. Talk to the assigned classroom teacher or Program Support Teacher for clarity, to brainstorm or to raise concerns

Orientation is ongoing as topics arise in the daily operations of a school.

\*Adapted from *Education Assistant Handbook*, Cariboo-Chilcotin School District #27, 2015.

## Questions to Ask Myself

- Have I reviewed and understand my role with the classroom teacher? Including both in-class and out-of-class activities (i.e., supervision duties).
- Do I know the school rules, policies, procedures, and emergency procedures? Not limited to:
  - reporting suspected cases of child abuse or neglect
  - releasing a student to parent/adult who comes early to pick up a student
  - taking a student off the premises for an outing
- Do I know who to call and what plans I need to leave if I am going to be absent or late?
- Do I understand my job description, roles, and responsibilities?
- Do I know which student records I am to keep, when and how to complete them and where to file them?
- Have I familiarized myself with the medical alert binder?
- Do I know the support staff involved with students in my class or whom I work with? (i.e., PST, Counsellor, SLP, OT, etc.)
- Do I know who to ask for help regarding Student Support Plans (SSPs) and programming, including Individual Education Programming (IEPs)?
- Do I understand the content within the SSPs/IEPs? (i.e., accommodations, modifications, outcomes, etc.)
- Have I become familiar with the student's most recent program and accompanying plans?
- Do I require any training to do my job more effectively?
- Does the student(s) that I am working with have an Individual Emergency Response Plan (IERP)?
- If applicable, have I spoken to the classroom teacher or PST to enquire about the students' IERP.
- Have I reviewed the student(s) IERP and understand my roles and responsibilities as outlined in the plan?

## Appendix C: Sample SA Daily/Weekly Planner

<b>Follow-Up</b> -What do I need to remember or do for the next lesson or class?			
<b>How will the learning be evaluated?</b> -Timeline -Observation/notes -Discuss -Demonstrate			
<b>What materials will I need?</b> <b>What do I need to find or bring?</b> <b>What do I need to ask for?</b>			
<b>How will I support the lesson/teaching?</b> -Activities -Project -Practice -Choice			
<b>What approach will I use?</b> -Small group -One-to-one -Think/pair/share -Student choice			
<b>Goals to be achieved</b>	1. 2.	1. 2.	1. 2.
<b>Student Name:</b> <b>Classroom:</b> <b>Subject:</b>			

\*Adapted from *Teaching Together: Student Support Assistant Handbook*, Government of Nunavut Department of Education, 2020.