Teaching assistant support models

'In-class' teaching assistant support models – how many can you think of? (See also Lorenz S (1998) *Effective In-class Support: Management of Support Staff in Mainstream and Special Schools*.)

'Velcroed' support
Teaching assistant support sticks to an individual, stifling independence and creating a learner's helplessness. Not at all helpful in supporting the 21st century child.

'Helicopter' support
Hovering over learners as they try to work; creating pressure by being close and 'waiting to pounce' whenever possible. Reduces risk taking and pressurises learning.

'Bridge builder' support
Even though a 'pro-active' approach may prevent issues, teaching assistant waits for an issue to 'blow' and then jumps in to 'build bridges' and support.

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Why 'in-class' support?

Support models – how many can you think of?
- 'Velcroed' support
- 'Helicopter' support
- 'Bridge Builder' support
- Class/year support
- Specialist support
- Subject specific support

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'Velcroed' support: close adult supervision at all times

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'Helicopter' support: hovering over the child in case of any problems

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'Bridge builder' support: linking the child to the mainstream curriculum

Class/year support

Dedicates support for groups/cohorts of learners. Useful for some guidance and welfare support roles, and in the primary setting.
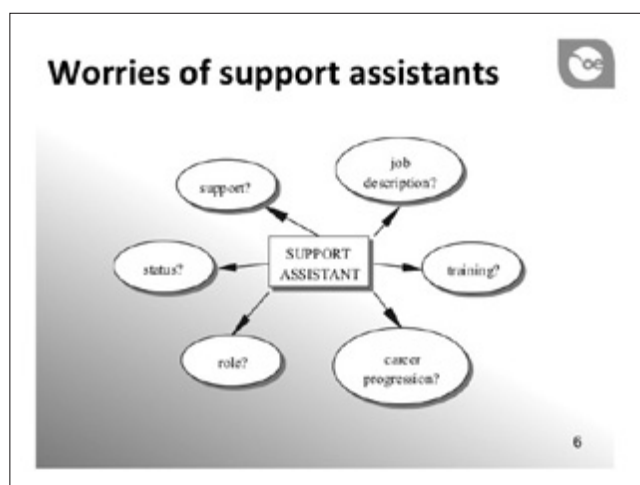
Specialist support

Dedicated, specialist support for specific complex needs and/or individual student requirements – for example personal care.

Subject specific support

Teaching assistant support for specific subjects, such as maths or PE. This allows for the support staff to gain depth of knowledge regarding schemes of work and topics covered and therefore to be more effective in supporting the academic element of the curriculum.

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Worries of support assistants

support? job description? status? SUPPORT ASSISTANT training? role? career progression?

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Good practice

What is good practice?
For in-class support to become more effective, TAs need to be able to:

- do less:
  - one-to-one work
  - individual in-class support
- do more:
  - liaison and planning
  - preparation of materials
  - supporting assessment and record keeping
  - develop skills in relation to 'high impact' strategies

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Unhelpful attitudes

- PITY – overprotection, special treatment
- PATRONAGE – knowing it all, failing to listen
- DISCRIMINATION – denying access, limiting opportunities
- VICTIMISATION – harsh treatment, lack of feeling

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How TAs can be most effective

- Acknowledge individual needs.
- Work in partnership with teachers and other professionals.
- Review and evaluate existing practice.
- Set targets, personally and professionally.
- Support the student, teacher, curriculum and the school.