

# Functional job requirements for the position of special school teacher aide

## 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%	15 minutes – 1 hour 15 minutes
Occasional	8% – 33%	1 hour 30 minutes – 8 hours 15 minutes
Frequent	34% – 66%	8 hours 16 minutes – 16 hours 30 minutes
Constant	67% - 100%	16 hours 45 minutes – 25 hours



## Description of special school teacher aide role

Special school teacher aides work with children across the age spectrum; from 4 to 18 years of age. Their role is to work as a part of a team together with the teacher and therapists to support students with high support needs and impairments that can be in the following areas; intellectual, hearing, visual, physical, speech/language and behavioural. Special school teacher aides are required to provide physical support and assistance to the students. Special school teacher aides are responsible for providing assistance with all aspects of planning, preparation and delivery of individual education plans across the key learning areas for every student in the allocated classes, as directed.

**Assessment details:** Assessment of the special school teacher aide position was conducted at Sunnybank State Special School (Troughton St, Sunnybank), which had approximately 10 special school teacher aides at time of assessment. Discussions were conducted with the principal and various special school teachers and teacher aides throughout the assessment. The appropriate mix of teachers and teacher aides was determined by the Principal of the school, in consideration of local circumstances and in accordance with relevant consultative arrangements. Strive Occupational Rehabilitation conducted a review of this document and the functional job requirements of the teacher aide role at Calamvale Special School on 22 July 2017.

**Hours of work:** The ordinary hours of work for a special school teacher aide is 5 hours per day, 25 rostered hours per week. The ordinary spread of hours of work exclusive of meal times is between 9am to 2:45pm Monday to Friday.

Alternate hours can be worked between 7.00am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. The maximum roster duty time shall not exceed 8 hours per day and a minimum engagement is 5 hours per week or 2 hours per day. Special school teacher aides will participate in approximately one day of professional development activity per term, however it is at their discretion as to whether they participate in these activities.

Special school teacher aides do not have set uniform requirements however are required to wear clothing suitable for engaging in physical activities.

**Meal breaks:** Special school teacher aides are entitled to a meal break of 30 minutes unpaid if in excess of 5 hours is worked on any day. However, if a teacher aide is on playground duty or on an excursion, they will not always receive their breaks. It was further reported that organisational demands and scheduled playground supervision may inhibit taking of such breaks. Meal breaks may be altered through consultation with the Local Consultative Committee.

**Rest pauses:** Special school teacher aides 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:** Special school teacher aides are rostered to complete one playground/gym supervision (lunch duty) per week.

The Activity Frequencies below have been calculated based on a week of 5 days comprising 5 contact hours per day, as per page one of this report.

Job activities have been listed as critical only where they meet criteria for critical job demands, as outlined on page one of this report.

	Job activity	Average time	Critical job demand
1	<b>Room/activity setup:</b> Dependent on the type of activity or task, special school teacher aides may be required to set-up activities both in indoor and outdoor environments. Dependent on the type of activity, students and teachers can be utilised for completion of these tasks. For example, at Sunnybank Special School equipment to be set-up can include bikes, gym equipment (outdoor) and tables, mats and chairs (indoors). This task may also include photocopying and preparation of resource material.	Occasional: Up to 8 hours 15 mins	No – does not meet criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.
2	<b>Teaching of students:</b> Each child in a Special School has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that is developed in conjunction with the teacher and parents. This plan forms the basis of the teaching curriculum for each student and the teacher aide provides support to the students as directed by the IEP or teacher. Skills and topics that are covered include; Life Skills, Self Care, Literacy and Numeracy, Oral motor programs, Gross and Fine Motor Skills, community access activities and work placement.  Teaching assistance of these areas may involve standing or seated presentation of information to students; both one-on-one and in group sessions. Teacher aides are also required to monitor verbal and non-verbal responses of students to information, providing answers to questions and encourage participation by students.	Frequent: Up to 16 hours 30 mins (20 hours maximum)	Yes
3	<b>Transportation:</b> This activity includes assisting students to get in/out of school bus and public transport; bus. It can involve utilising the hoist for wheelchair transport, or manually assisting a child in/out of the bus. Walking harnesses can also be used for some students when completing visits outside of the school premises.	Occasional: Up to 8 hours 15 mins	Yes
4	<b>Mealtime assistance:</b> The type of assistance provided to each student varies depending on their level of dependence with this activity. The type of meal assistance that can be provided includes: obtaining a student's lunch and opening containers, positioning the student for eating and sit with them (or closely supervise during meal times). Feeding the student may be required and this may occur in the form of manual feeding or via a feeding tube. Medications are administered to students as required throughout the day. This can involve testing blood sugar levels, injections and nasal administration (depending on the type of medicine).	Occasional: Up to 8 hours 15 mins per week	Yes
5	<b>Toileting assistance:</b> The type of assistance provided to each student varies depending on their level of dependence with this activity. This task may involve changing pads/nappies either on a change table or in standing, for children that are unable to use the toilet. For independently mobile students this may involve supervision for toileting to ensure independence in cleaning and hygiene. Assistance may be required for children that have catheters, colostomy bags or ileostomy bags. When a student has an accident (bowel or bladder) whilst at school, teacher aides are required to provide assistance to clean or shower the child.  Please note that this task can be required to be completed outside of school premises.	Occasional: Up to 8 hours 15 mins	Yes
6	<b>Supervision during meal breaks:</b> Special school teacher aides are required to participate in one supervision session per week. Supervision may include the playground, gym, library and bus areas (depending on the school) and involves ambulating around a pre-determined area and completing visual and auditory monitoring of students' activities and school premises, providing assistance to students as required.	Rare: Up to 1 hr 15 mins per week	No
7	<b>Staff meetings:</b> Special school teacher aides may be invited to attend staff meetings. These meetings are usually conducted outside of the teacher aide's general working hours and therefore it is not enforced that they attend. Special school teacher aides required to attend meetings conducted outside normal working hours should negotiate how these hours are to be recorded with their supervisor.	Rare: Up to 1 hr 15 mins per week	No
8	<b>Extracurricular activities:</b> This is dependent on the individual school, however teacher aides can participate in a range of tasks outside of school hours. Examples can include; school musical, Graduation, camps and excursions.	Rare: Up to 1 hr 15 mins per week	No



## 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

Wheelchairs, hoists, walkers, positioning equipment, toileting equipment, foot supports, seat covers
Students' chairs and desks – up to approximately 20kg
Pens/pencils/chalk/whiteboard markers, books and games and activity equipment
Computers, PDAs and data projectors
Phone and email – for planning and liaison
Learning aids – overhead projectors, screens, computers

## Loads lifted and carried

	Not present	Rare (0-7%)	Occasional (8-33%)	Frequent (34-66%)	Constant (67-100%)
0-5kg			Carrying/moving equipment around classroom		
6-10kg			Walkers		
11-15kg		Wheelchairs			
16-20kg			Assisting children with transfers; waist level		
21-25kg					



## Risk based physical environmental considerations

- There may be clutter in the work/storage area, increasing the risk of trip hazards, awkward bending and lifting, and poor storage practices
- Items, furniture and fixtures may have limited adjustability features requiring the adoption of awkward postures
- There may be limited space for movement during performance of some activities
- There may be constant low-level ambient noise (from students and potentially traffic)
- There may be limited classroom lighting and ventilation in some facilities
- Some work may be performed outdoors in an area exposed to the elements (e.g. activities on school oval or uneven surface)
- Terrain during community outings is variable e.g. shopping centres, parks
- Work may be performed in temperatures above 24 degrees (occasionally in summer)
- Work areas may be slippery or wet
- There may be limited knee space when seated, resulting in trunk rotation

Psychosocial risks to be considered	Social/interpersonal demands
Time pressure/high workload – while deadlines exist for many tasks, the level of demand is dependent upon school environment and staffing level. The teacher’s aide workload can be high due to multiple demands and a large number of unplanned interruptions occurring throughout the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicating with persons outside the organisation e.g. parents and community members</li> <li>• Establishing and maintaining interpersonal relationships e.g. with students, staff and parents</li> <li>• Resolving conflicts – between students and negotiating with others</li> <li>• Communicating with supervisors, peers or subordinates</li> <li>• Guiding, directing and motivating – students</li> <li>• Training and teaching – students</li> <li>• Responsible for other’s health and safety</li> <li>• Coaching and developing others – aides and students</li> <li>• Negotiating with others e.g. parents, students and internal and external providers such as therapists</li> <li>• Interpreting the meaning of information for others – students</li> <li>• Dealing with unpleasant or angry people – parents or students</li> <li>• Dealing with physically aggressive people – students</li> <li>• Assisting and caring for others – students (may include first aid)</li> </ul>
Lack of control/autonomy – may exist as the teacher generally direct the tasks of the teacher aide.	
Poor worker/team leader relationships/low social support – may exist in some environments.	
Environmental stress – constant low level ambient noise from students, PA announcements, school bells etc. requiring considerable projection of voice to be heard. Some temperature variation during winter and summer, constant environmental monitoring of student location during outdoor skills based sessions.	
Insufficient work breaks – shortened breaks may be taken on a voluntary basis due to high workload and time constraints. Breaks may be limited by meal and playground supervision duties, particularly if there is insufficient planning e.g. unplanned wet weather duties.	
Investigations – participate in reporting investigation and resolution processes, including mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect and participation as a witness or party to performance, discipline, grievance, WorkCover or other processes.	
Policies - comply with departmental policies, procedures, guidelines and the code of conduct, including undertaking risk management processes to ensure the health and safety of students and others under their supervision or direction.	



## Considerations for assessment of physical job fitness

- Sustained sitting capacity of 50 minutes, including on floor either cross legged, kneeling or crouching (acknowledging ability to regularly vary posture). Including sufficient flexibility to allow adoption of awkward postures when working with students, particularly on floor level or during task demonstrations e.g. physical/ gym activities.
- Grip strength (within norms for age and gender)
- Pushing and pulling (to 1200N of force if working with older children and to 700N of force if working with children up to 12 years)
- Lifting and tilting load remaining on supporting surface at between knee and waist level of 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 supported would be up to 60kg).
- Handling ability with vision occluded (stereognosis may be required for positioning hoist sling)
- Pushing and pulling to 80N of force on flat terrain
- Kneeling, stooping and crouching (sustained static and one-off).
- Fine motor dexterity or actual keyboard operation for typing activities (for non-contact duties)
- Lift and carry heavy and/or awkward loads with no assistance (up to 20kg)
- Sustain constant dynamic standing throughout the days with minimal sitting breaks
- Active range of motion and symptoms associated with movements of the spinal and peripheral joints, including hips, knees, ankles, shoulders and wrists
- Able to ascend and descend 2 x flights of stairs
- Sufficient visual and auditory function to enable interaction and response to students
- Forward and overhead reaching in various positions

## Other Considerations

- History of neck/shoulder discomfort associated with static and sustained repetitive neck flexion postures
- History of upper limb, lower limb or spinal pain with repetitious or static tasks
- History of lower back pain with sustained sitting
- Knowledge of behaviour management strategies for children prone to 'dropping' and for children during travel
- Knowledge of ergonomic principles for clerical workstations and knowledge of/ability to learn safe crouching/stooping posture (with flexion occurring at the hips rather than in the lumbar spine)
- Knowledge of correct hoist use and manual handling techniques i.e. ability to bend at hips, bend knees and squat with a neutral spine
- Knowledge of vocal health and techniques to enable safe projection of voice
- 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



Photographs of selected work activities and work environments and physical demands of job activities of special school teacher aide role.



Manually handling student to transfer from wheelchair to plinth.



Assisting student with hygiene and self-cares.



Assisting student transferring from sit to stand.



Performing physiotherapy program with student.



Assisting student with mobility goals.

