

Functional job requirements for the position of special education teacher

Department of Education

This document was developed for the following purposes: assisting in the development of rehabilitation programs for injured or ill employees, and providing detailed information about job demands to medical practitioners and allied health professionals undertaking medical reviews of departmental employees.

This report identifies those activities which are essential to successful performance in this role. In determining whether a work activity is a 'critical activity', the following questions are considered:

- Does the worker spend greater than 33% of designated work time performing this activity?
- Is specialised training/experience required to complete this activity? Has this been completed by only a small proportion of staff in this geographical region?
- Is this activity performed in an environment where no other workers are readily available to assist with its completion?
- Does this activity occur without prior notice and require immediate attention leaving no time to seek assistance to complete it?
- Is this activity core to the development of stakeholder relationships, which are essential to achieving successful outcomes?
- Would an inability to perform this activity result in an increased health and safety risk to co-workers, students, and/or members of the public?

The development process included: site observation of work environments, staff interviews, staff feedback on draft documents and consideration of benchmark publications for the analysis and description of work activities and job demands specific to particular positions (the *Revised Handbook for Analysing Jobs*, the *Occupational Information Network* and the *Australian Job Guide, 2006*).

This report indicates the average time spent across a working week on each work activity, and also on each physical demand of work. In order to make this information meaningful to the various users of this report, in some instances the time spent is expressed as a single word, as a percentage of total time, or as an actual amount of time (i.e. hours and minutes). The timeframes used are based on the benchmark descriptions (from the publications above) for expressing frequency of performance of work tasks.

Descriptor	Percentage of time	Amount of time based on 25 hours per week
Not present	0%	0 minutes
Rare	1% – 7%	2 minutes – 2 hours 40 minutes
Occasional	8% – 33%	3 hours 2 minutes – 12 hours 34 minutes
Frequent	34% – 66%	12 hours 55 minutes – 25 hours 5 minutes
Constant	67% - 100%	25 hours 28 minutes – 28 hours



Description of special education teacher role

Special Education Teachers in Queensland work with students in a variety of educational environments. Their role requires liaison with a variety of stakeholders to ensure educational priorities are met. These stakeholders include: parents, classroom staff and therapists. Special Education Teachers can potentially work with children across the age spectrum, from 6 to 18 years of age. Special Education is identified as educational services additional to those generally available in a primary or secondary school and may be delivered in a regular or special education setting. Where possible, students tend to be placed in classes with others of a similar level or physical motor capability, cognitive function and age. The age difference of students in a particular classroom is up to three years.

Hours of work and scheduled breaks

Hours of work: Special education teachers are allocated 25 contact hours per week (i.e. five hours per day). Average work hours are between 8am to 4pm, however teachers can work additional hours in order to complete non-contact tasks. The maximum rostered duty time shall not exceed 7 hours per day or a minimum rostered duty time not less than 3 hours. Any alternate hours must be implemented through the Local Consultative Committee (Refer to Teachers Enterprise Bargaining Agreement for details).

Meal breaks: All special education teachers who work for more than 5 continuous hours on any day shall be allowed a minimum of 30 minutes for a meal break to be taken between the third and sixth hour from commencement of duty. Meal breaks may be altered through consultation with the local consultative committee. Due to the nature of the student population, these teachers tend to take two short meal breaks (morning tea and lunch) in the classroom. These breaks last between 10 and 20 minutes. Teachers continue to monitor and interact with students during these breaks.

Rest pauses: Special education teachers are entitled to a rest pause of 10 minutes duration to be taken mid-morning which will be considered as rostered duty time.

Bus and playground supervision: Teacher aides will relieve teachers of bus and playground duty as far as possible and where appropriate. Special education teachers may still be required to undertake some part of bus and playground duties.

Non-contact time: Special education teachers are entitled to at least 2 hours of rostered preparation and correction time to be allocated in blocks of at least one-half hour, with the objective being to provide one hour blocks of time, where possible.

The Activity Frequencies below have been calculated based on a week of 5 days comprising 5 contact hours per day. Rare = 0 mins – 1 hr 45 mins per week, Occasional = 2 hrs – 8 hrs 20 mins, Frequent = 8hrs 30 mins – 16 hrs 36 mins, Constant = 16 hrs 45 mins - 25hrs (times are exclusive of scheduled breaks).



	Job activity	Average frequency/ time per week	Critical job demand
1	Administrative duties/Non-contact time: including answering parent enquiries, completion of paperwork and class preparation. Depending on the school, this time may be taken as whole days (equivalent to 3 days per term) or distributed as a number of weekly hours. Teachers in this environment also have to undertake class preparation daily and respond to parent enquiries as these arise.	Up to 12 hrs 34 mins	Yes
2	Assisting students to and from pick-up/set-down: before and after school and before and after excursions and community visits.	Up to 12 hrs 34 mins per week	Yes
3	Toileting assistance: for independently mobile students, or students who can mobilise with assistance, or students who mobilise using a wheelchair. Involves appropriate positioning of students for toileting tasks.	Up to 2 hrs 40 mins - 12 hrs 34 mins per week, depending on the student population being supervised	Yes
4	Toileting assistance: involving changing pads/nappies for students who are unable to access the toilet. Involves appropriate positioning of students for toileting tasks.	Up to 2 hrs 40 mins - 12 hrs 34 mins per week, depending on the student population being supervised	Yes
5	Group teaching: including individual guidance and supervision. Group teaching is a component of each class regardless of the age or level of physical and cognitive function of students. May involve standing or seated presentation of information to students, monitoring verbal and non-verbal responses of students to information, providing answers to questions, supervision of group and individual learning activities and encouraging participation by students.	Up to 12 hrs 34 mins	Yes
6	Mealtime Assistance: during morning tea and lunch. Teachers position, sit with students or closely supervise them during mealtimes. In the case of students with no independent upper limb function, teachers may be required to feed the students. Teachers may also be required to provide medical assistance to students during this time.	Up to 2 hrs 40 mins - 12 hrs 34 mins per week, depending on the student population being supervised	Yes
7	Transporting students for community access/excursions: usually in school-owned bus or minibus.	Up to 2 hrs 40 mins	Yes
8	Supervising students for community access/excursions. May involve sub-activities such as changing students' clothes whilst on excursion.	Up to 12 hrs 34 min per week	Yes
9	Teaching for gross motor skill acquisition: including play, socialisation and gymnasium activities.	Up to 12hrs 34 mins per week	



Frequency of physical job demands (average % of shift)

Demands	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)	Demands	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
Sitting			✓			Reaching				✓	
Standing – static			✓			Handling				✓	
Standing – dynamic				✓		Pushing			✓		
Walking – flat terrain				✓		Pulling			✓		
Walking – slippery/gravel terrain				✓		Lifting			✓		
Climbing – step stools/ladders		✓				Carrying		✓			
Climbing – stairs		✓				Balancing – above ground		✓			
Stooping			✓			Fine motor		✓			
Kneeling			✓			Control operation		✓			
Crouching – one off			✓			Arm – hand steadiness			✓		
Crawling		✓				Driving		✓			
Auditory function					✓	Visual function					✓

Tools/equipment handled

Writing materials – for non-contact duties
Hoist
Wheelchairs
Games and activity equipment e.g. modified bicycle, plastic pool for water play
Positioning equipment e.g. side-lyers
Toileting equipment
Other equipment e.g. foot supports and seat covers

Loads lifted and carried

	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
0-5kg					
6-10kg					
11-15kg				From floor to chest level	
16-20kg					
21-25kg					

Risk based physical environmental considerations

In general these environments will vary depending upon the age of the school. Their design will be impacted by the initial purpose of the school (which in many instances may not be the current use for a special education environment.)

- Design of work area is such that unsound working postures may be required
- There may be clutter in the work area
- There may be limited/confined space for movement during performance of some activities
- Work area floor may be slippery or wet (rare)
- There may be limited knee space when seated, resulting in trunk rotation (sometimes)
- There may be constant low-level ambient noise
- Work may be performed outside or in an area exposed to the elements (sometimes)
- Work may be conducted predominantly in indoor, classroom environments which may have climate controls such as fans and air conditioning systems
- Terrain during community outings is variable e.g. shopping centres, parks.

Psychosocial risks to be considered	Social/interpersonal demands
Time pressure – while deadlines exist for many tasks, the level of demand is dependent upon school environment and staffing level. Workload can be high as a large number of unplanned interruptions may occur throughout the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicating with persons outside the organisation e.g. parents • Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships e.g. with students • Developing and building teams e.g. working as part of a team to ensure efficient activity completion • Communicating with supervisors and peers • Providing advice to others e.g. peers and parents • Guiding, directing and motivating students • Coordinate or lead Teacher Aides, volunteers and students • Training and teaching students • Coordinating the work of others e.g. students and volunteers • Deal with unpleasant/angry people. (Rare, e.g. parents or students) • Negotiating with others e.g. parents, students and internal and external service providers such as therapists • Responsible for students' health and safety • Managing physically aggressive students (rare, but may be required) • Assisting and caring for students • Interpreting the meaning of information for others e.g. parents
High demand – e.g. when the whole class is participating in the one activity, demands on the teacher may be high.	
Fast work pace is required – e.g. assisting with toileting when on community outing.	
Environmental stress – Noise: there may be constant low level ambient noise from students, traffic and machinery. Odour: e.g. potential food spillage; and possible negative responses from public to some students.	
Insufficient work breaks – shortened breaks may be taken on a voluntary basis due to high workload and time constraints. Although break times are stipulated, special education teachers may not always receive an uninterrupted break.	

Considerations for assessment of physical job fitness

- Assessment of sustained sitting capacity of 50 minutes (acknowledging ability to break regularly and vary posture)
- Symmetry, range and discomfort with movements of the neck, lumbar spine, trunk and shoulder
- Assessment of forward and overhead reaching in various positions
- Assessment of grip strength (within norms for age and gender)
- Assessment of pushing and pulling (to 1200N if working with older children, to 700N if working with children up to 12 years)
- Assessment of lifting from below knee level (up to 15kg)
- Assessment of lifting and tilting load remaining on supporting surface at between knee and waist level to reflect sideways movement and support of student while placing and removing hoist sling (up to 100kg single person, but this would be rare – more likely body weight to be supporting would be up to 60kg).
- Assessment of handling ability with vision occluded (stereognosis may be required for positioning hoist sling)
- Assessment of lifting and carrying up to five metres from floor level 5kg – 15kg, five repetitions
- Assessment of pushing and pulling to 80N on flat terrain
- Assessment of handling of large and awkward loads requiring wide grip span
- Assessment of kneeling, stooping and crouching (sustained static and one-off)

Other considerations

- History of neck/shoulder discomfort associated with static postures.
- History of lower back pain with sustained sitting
- History of lower back, shoulder or knee injury
- Knowledge of ergonomic principles for clerical workstations
- Knowledge of behaviour management strategies for children prone to “dropping”
- Knowledge of safe manual handling techniques and hoist use
- Knowledge of infection control practices to prevent cross-contamination after exposure to urine/faeces/blood and knowledge of food safety practices
- Knowledge of dysphagia and associated food preparation requirements (with appropriate Speech Pathology advice)
- Knowledge of appropriate medical treatment regimes
- Knowledge of infection control procedures
- Knowledge of behaviour management strategies for children during travel

Photographs of selected work activities and work environments



Operating hoist and sling to transfer students with limited mobility.



Assisting with wheelchair transfer into back of van.



Assisting teacher aide with physiotherapy program.



Special education toilet facilities.