

WA Competency Framework for Education Assistants (Special Needs)

Practice and Professional Learning

The Framework for Education Assistants WA came into effect in March, 2008. In around 2015/2016, it was discussed to continue to update and add to these competencies as a new role of Lead Education Assistant was developed here, however for a number of different reasons a revised framework was not completed. When I heard that ATA was developing a national set of standards, I was both excited and thankful that an important document like this was in planning. Well done ATA!

The framework was originally developed as a resource informing the skills, knowledge and understanding of Education Assistants within their various roles and also to be used as a reference point for professional learning and performance management. I think this fits in well with the ASPES as it will clearly define different areas of Paraprofessional Educator (PE) roles and could therefore be used as a professional development tool to upskill and further their development.

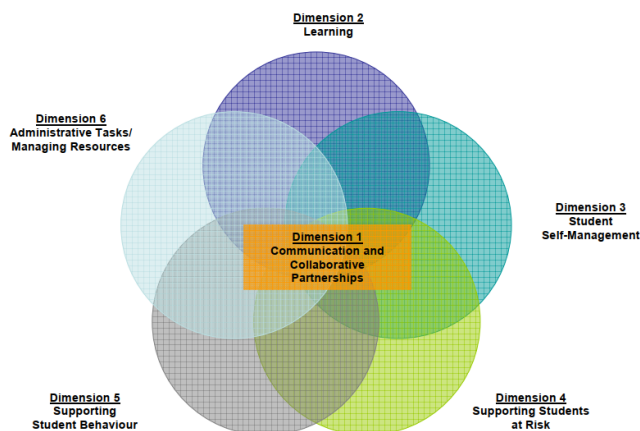
When developing our ASPES, given the fact that we are covering PE across Australia, I think it is important to consider how we describe the progressions within our descriptors (maybe stages/levels). We also need to consider maybe refining the stages to Mainstream EAs, Mainstream EAs supporting SEN, and Education support school/Centre EAs, as these roles do differ slightly and have different expectations. Alternatively we could describe the level of guidance: Under teacher direction, Under general guidance, Under limited guidance. Within the WA Framework, Level 1, 2 and 3 knowledge and skills are explained on page 7-8 and is followed on page 9-10 by how the standards within the framework reflect the requirements of the job role.

Similar to our ASPES, This Framework has 6 standards. The standards are a reflection of the support that the EA provides ultimately to students and also to teachers in the support of students. These include:

- Standard 1 - Communication and collaborative partnerships
- Standard 2 - Learning
- Standard 3 - Student self-management
- Standard 4 - Supporting students at risk
- Standard 5 - Supporting student behaviour
- Standard 6 - Administrative tasks/management of resources

Our standards should cover each of these areas, if not specifically, then within the standard descriptors which are to be developed.

What I would like to point out is the diagram on page 13; ***Six dimensions for supporting Educational Outcomes***. As you will see, each of these standards/dimensions interconnect and sometimes overlap with each other. Most importantly, Communication and collaborative partnerships sits right in the middle, as this has a direct impact on each of the other areas.



Something to consider in our ASPES which I like within the WA Framework is that the 'Roles and responsibilities' is explained, together with 'Examples' of what this could include in the different stages. I have included an example of the Learning dimension below (p. 17), so we can see how this might fit with the ASPES *Standard 1 - Know students and how they learn*. Further descriptions and professional learning examples are provided on page 23-25

7.2 FRAMEWORKS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: LEARNING		
Level	Roles and responsibilities	Examples
1	<p>Under teacher direction, the education assistant is expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow class, small group and individual educational programs (Documented Plans) and raise any concerns with the teacher; Identify own need for professional learning and ask for help; Follow instructions when working 1:1 or with students on the computer; Organise teaching and learning materials as requested; Help students learn class routines and learning behaviours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow the same routine and use the same cues every morning to help students learn how to unpack their bags and put away their belongings; Read articles about curriculum initiatives in School Matters; Set out paint, clean brushes, paper, paint smocks and other needed materials before class; Run 'how to use the mouse' programs with young students on a 1:1 basis; Work with a student using a hand brace and modified pencil during printing sessions.
2	<p>Under general guidance, the education assistant is expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow and give feedback on class and small group programs and students' Documented Plans; Identify own need for and possible professional learning opportunities; Help with and provide feedback on speech, occupational therapy and physiotherapy programs; Implement programs using computer/digital technologies; Help to maintain a positive, well-organised learning environment; Help students learn school routines, e.g. assemblies, library, canteen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a workshop on dysphagia after the enrolment of a new student; Alert the teacher, physio and school nurse when a student's AFOs leave red marks on his legs; Work 1:1 to teach students to use a digital camera to record their artworks; Regularly praise the students being worked with and report positive achievements to the teacher; Accompany two students to sessions with the teacher librarian. Read the Documented Plans Framework 2007.
3	<p>Under limited guidance, the education assistant is expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the development and implementation of class and small group programs and students' Documented Plans and give feedback; Identify own and others' need for and access professional learning; Help with and provide feedback on speech, occupational therapy and physiotherapy programs; Implement programs using computer and digital technologies; Contribute to the creation of a positive, inclusive learning environment; Support students' participation in planned transition programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accompany a student to day-long Structured Work-based Learning placements, after accepting duty of care; Take a small group of students around SciTech during a class excursion, following the learning plan set by the teacher; Carry out explicit teaching sessions with individual students, while recording each response; Work 1:1 with a student using single-switch cause and effect software; Suggest a layout for a class mural based on the term's theme of frogs; Support students during Year 7 transition visits to local high schools.

Finally, the framework includes an appendix 'Performance Management Self Reflection' checklist that can be used to identify areas of strength and weakness. Obviously the areas of weakness would be the areas that the individual can seek professional development on, or focus on those specific skills within their teams to improve their practice and effectiveness within their role.

If you have some time please look through the document and consider some of the points I have raised in the development of the ASPES. Hopefully this will see us produce a document that is uniformed across Australia, is informative of the diverse roles of Paraprofessional Educators, and can be used as a tool for continued professional development and practice.

Thank you,

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