Educational Assistant Handbook



One *Learning* Community

Greater VICTORIA School District

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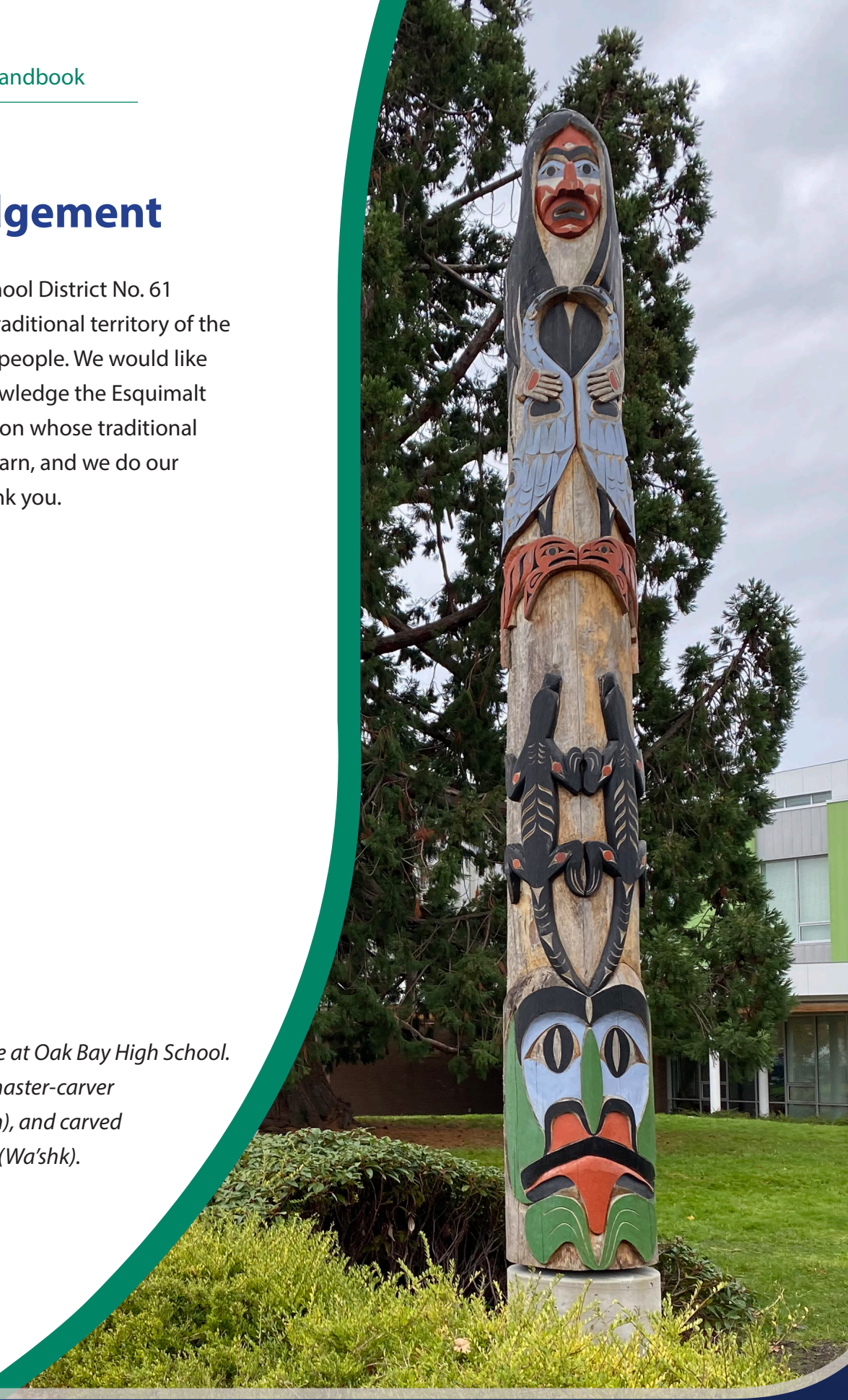
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The Greater Victoria School District acknowledges the work and generosity of other British Columbia school districts in developing Educational Assistant handbooks—in particular the Cowichan Valley School District and Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools. We thank them for sharing!

Territorial Acknowledgement

The Greater Victoria School District No. 61 (GVSD) resides on the traditional territory of the lək̓ʷəŋən (Lekwungen) people. We would like to recognize and acknowledge the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territories we live, we learn, and we do our work. Hay'sxw'qa—thank you.



Sno'uyutth Welcome Pole at Oak Bay High School. Designed by Songhees master-carver Butch Dick (Yuxwelupten), and carved by his son Clarence Dick (Wa'shk).

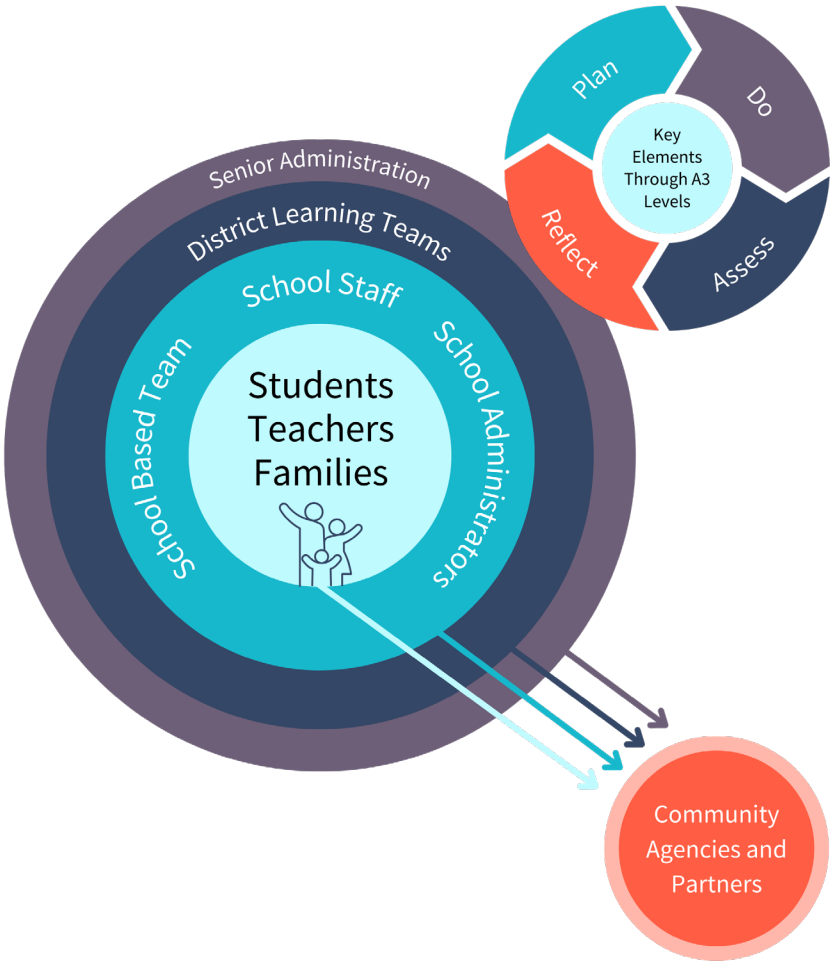
BC Ministry of Education Policy Statement on Inclusion:

British Columbia provides an inclusive education system in which students with special needs are fully participating members of a community of learners. Inclusion describes the principle that all students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs. The practice of inclusion is not necessarily synonymous with full integration in regular classrooms and goes beyond placement to include meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others.

(BC Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies and Guidelines, 2016, p.2)

Inclusion

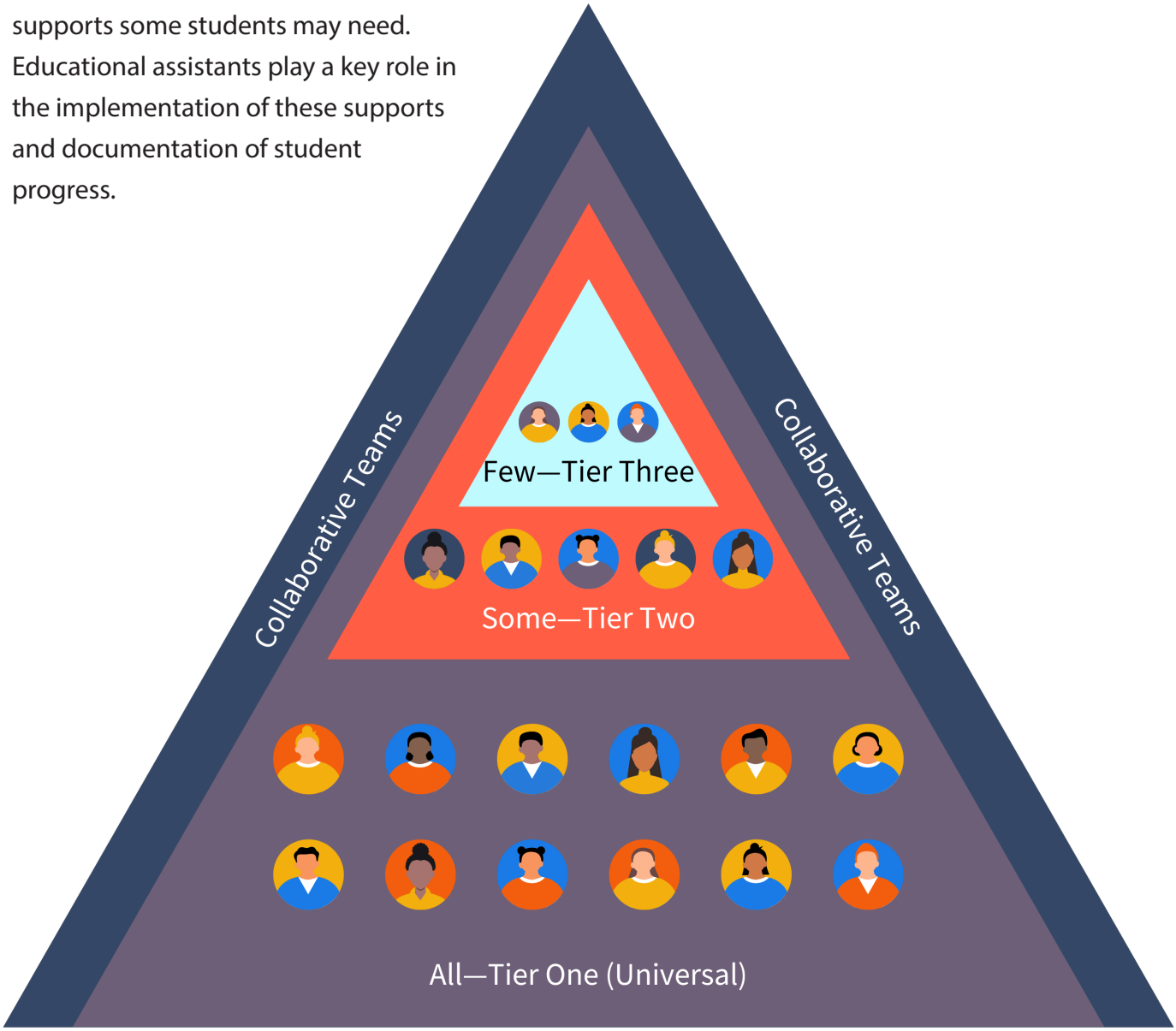
In the Greater Victoria School District (GVSD), we view inclusion as a way of thinking and acting, grounded in the belief that every learner can be successful in their classrooms and school communities. Inclusion in our schools is supported through a continuum of student support that has students and families at the centre, is strength-based and relies on strong school-based team practices. As an educational assistant, you help provide equitable access for diverse learners.



System of Support

Students in the GVSD are supported through a needs-based, multi-tiered collaborative system of support. This system is grounded in inclusion research and begins with developing and implementing universal strategies and practices for all students. Then, if required, additional layers of targeted and/or intensive supports and services are provided for students who need them.

Working collaboratively the School-Based Team determines which targeted and/or intensive supports some students may need. Educational assistants play a key role in the implementation of these supports and documentation of student progress.



Leaning into Building Compassionate Connections

Trauma-informed practice, sometimes known as trauma-sensitive practice or safe and supportive schools, is the foundation for creating welcoming, caring, respectful and safe schools that will benefit all students.

Building connections and authentic relationships with students is a key component of a trauma-informed practice. For students, strong relationships with caring adults can provide the grounding that will support them to learn and grow at school.



Educational assistants can make connections and build relationships by:

Showing genuine interest and respect for students as persons

- Greet students by name daily and implement a friendly "check-in" method to gauge where the student is at
- Create time and space to engage students in conversations about their life and interests
- Provide students with ways to shine at school that are connected to their strengths, talents and interests

Showing kindness towards students and holding empathy for the challenges they may face at school or home

- Use active listening, be present and use validating language to acknowledge you hear and understand their feelings and experiences
- Check your assumptions about a student, be curious, observe and wonder how you can support
- Teach the student skills and strategies to deal with challenges and provide time, space and guided opportunities to use these skills and strategies

Maintaining a calm manner, setting high expectations and clear boundaries for students and communicating with a respectful tone

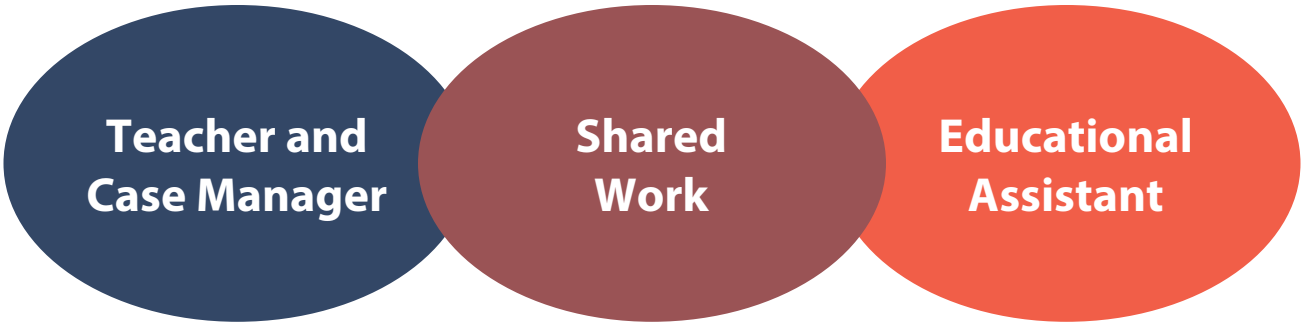
- Be predictable and consistent in your own responses helping students to regulate
- Hold the student in positive high regard
- Provide consistent expectations, limits and routines
  - » Ensure limits are age-appropriate, proportional, and delivered to the child in a calm and respectful manner
  - » Create regular routines, warn of disruption to routines and support transitions with extra time and supervision
- Set boundaries that show students the types of behaviours that are safe and appropriate for school, while also giving them opportunities to learn and practice new behaviours
  - » For example—rather than "stop running," say "please walk"

Roles and Responsibilities of an EA

Educational assistants work in collaboration with the teacher and under the general supervision of the principal to support the inclusion of students with diverse learning needs. EAs can provide a range of services including academic support, behaviour support, social emotional skill development and personal care. Specific assignment of duties is based on student needs and the operational needs of the school.

Strong collaboration with all members of the team, and in particular with teachers and case managers is essential in supporting students. Having clear and transparent communication and documentation processes as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities will enhance collaboration and create a strong student support team.





Teacher and Case Manager	Shared Work	Educational Assistants
• use assessment data to identify student strengths and stretches, determine curricular access points, design instructional programming, determine needed supports, resources and materials	• discuss learners' strengths and stretches and priority areas for programming focus	• share relevant observations and information regarding day-to-day experiences and progress of students
• participate in developing Individual Education Plan (IEP)/Competency Based Individual Education Plan (CBIEP) with Case Manager • identify responsibilities of individual members of student specific support teams in terms of participating in the development, implementation and monitoring of programming set out in the IEP/CBIEP	• discuss learners' strengths and stretches and priority areas for programming focus • attend and/or contribute in meetings to assist with developing IEPs/CBIEPs and/or other student plans	• share relevant observations and information regarding day-to-day experiences and progress of individual learners in support of IEP/CBIEP planning and program design

Teacher and Case Manager	Shared Work	Educational Assistants
• plan learning activities	• discuss goals & objectives • discuss & clarify ways in which the EA and teacher can support each other with instructional programming, classroom management and expectation setting for students	• gather relevant information through working with student(s) to provide feedback into the planning process
• design learning and skill development goals, as well as tracking methods, for worksites and other community-based settings	• develop activities to meet goals • share resources and concerns	• support learning and skill development activities in worksite and community-based settings
• develop individualized, appropriate behavioural programming • model techniques for EAs to use in providing instructional and behavioural assistance	• discuss specific philosophy, techniques, strategies and appropriate language	• implement the techniques and strategies as demonstrated • document, monitor, and report to teacher/team on implementation of the programming
• define the use of specific techniques, strategies, and appropriate language, as required in individual situations (e.g., self-care, specialized technology)	• discuss specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language	• implement specific techniques, strategies and appropriate language

Teacher and Case Manager	Shared Work	Educational Assistants
• establish work plan priorities	• review plan daily and weekly	• follow priority plan • inform teachers regularly on the implementation of the program
• instruct, supervise and facilitate student learning	• discuss successful practice	• facilitate student learning individually, both in small group and whole class activities
• review and reinforce learning activities for concept and skill development	• review learning resources together to clarify and share experiences and expectations	• review and reinforce learning activities with specific students using lesson plan and learning strategies developed by the teacher/team
• provide the EA with the requisite information regarding classroom management structures and expectations for students	• discuss and clarify classroom management structures and expectations for students	• carry out work within developed structures and plans, being consistent with expectations for student (IEP/CBIEP)

Confidentiality Considerations



When working in a school, confidentiality is essential. Educational assistants have access to confidential information about students, families and colleagues and well as the day-to-day operations of the school. All matters related to the school, personnel, the students and their families should not be discussed outside of educational team meetings.

Other considerations include:

- Respect the dignity, rights and self worth of all students.
- Be sensitive to and respect the cultural background, beliefs, race, gender and needs of students, parents, colleagues and community partners.
- Maintain respectful and professional communication and relationships with colleagues, parents and community partners at all times.
- Discuss problems, concerns, confidential matters or administrative issues privately and only with the school staff involved.
- Respect the confidential nature of information concerning students. Discuss the student and their educational programming only with other members of the student's support team. Parents have the right to expect that information about their child's programming and progress will be kept in confidence.
- Be aware of where you are when sharing information—ensure you are in a private location where a door can be closed and others are not present/within hearing range.
- Express differences of opinion privately with the classroom teacher and/or other members of the student's support team.

Communication

Ongoing, open communication can support collaboration between all members of the student team, and can help to prevent misunderstandings or conflict.

Effective team communication can be supported by:

- EAs and teachers make time to learn about the special interests, talents and training that each brings to the team and how these could be used in their work with students.
- The knowledge, skills and perspectives of both the educational assistant and the teacher(s) are known, understood and respected.
- Clear understanding by both teachers and EAs being clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Setting defined times to regularly communicate and collaborate in regards to plans, procedures and student progress. This will also provide a consistent time to address questions, concerns or problems.
- EAs and teachers develop a common vocabulary and system of non-verbal cues for use in the classroom.
- EAs must ask for clarification or assistance if the assigned tasks and expectations are not understood. This should include reviewing hours, breaks, school schedules, school procedures and policies, etc.



On-going communication with families is essential to student success. **The following should be considered in regards to EAs communicating with families:**

- EAs should discuss with teachers how they can contribute to home/school formal and informal communications.
- EAs may spend a considerable amount of time with a student during the school day and are often present when parents drop off and pick up their child. Dialogue at these times should be restricted to friendly greetings and informal interactions. **EAs should direct the parents to the teacher for updates on the student's behaviour or academic progress.**
- **EAs should not be texting/phoning/emailing parents about children they support unless directed to do so by a school administrator.**



Orientation—questions to support a good start!

Every school in the GVSD is unique. When you are assigned to a new school and/or new EA role it is important for you to familiarize yourself with that school's specific routines and practices.

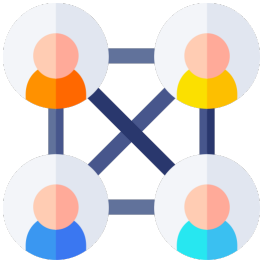
Use the questions below as a guide to support you. Some may be answered by staff in the office including the school principal, vice-principal, school administrative assistant or school clerk while some will be answered by the case manager (learning support teacher or school counsellor) and/or classroom teacher.

Roles and Responsibilities



- What are my regular and special duties?
- What is my schedule?
- What records am I responsible for keeping? How and where should things be recorded?
- How best do I support students who are struggling with behaviour?
- Is there any specialized equipment that I am required to use with students I am supporting?

Communication



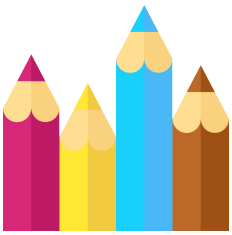
- What is the appropriate line of communication that I am expected to follow?
- With whom should I discuss a problem?
- What should my response be when parents raise questions about a child?
- Which regular meetings am I expected to attend? What other meetings might I be invited to on an as-needed basis?
- How do I record an absence?
- Who should I phone if I am going to be late or have some other emergency?

Safety Considerations



- Are there known hazards associated with the school and what are the safety procedures?
- Who is the designated First Aid Attendant?
- What emergency procedures, if any, do I need to know?
- Will I be working with a student where there is a risk of violence? If yes, how will I access the following documents prior to working with the student: IEP/CBIEP, Student Support Plan, Worker Safety Plan?
- How do I report an incident/injury/violent incident or an unsafe situation?
- Is there any special equipment/clothing required for this position?

Other



- Where can I get a copy of the bell schedule? A map of the school? A staff list?
- Do I need a school or classroom key? Who do I see about this?
- Where are supplies kept and how are they obtained?
- Is there a specific place to keep my personal belongings?
- Is there anything I should know about parking?
- If there is a time where I don't have work or am not needed in a classroom, who should I see for redeployment?
- How do I complete my timesheet? Is there anyone who can help with this?

Student Plans

A range of plans exist in schools to support students. These plans are developed collaboratively, and are reviewed and revised regularly and can include:

- Individual Education Plans
- Student Support Plans
- Medical Plans
- Mental Health Plans
- Transition Plans
- Annual Instructional Plans (AIP)
- Risk Assessment
- Worker Safety Plans

Employees who are assigned to work with students with diverse needs will have access to the necessary documents regarding that specific student's educational program. These documents are generally kept in the student's Designation File ("blue file") or in another confidential location.

Work with your school administrator and/or the student's case manager to obtain access, as needed. As confidential documents, these should not be removed from their secure storage space, duplicated nor housed in an on-call file. Access will be provided on an as-needed basis with permission from school administration and/or the case manager.

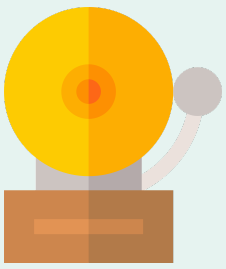


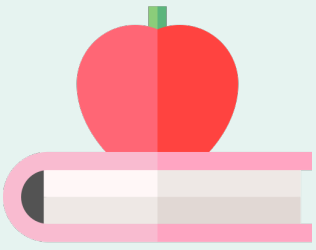
Spareboard Educational Assistant Plan/File

Regular educational assistants should develop a spareboard EA file for their position to be used by the person who will replace them when they are away from school. A clearly written plan will support a smooth transition from one EA to another, and will provide detailed information that the teacher may not be able to immediately relay.

The Spareboard Plan/File should contain the following information. Conversations with your school administration and classroom teacher/case manager using the questions on pages 15–16 may help to guide your planning.

- School map
- School bell schedule
- School staff directory
- School specific fire/earthquake evacuation procedures
- School fire drill procedures
- Regular EA schedule, including break times
- Specific assignment duties including helpful routines/prompts and strategies for students you will be supporting, record keeping expectations, etc.
- Playground and classroom expectations
- Where to find the "basics" (e.g. walkie talkie and/or vest for supervision, where the EA keeps specific resources/materials)





The template on page 26 can be used as a guideline for the Spareboard Plan/File.

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention

Educational assistants in the GVSD are encouraged and supported to become trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention (NVCI).

Nonviolent Crisis Intervention® is a program developed by the Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI). With a core philosophy of providing for the Care, Welfare, Safety, and Security of everyone involved in a crisis situation, the program's proven strategies give educators the skills to both de-escalate disruptive behaviour while also teaching skills to safely respond to various levels of risk behaviour.

Specific objectives of the program include:

- How to identify behaviours that could lead to escalating behaviour from students and adults
- How to effectively respond to behaviours to prevent the situation from escalating
- How staff fear and anxiety influence student behaviour
- How to use verbal and nonverbal techniques to defuse behaviour and resolve a situation before it escalates or potentially leads to high risk behaviour
- How to assess risk levels and consider the issues that impact decision making
- How to establish therapeutic rapport after a crisis has taken place

The CPI Crisis Development Model SM

Integrated Experience

Crisis Development/ Behavior Levels	Staff Attitudes/ Approaches
1. Anxiety	1. Supportive
2. Defensive	2. Directive
3. Risk Behavior	3. Safety Interventions
4. Tension Reduction	4. Therapeutic Rapport

Crisis Prevention Institute

This training is provided by the district at regular times, typically on professional development days. When it is determined that a student requires additional specialized interventions, additional NCVI training may be provided to the school team supporting that student.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect—Duty to Report

Everyone in British Columbia shares responsibility for keeping children safe. As an educational assistant, with the support of the school principal or vice-principal, you may be **required to report to the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD)**.

As a service provider, our role is to be aware of, and alert to, signs and symptoms of possible child abuse or neglect and to respond appropriately if we have concerns about a child's safety or well-being. This is important for ensuring a collaborative response to suspected child abuse and neglect.

MCFD has the lead responsibility for responding to suspected child abuse and neglect. It also delegates authority for child protection and family support to Aboriginal Child and Family Services Agencies, which provide services to their communities.

Police respond when a child is in immediate danger. Police also investigate cases where a criminal offense is suspected.

Anyone who has reason to believe a child or youth under 19 years of age may be at risk has a legal duty to report the concern to the local MCFD office, in a timely manner, at 1-800-663-9122.

Your call will be answered by the Provincial Centralized Screening team (PCS) and their primary role is to receive and assess child protection reports and initial requests for ministry service across the province, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Please report your concerns to your school principal or vice-principal so that you have support when reporting concerns. The duty to report overrides any duty to protect the privacy of students, families or staff.

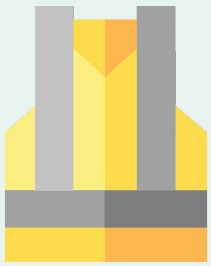
Occupational Health and Safety

Health and safety is everyone's responsibility. Regulation 4300.1 outlines Health and Safety guidelines for all GVSD staff. Each site has a site-based Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee with members from CUPE, the Greater Victoria Teachers' Association (GVTA) and from administration who meet regularly to discuss issues related to health and safety at the site. As well, each site has a Health and Safety bulletin board where relevant information is posted.

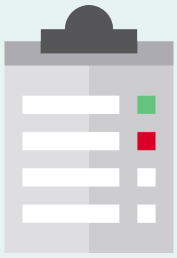
There are procedures in place for injuries, accidents or violent incidents. Please familiarize yourself with these procedures.

All employees are expected to:

- perform all tasks without risk of injury to themselves or others;
- report health or safety hazards to their supervisor;
- use and/or wear protective clothing and equipment as required;
- comply with all health and safety regulations and directives;
- adopt a responsible attitude toward safety on the job;
- not remove, impair or render ineffective any safeguard provided for protection;
- report all accidents and complete the appropriate accident report form.







Automatic Dispatch System

The Greater Victoria School District uses an automatic dispatch system (ADS) for new educational assistants on the spareboard. We require you to be ready and available to work each and every school day. ADS will dispatch on weekdays starting at 6:30 am. If you have not been contacted by 7:30 am, please call the ADS Emergency/Help line at 250-475-4126.

Should you not be available to work on the occasional day due to illness or injury, please update your unavailability via eServices with the Automated Dispatch System (ADS) by 6:00 am.

For any day that you have already been dispatched to a school, but need to cancel the dispatch and request a replacement for yourself, in addition to updating your unavailability, please also email ADS at ads@sd61.bc.ca or leave a phone message on the ADS Emergency Line at 250-475-4126. Include in your message your name, employee number, that you are a spareboard employee and the school you were dispatched to with the start and end times for the day.

Should you require to be away for more than five days in a school year please make your requests in writing for approval prior to the date. Please email Human Resources hrs@sd61.bc.ca .

As a reminder, spareboard educational assistants do not work during Christmas Break, Spring Break, Summer Break or on the five district professional development days. Please use these times to plan your vacation and appointments.

ADS General information

- All codes entered must be followed by pressing the # key
- Dates must be entered as YYYYMMDD or YYMMDD
- Time must be entered as HHMM using the 24 hour clock
- Exit back to the Main Menu by pressing * then 1
- Increase the volume of ADS by pressing * then 3
- Decrease the volume of ADS by pressing * then 2

Using ADS

Accepting a Dispatch

If you are called for a dispatch, you will hear the ADS speak the following message:

"Good Evening, the Greater Victoria School District has dispatching information for <your name>. Enter your PIN number followed by the pound key."

1. Enter your PIN followed by the # key then press 1.
2. The ADS will now speak the details of your assignment.
   Press 3 to listen to the absent employee's message.
   Press 4 to accept or 5 to refuse the assignment.
   If you refuse, enter your REFUSAL Code followed by the # key.
   If you accept, wait for the system to speak out your ADS Job number.

IMPORTANT

Wait for ADS to speak your Job number.
You need this to Inquire On or Cancel your dispatch.

Receive Notification of Change/Cancellation in Dispatch

If you are called by ADS because either the dispatch is being cancelled or changed, you will hear the ADS speak the following message:

"Good Evening, the Greater Victoria School District has dispatching information for <your name>. Enter your PIN number followed by the pound key."

1. Enter your PIN followed by the # key then press 1.
2. The ADS will now speak the following message:
   "The Greater Victoria School District is calling to confirm that the dispatch ID < > has been cancelled/ changed."
   Press 1 to acknowledge you have listened to the details of the cancellation or change.
   Press 2 to review the details of the assignment.
   Press 4 to replay the absent employee's recorded message.

NOTE:

You must press 1 to acknowledge the change or cancellation before hanging up. The ADS will repeatedly call until you do acknowledge the change.

Inquire on a Dispatch

(#2 from the Main Menu then # 2 from the sub-menu)

1. Call the ADS phone number, enter your employee number and PIN followed by the # key and press 2 for INQUIRIES.
2. Press 2 to INQUIRE ON A DISPATCH.
3. Press 1 and enter your Job ID Number followed by the # key.
4. Press 1 to listen to the details of the dispatch. Press 3 to listen to the absent employee's recorded message.

Cancel a Dispatch

(#4 from the Main Menu then #2 from the sub-menu)

1. Call the ADS phone number, enter your employee number and PIN followed by the # key and press 4 for CANCELLATIONS.
2. Press 2 to CANCEL A DISPATCH.
3. Press 1 and enter your ADS Job Number followed by the # key.
4. Press 4 to cancel the Dispatch.
5. Press 1 to complete the process.

NOTE:

You are only able to cancel a DISPATCH. You can only cancel a dispatch that has not begun.

After reviewing this information, if you need further assistance, please email ads@sd61.bc.ca or phone the ADS help line at 250-475-4126.

CUPE Information

As an educational assistant in the Greater Victoria School District you are a member of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 947. CUPE 947 represents over 800 support staff working for the Greater Victoria School District including members who work as educational assistants, clerical, information technology, audio-visual, transportation and facility rentals.

The GVSD website's **CUPE 947 webpage** contains detailed information regarding your collective agreement, salary grid, job evaluation, spring break agreements, job postings, etc.

We are regularly asked for clarity in regards to rest periods (breaks), so we have provided information below from the **collective agreement**:

18.03 Rest Periods (Breaks)



Employees who are assigned to work six (6) hours or less in a day and who are assigned a minimum of three (3) hours between 8:00 am and 12:00 pm or, are assigned four (4) continuous hours shall be entitled to one (1) fifteen (15) minute paid rest break. Employees who are assigned to work in excess of six (6) hours in a day shall be entitled to two (2) fifteen (15) minute paid rest periods.

EAs working under 6 hours per day:	One paid 15 minute rest break
EAs working over 6 hours per day:	Two paid 15 minute rest breaks

We all want to make the Greater Victoria School District a safe, supportive work-site for all CUPE 947 members. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

CUPE contact: **cupe947@telus.net**

EA Spareboard File Template

Consider including the following information in your spareboard file as appropriate to your role.

Name of Educational Assistant:

School information

Address:	Phone number:
Principal:	Vice-Principal:
SSA 3:	School Clerk:

Include a list of all school staff, a map of the school (that includes locations of staff washrooms) and a calendar that includes any required meetings, holidays, pro-d days, special events, etc.

EA general information to be included

Schedule for the day	
Schedule of break coverage, bus coverage, supervision	
Where to access supervision equipment (walkie-talkies, supervision vests, first aid kits, etc.)	
Staff computer available for use (location, how to access)	
Communication methods used in the school (location, how to access)	
Time Sheets: When are they due? Who can provide help if needed?	

Classroom and student information

Classroom teacher(s): Classroom numbers:

Any student medical alerts, worker safety plans, and/or student support plans you need to be aware of?

Individual students you will be working with:

Student	Div./ Class	Specific considerations (e.g., student interests, key peers, if any plans exist, etc.)	Successful strategies to use

Notes regarding daily routine/schedules related to specific students:

Notes regarding playground expectations/supervision related to specific students:

Notes regarding equipment related to specific students:

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