

TEACHER AIDES

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Students with disabilities are included in regular classes and may require individualised programs, adapted teaching strategies, support in personal care, and/or behaviour support.

PROPOSED SOLUTION/ INTERVENTION

Teacher aides (special) are employed and work with a particular student, teacher or class to provide support.

THE THEORETICAL RATIONALE – HOW DOES IT WORK?

Under the supervision of an appropriately trained classroom teacher and/or a trained special educator, aides can provide valuable instruction, assistance with personal care and support to facilitate appropriate behaviour and peer interaction. They may also support the teacher by undertaking clerical or other duties and managing small groups of students.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY? WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE FOR THEIR EFFICACY?

There is very little evidence to support the use of teacher aides per se. There is little evidence to suggest that students with special needs do better at school simply because they are supported by a teacher aide. There is considerable evidence that the employment of a teacher aide in a regular setting, with a teacher who may be unprepared and unqualified to teach students with special education needs may have negative consequences. If a

teacher or special educator cannot provide supervision, the aide (the least qualified person) may be left to deal with students with the most complex learning needs. Aides may provide too much support and reduce a student's independence in self care and in socialisation. Students may become unnecessarily dependent on a teacher aide. Teachers may become less involved with students with disabilities and defer to the teacher aide.

CONCLUSIONS

It is essential that teacher aides are appropriately trained, supervised and supported in the implementation of effective programs and teaching strategies. Class teachers must take responsibility for the education of all students in their classes and should be provided with the professional skills and, if necessary, support from a special educator.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Schools and systems should consider the relative merits of employing aides and appropriately trained and supported teachers. Special educators may have a role to play in providing support and professional development for regular teachers and their aides.

THE MUSEC VERDICT: USE WITH CAUTION.

Key references may be found at:
http://www.musec.mq.edu.au/co_brief.aspx

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