

**Work Performed by Teacher Assistants**  
**by Laura Fisher, NCATA 2006 Teacher Assistant of the Year**

- Assist individual students so the teacher can continue the whole-group lesson – Work with small groups or individuals to re-teach, practice, and reinforce skills previously introduced by the teacher.
- Review lesson plans with the teacher – Consult with the teacher to understand his/her goals and the teacher assistant's role in supporting those goals.
- Teach children – Under the supervision of the teacher, work with individuals or small groups to build upon skills the student has previously mastered. Materials used include Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, and Open Court for literacy and the textbook and manipulatives for math.
- Create materials to be used in the classroom – Make up word-search puzzles, comprehension questions for novel studies, word problems for math practice, and other items requested by the teacher.
- Utilize office equipment and clerical skills to support the teacher's instructional goals – Make copies, cut and/or laminate, and assemble materials, create materials using Microsoft Works software, update students' Accelerated Reader and Orchard records on the computer, set up and maintain classroom files, receipt money, correct papers, and record grades.
- Serve on School Committees – Teacher Assistants serve on committees and work with after-school clubs such as School Leadership Team, PTA, Faculty Advisory Committee, Chess Club, Chorus, Unicycle Club, Step Club, Odyssey of the Mind, Art Club, Literacy Club, Newspaper Club, Hospitality Committee, and fundraising projects.
- Morning and afternoon carpool duty – Ensure that students exit and load their vehicles and enter and exit the school safely. At some schools they direct traffic and serve as crossing guards.
- Monitor students – Assist younger students in making food selections and maintain appropriate student behavior in the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch. Escort students to recess, special area classes, and the cafeteria. Ensure students travel safely and manage behavior on field trips. Serve as proctors for Quarterly and End of Grade Testing.
- Participate in Staff Development – Teacher assistants continually take part in staff development offered by LEAs, through college and university courses, and through workshops offered by the North Carolina Association of Teacher Assistants.
- Communicate with parents and serve as a positive liaison with the community – Support the goals of the teacher and the school by sharing information and/or initiating contact with parents when appropriate. In addition, teacher assistants are aware of their responsibility to be a positive role model at work as well as away from work. They also serve as advocates for our students in the community.

- Community Involvement – In addition to their work in the classroom, teacher assistants support the goals of LEAs’ Character Education initiative by the work they do in their communities. Many teacher assistants are involved in civic, religious, and neighborhood activities.

**Benefits of having teacher assistants in each classroom include:**

- When there are two instructors in the classroom, the ratio of student-to-educator is cut in half, which gives more individualized attention to students, increasing the likelihood of their success.
- Teacher assistants can “lighten the load” of teachers, relieving stress, which can help decrease teacher turnover.
- Instructional differentiation becomes more effective by using a teacher assistant to work with smaller groups of students.
- Teacher assistants help students learn skills needed to bring them up to grade level by providing direct or remedial instruction with programs such as Reading Mastery, Corrective Reading, the Open Court Intervention Guide, and the math curriculum.
- Many teacher assistants are working toward meeting or have already met the qualifications to be considered “Highly Qualified” as outlined in the No Child Left Behind legislation, even though some school systems only require it of teacher assistants in Title One funded positions.
- A teacher assistant who is assigned to a particular classroom knows the students and the policies and procedures and is a great choice to substitute when a teacher is absent. This consistency is also a comfort to younger children.
- Teacher assistants often enter this profession from a variety of backgrounds and bring useful skills to the job.
- Teacher assistants regularly participate in workshops and in-services and take classes to improve their skills.
- Individuals hired as teacher assistants often forego higher-salaried positions to work in a field where they can make a difference in the lives of children and make a positive contribution to society. They are dedicated to the success of the students they serve.
- Teacher assistants gain real-life, on-the-job training that can’t be taught in a college classroom. This experience is particularly valuable if they pursue a degree and teacher licensure.