



Northern Lights  
College

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# **EDAS 153 SCHOOL MENTOR GUIDE**

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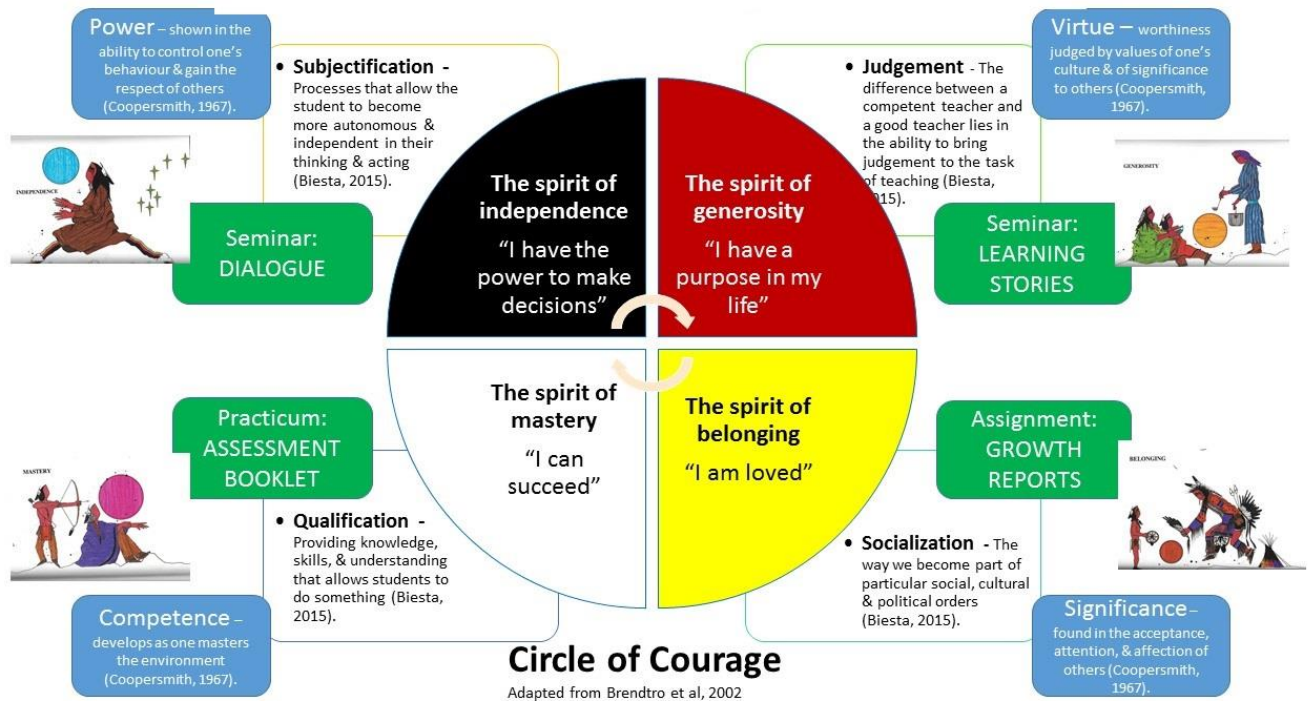
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# EDUCATION ASSISTANT PRACTICUM MENTOR GUIDE

This guide has been developed to help acquaint mentors with their role and to answer some of the questions that arise naturally out of such an experience. We believe that the practicum experience will benefit all of those involved.

## Circle of Courage



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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers supervised practical experience and involvement with children in a classroom setting. Emphasis will be on integrating previously learned theory, knowledge and skills into daily practice. Practical application of functional behaviour assessments and positive behaviour support will be addressed. Professionalism and reflective practice will also be explored.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

### OVERARCHING LEARNING OUTCOME:

The intention of this course is to offer students the opportunity to work with exceptional students as part of an educational team. A student who successfully completes this course will be able to

- Integrate his/her theoretical knowledge with practical experience in order to work effectively with students with special needs

### SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES:

A student who successfully completes this course will have reliably demonstrated the ability to

- Establish effective relationships with children and/or adults
- Use positive strategies to guide student behaviour
- Apply principles of functional behaviour assessment to analyze children's behaviour
- Design and implement a behaviour intervention plan to support positive behaviour in children
- Work effectively as a team member
- Communicate in a caring, respectful and clear manner
- Practice in an ethical and professional manner
- Accurately assess the quality of own performance

## THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL MENTOR

The school mentor is a licensed teacher who is in a supervisory position of a class or resource room. This person will have the most contact with the student. The student reports to and receives feedback on the day-to-day practicum experiences from this person.

Successful mentors are valued for the way that they are helpful to students by their use of personal encouragement, practical suggestions and constructive criticism. This is accomplished through regular, brief, frequent conferences with the student.

As a mentor, you need to be

- confident that your class is functioning well and will provide the student with a positive experience.
- willing to share knowledge and resources with the student.
- willing to take time to assess and discuss the student's progress with the student and the Practicum Instructor.
- a model for the student, and therefore careful in your attitudes towards colleagues and parents of the children, so that the student gains an understanding of professional behaviour.

- able to match classroom responsibilities to the student Education Assistant’s abilities and allow the student to have experiences that will reinforce classroom learning
- able to give clear directions about what is expected of the student and encourage the student to feel like part of the teaching team.
- understanding of student mistakes. Some of the greatest learning potential happens from mistakes. Be prepared for this and only interfere if the student is getting into a potentially dangerous situation due to inexperience.

## PRACTICUM GUIDELINES

### 1. Attendance:

Attendance will be documented daily basis for the duration of the practicum period. The student is responsible for filling out the Attendance Sheets with the dates and times, and the mentor is responsible for signing for the practicum hours.

### 2. Scheduling:

The student is required to spend 150 hours in their practicum placement during the initial practicum and is responsible to ensure that the hour requirement is fulfilled. Mentors and students will agree on a working schedule that is compatible for both. Students may need to make up time for holidays and missed days. Students should arrange make-up time with the school mentor and inform the practicum instructor of any schedule changes.

### 3. Confidentiality:

Students and instructors follow strict guidelines regarding confidentiality. All discussions regarding practicum requirements are confidential in nature. Students are not to discuss any aspect of their practicum outside of the parameters of the course.

Students must also adhere to the guidelines for reporting abuse as identified in each school setting. In the interest of safety for all those concerned, a student should not be left alone with a child or children. The only exception is when a student is also working in the school; then the role of staff member supersedes that of a student.

### 4. Illness

Students must call the practicum instructor and school mentor by 8 am daily in cases of sickness or inability to attend daily practicum sessions.

### 5. Dress Code

Students are to conform to the dress code of the practicum school. As well, they should be referred to by the children according to the policies of the school. Please inform the student of your requirements in this area.

### 6. Orientation to classroom and school

When the student first arrives, introduce them to the class and other staff members at the school. Students indicate that starting a new practicum is like starting a new job. They need to know the things that you would tell them if they were new employees.

## WELCOMING A STUDENT TO YOUR CLASSROOM

Your practicum student is eager to assume responsibility in your classroom. Students have reported that knowing the following has been helpful:

- Having a regular time to meet and discuss the program and children on a weekly basis, so that both of you can count on this time to share ideas and plans.
- The emergency procedures for the school and your classroom.
- The daily schedule for the classroom and usual transitions from one activity to the next
- Your classroom management system and when/how you would like the student to participate in behaviour guidance
- Pertinent information about students in your classroom. For example, students with severe allergic reactions, students who may have violent outbursts etc.

## PRACTICUM ASSESSMENT TASKS

The following assessment tasks will be completed in the school as part of the student's practicum experience. Please note that these descriptions have been taken directly from the student information and so, are worded directly for the learner:

### Personal / Professional Growth Learning Stories

Learning stories are a valuable method of recording and documenting your learning. These stories will provide you with the opportunity to record, analyze and reflect upon your experiences in the classroom. They focus on a specific learning event and allow you to do three things:

1. Tell a story about a learning event you had
2. Discuss the learning that you took away from the experience
3. Brainstorm possibilities and opportunities for your future learning

For every week that you attend your placement, write a learning story using this format:

<b>Date:</b>	The date of the learning story
<b>Name:</b>	Your name

### WAYS THE MENTOR CAN ASSIST WITH THIS REQUIREMENT:

- Provide the student with experiences that will increasingly challenge his/her skill level
- Debrief and discuss learning opportunities on a regular basis

## PRACTICAL SKILLS VIDEO

This is a two part assessment task:

1. **Recording** – Make a 15-20 minute recording of yourself working with an individual or group of students. Be sure that you are actively involved with the students and not just circulating through the classroom while the children are working at their desks. The intent of this recording is to be able to assess your skill development, so it is imperative that you are visible and audible throughout the video; the viewer needs to be able to hear what you are saying, plus see your facial expressions and your body language.
2. **Reflective analysis** – View the recording and take careful note of how you are working with the children, particularly in relation to the focus skills identified for your practicum. Use both the practical skills video rubric and the skill development handbook as a basis for analyzing your practice and comment specifically on each focus area and skill you see represented in the recording.

### Permission to record:

You will need permission to record the students in your placement, and collecting permission forms always takes longer than you think, so talk to your mentor about this early in your practicum. Please emphasize that this recording is about assessing you and your skills (rather than the children who may be in the recording) and obtain permission to record each student who will be in your video, using the permission letter included in the course content. If parents have any questions or concerns about this assignment, please direct them to your school mentor and/or practicum instructor.

### WAYS THE MENTOR CAN ASSIST WITH THIS REQUIREMENT:

- Assist the EA student in choosing students for the video and gaining parental consent in a timely fashion
- Assist the EA student in choosing an appropriate time and place to do the taping

## GROWTH PORTFOLIO

This practicum will allow you to focus on your personal skills and growth as an Education Assistant in areas where you feel you need more development; and the primary means for doing this will be the growth portfolio. Your growth portfolio will consist of your three professional development goals for the practicum and records of the progress you are making toward your goals.

Certain performance indicators have been identified in the **EA Skill Development Handbook** as focus competencies for EDAS 153. Using these performance indicators as a guide, complete the following:

1. **Celebrations & Challenges chart** – this form asks you to list those areas which are strengths and those areas which need more development
2. **My goals & Ways to reach my goals chart** – this form asks you to set professional development goals for this practicum and to brainstorm ways in which you might meet those goals

As the practicum progresses, you will need to keep track of the progress you are making toward meeting your goals. You will need to submit a **weekly growth report** for each week you are in your placement, in which you will discuss the opportunities you have had to work toward your goals. Also, in the final week of the practicum, you will need to submit a **final summary of growth**, which summarizes your growth toward your goals for the entire practicum.

Additionally, you will complete one (1) **peer observation** in the first part of the practicum as another way of providing you with feedback on your teaching and guiding skills.

## PEER OBSERVATION

This observation experience will allow you to receive feedback from another professional who is not part of the direct practicum experience and to reflect upon this feedback.

For your Peer Observation, you need to

1. Arrange for a teacher, education assistant or administrator (who is not directly part of your practicum classroom) to come to observe you working with the children in your class.
2. Prior to the observation, give your observer a copy of the Peer Observation Handbook, so that he or she will understand the goals of the assignment.
3. Stress to your observer that more is more in this situation and ask him/her to record as much detail as possible using the running record format included in the Handbook.
4. After the observation, discuss and reflect on the experience with your observer.
5. Write a 2-3 page reflective analysis of your skills as evidenced through this experience and submit it to the Growth Portfolio dropbox. As you work through your analysis, you will need to return to the experience, connect with your feelings, challenge your assumptions, and evaluate. Use the focus skills for your practicum (from the Skill Development Handbook) as a basis for analyzing your practice. Also refer to the following list of questions when you are reflecting on your peer observation experience:



- What worked? Why?
- What didn't work? Why?
- What additional resources or supports would have further enhanced learning for each student?
- What might you do differently if you had a 'do-over'? Why?

#### WAYS THE MENTOR CAN ASSIST WITH THIS REQUIREMENT:

- Assist the EA in setting SMART goals
- Provide opportunities for the EA to develop her/his skills and work toward meeting her/his specific goals
- Assist the EA student in arranging for the peer observation

### POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR SUPPORT PLAN

All students, at some time, communicate through challenging behaviours in school settings. Guiding challenging behaviours can be stressful for everyone. As an EA, part of your role in the classroom may be supporting a child with behaviour challenges, and this assignment offers you the opportunity to carefully observe, plan and implement a positive behaviour support plan. The assignment will extend over the length of the practicum, and is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: Child introduction
- Part 2: Behaviour baseline report
- Part 3: Positive behaviour support plan
- Part 4: Assessment of behaviour plan

#### WAYS THE MENTOR CAN ASSIST WITH THIS REQUIREMENT:

- Assist the EA student in choosing a student who would benefit from behaviour support
- Ensure that the EA student has regular opportunity to observe and interact with the student
- Assist the EA student in choosing/implementing appropriate behaviour support strategies

In addition to the assessment tasks, there are the following methods of practical skill assessment:

1. **Mid-term assessment form.** At the mid-point of the practicum, both the student and the school mentor complete a copy of this checklist (including comments and examples of the student's skills development) and submit these to the practicum instructor. It is expected that the school mentor will meet with the student to review the results of the mid-term assessment prior to submitting it to the practicum instructor.
2. **Summative skills assessment form.** At the end of the practicum the student, school mentor and practicum instructor each complete a copy of this checklist, providing detailed comments and examples of the student's skill development and assigning a numeric score. The scores from the three assessments then averaged and this final score forms the student's practical grade for the course.

## PRACTICUM INSTRUCTOR CONTACT

Please feel free to contact the practicum instructor at anytime if you have questions or concerns regarding the practicum experience. We have found that open communication works best to facilitate a good experience for the student and the school.

## ABOVE AND BEYOND PRACTICUM ASSIGNMENTS

Each student is an individual, and it takes time to get to know your student's level of skill. As you become familiar and comfortable with the student, please encourage the student to take on a larger role. We have found that encouraging and challenging the student facilitates the process of confidence and growth. This, of course, will be different with each student and each class.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the school mentors who help students realize their goal in becoming Education Assistants. We appreciate the time, energy, and support that you give to making the practicum work.

## PRACTICUM TIMELINE

WEEK	ASSESSMENT TASK
1	Classroom Observation and Relationship building with students and staff
2	Behaviour plan – child introduction
3	Behaviour plan – behaviour baseline report Peer observation
4	Behaviour plan – positive behaviour support plan Mid-term assessment form
5	Practical skills video
6	Behaviour plan - assessment Summative assessment form; attendance sheet