

Inclusive Education: A Guide for Student Support Services Teachers



Module 3: INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

Engaging Students and Classroom Teachers

Preface

Saskatchewan is guided by a Student First approach which puts the student front and centre by focusing on each student's strengths, abilities, interests, and needs. To create intentional and responsive educational experiences in classrooms and in the school involves the entire school community, including students and families.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education promotes the belief, attitude and approach of inclusion for meeting student needs. A strong commitment to inclusive education by the school community is demonstrated by inclusive educational practices that are part of the everyday school experiences of the student. Environments where students feel safe, accepted, respected and confident to engage in learning are essential to student success.

Supporting students through a needs-based service delivery model promotes the success of all students, including those who have learning needs that require supports to optimize learning opportunities. The needs-based model is a Student First strengths-based approach in which responsive instruction, interventions and supports are identified, planned and provided to meet student needs at the school and classroom level, through targeted and/or group approaches, and at an intensive individual level. The needs-based model recognizes that a student's needs change over time and that individualized, flexible and responsive supports are required.

Instructional Support: Engaging Students and Classroom Teachers is part of a series of modules that provide examples of high quality inclusive practices. **This module provides suggestions for student support services teachers to engage students and classroom teachers in authentic inclusive school experiences.**

Supporting documents and resources can be found throughout the module by clicking on the underlined term, phrase or title.

Student Support Services Teachers and Their Collaborative Roles

Student support services teachers (SSST) perform an array of roles and have a variety of responsibilities, such as:

- collaborating with classroom teachers to identify and implement adaptations, instructional strategies, interventions and supports students need to be successful, contributing members of the classroom and school communities;
- modeling/sharing strategies that support student learning;
- scheduling, facilitating and actively engaging in school and division-based student support team meetings;

Student support services teacher (SSST) is a generic term used by the Ministry of Education to describe teachers who support students facing a range of barriers to learning to achieve their educational and developmental potential by providing a range of strategies and specialized support at the classroom, targeted group and individual levels. School divisions may refer to this role in different ways, for instance, learning resource teachers or LRTs.

- engaging with classroom teachers and other collaborative team members to plan and monitor student Inclusion and Intervention Plans (IIPs);
- working as part of the school leadership team to assign educational assistants (EAs) to classrooms with diverse learning needs based on the school support allocation plan (see Module 1: *School-Wide Planning: Making Supports and Services a Priority*);
- supporting EAs to acquire the skills they need to support the specific needs of students;
- collaborating with classroom teacher(s) to inform parents/guardians about student progress towards meeting IIP outcomes; and,
- working with team members to plan for student transitions within the school day and year, from grade to grade, to a new school and beyond high school.

Providing Instructional Support to Students

Inclusive education provides all students with equitable opportunities to learn with age-appropriate peers within their school community. An inclusive school provides responsive instruction that is differentiated to meet students' needs, builds on students' strengths for learning and participation, and offers learning opportunities that are challenging, engaging, and culturally and developmentally appropriate.

Student support services teachers help to actualize the inclusionary vision of the school. They provide flexible services and work collaboratively with classroom teachers. Their collaborative role may be that of a/an:

- learning support coach;
- co-teacher;
- peer collaborator;
- supportive teacher; and/or,
- interventionist (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2015).

Learning Support Coach

The learning support coach role provides indirect support to students through consultation with classroom teachers. In this role the student support services teacher helps to strengthen the classroom teacher's capacity to support students by working together to:

Classroom teacher includes teachers responsible for teaching a grade or subject.

- administer classroom assessments;
- analyze the learning profile of students, including their strengths, needs and interests;
- interpret ongoing formal and informal assessment results to support instructional planning;
- identify barriers and opportunities;
- design learning environments, experiences and strategies that are accessible, effective and engaging for students; and,

- share materials, resources and ideas for leveraging technology to achieve student outcomes (Alberta Education, 2015).

Co-Teacher

Co-teaching is a relationship in which teachers collaborate to provide instruction in an inclusive classroom. Research suggests that co-teaching is beneficial for both students and teachers (Villa, Thousand & Nevin, 2008).

Co-teaching Benefits	
When teachers work together, students:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • receive more teacher attention; • have their needs met within the context of the classroom, thereby reducing the stigma often associated with leaving the classroom for support; • improve academic performance; • increase literacy achievement; • experience increased self-esteem; • see themselves as learners; • participate more; • experience improved social skills and develop stronger peer relationships; and, • receive more consistent instruction.
The benefits for student support services teachers include:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experiencing the everyday occurrences of the classroom; • working with the curriculum; • seeing how specific students perform in the classroom; • improving problem solving and collaborating skills; • modeling inclusive practices; and, • strengthening the classroom teacher's capacity to meet the diverse needs of students.
Classroom teachers benefit by:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • having someone to share the responsibilities of the classroom; • improving problem solving and collaborating skills; • observing inclusive practices in action; and, • strengthening their planning and adapting skills for diverse learning needs.

Four common co-teaching approaches have been identified (Villa & Thousand, 2016):

1. *Supportive*: one teacher instructs while the other teacher rotates among the students to provide supports such as one-to-one academic, behavioural, or communication coaching or gather diagnostic information by observing and monitoring students.
2. *Parallel*: teachers work with different groups of students on the same outcome(s). Parallel co-teachers differentiate what they do with each group by providing students

options for accessing and interacting with content in ways that match their learning preferences, styles and needs.

3. *Complementary*: one co-teacher provides instruction while the other co-teacher enhances it. Both teachers are instructing the same lesson to the whole group of students at the same time, building on each other's instructional strengths and expertise.
4. *Team-teaching*: teachers plan, teach, assess and assume responsibility for all students. Team co-teachers decide who does what before, during and after the lesson, ensuring that the work is equally divided.

Through co-teaching, educators are able to provide lessons in ways that allow students to experience each teacher's strengths and expertise and to target and support individual student needs within the context of the classroom.

Peer Collaborator

When classroom teachers and student support services teachers work together to solve a problem or develop a plan of support, they are peer collaborating. As peer collaborators, both teachers discuss classroom and content challenges, brainstorm different ways to address student learning and find ways to support each other. Some examples of peer collaboration include:

- working together to create a behavioural or learning plan for a student;
- being part of the same Professional Learning Community (PLC);
- analyzing and interpreting student data;
- sharing resources and instructional practices; and,
- working together to identify adaptations and instructional approaches that will benefit the whole class or individual students.

Supportive Teacher

Student support services teachers may take on the role of the supportive teacher. In this role the student support services teacher provides direct instruction or support to individual students or groups of students. This type of support may best be implemented for students who require individualized or targeted supports and/or programming.

Interventionist

As an interventionist, the student support services teacher works within school-wide models (e.g., Response to Intervention, School-Wide Positive Behavioural Supports, etc.) to provide support at multiple levels and across multiple settings. In this role student support services teachers support students who are working below grade level, usually in the areas of reading and language instruction. In addition to what is happening in the classroom, the student support services teacher is responsible for developing, reinforcing and teaching strategies to increase student success.

Reflective questioning provides educators with the opportunity to think deeply about their educational ideologies and practices and how they impact students.

Collaborative Roles
Reflective Questions and Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Which collaborative role(s) best match my professional training, strengths and/or experience?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Which collaborative role(s) do teachers support?○ Which collaborative role(s) does the school administration support?○ What specific roles are better suited for different individuals or situations?○ What professional development may be needed in our school to develop a better understanding of collaborative roles?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How does the collaborative role support learning for students who require occasional or frequent supports?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Which classrooms have students requiring occasional or frequent supports?• Which teachers need support to meet the diverse needs in their classrooms?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Which classrooms' needs can be met by an educational assistant? Which classrooms' needs can be met through collaborative instructional support?○ For which subject? For how long? Do we need an exit plan?• What is my capacity to support students collaboratively and still fulfill my other responsibilities?• How do I prioritize my support and responsibilities?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Which students have the highest needs and require the most support?○ Have I had discussions with the administrative team regarding how to prioritize my support and responsibilities?• Has planning time been considered to properly support the collaborative role(s)?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How will planning time be scheduled?

The role of student support services teachers requires flexibility in order to meet the ever changing needs of students and actualize the inclusionary vision of the school. Classroom and student support services teacher roles need to take into consideration the strengths, abilities and needs of students while nurturing their independence, personal empowerment and self-determination.

Helpful Ministry Documents and Resources:

- [Actualizing a Needs-Based Model](#)
- [The Adaptive Dimension for Saskatchewan K-12 Students](#)
- [Inclusive Education](#)
- [Stewart Resources Centre](#)
- [Supports for All Learners](#)

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