

TEACHING ASSISTANT'S Pocketbook

2nd edition

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Cartoons:
Phil Hailstone



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Summative assessment



Perhaps the best examples of summative assessment are tests and exams.

Here children are marked against pre-defined answers/criteria to provide them with a standardised level of attainment.

Exams/tests written by the teacher are used to determine levels of understanding and learning in relation to specific topics/lessons and can assess pupils' progress towards national tests/exams.

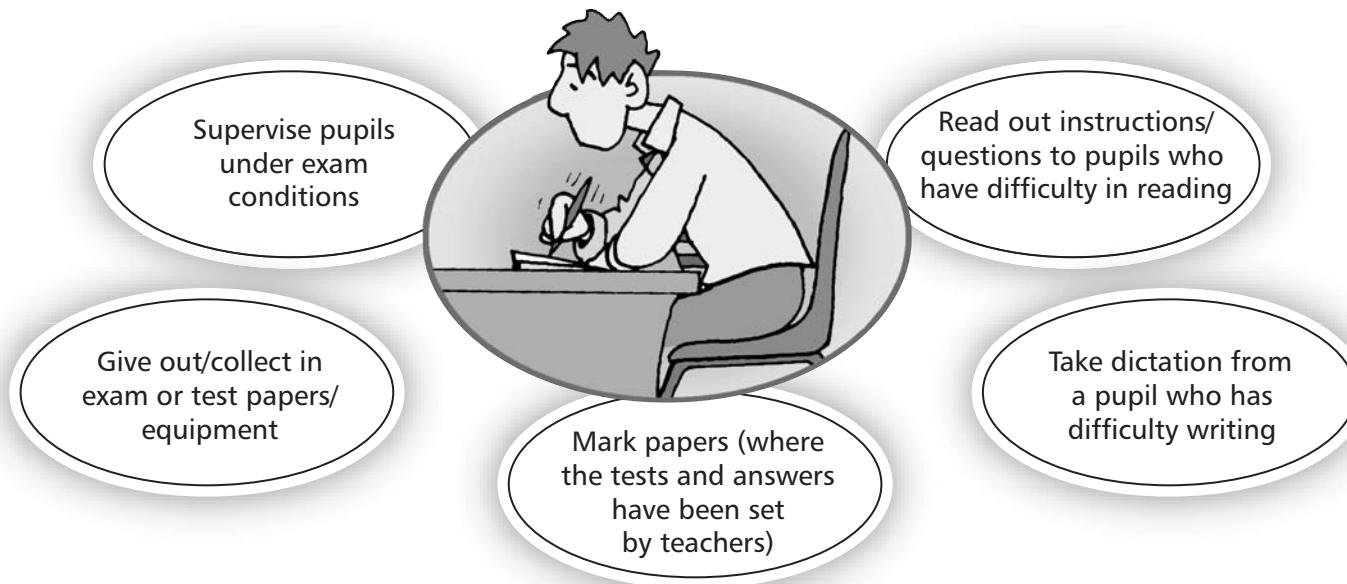
National, external exams/tests are used to provide each pupil with a standardised level of attainment. They enable comparisons between children of the same age group within the school, within the Local Authority and countrywide.

When children take part in such assessments there will be very strict guidelines for both the children – eg talking is not permitted – and their teachers to follow. Be mindful of this if you are asked to help supervise such tests/exams.

Summative assessment



Summative assessment is very structured and you could have a vital role to play within it. You could be asked, for example to:



Whatever your part, **it is vital to stick to the rules and guidelines**. This is equally important for diagnostic assessments.

Diagnostic assessment



Diagnostic assessment is, as its name implies, used to diagnose difficulties that pupils may be having.

A good example of this type of assessment is a diagnostic reading test. Here a child reads out loud a series of stories that become progressively more difficult. The marking system provides the teacher with a reading accuracy and reading comprehension score, but the test also offers additional information on the processes the child is using to read as observed by the tester.

For example, does the child miss out words, substitute words, guess unknown words, look for pictorial cues? All of these have implications for the child's ability to read and comprehend. Logging their responses will help in planning work to improve their skills.

This is one example of how schools use diagnostic assessment to build profiles of pupils, their levels of ability and their learning needs.

Diagnostic assessment



Information and feedback gained from such diagnostic assessments are invaluable to both teachers and TAs. They provide a much wider understanding of the difficulties a child may be facing in relation to learning and inform the strategies/support that might be used to develop the pupil's skills.

The information is also useful in mapping progress on identified skills to establish how well the pupil is improving. These should be related to specific time-scales, eg the reading test repeated annually will indicate progression over a twelve-month period.

So what might your part in this whole process be?



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Diagnostic assessment



As a TA you may be asked to undertake some of the diagnostic assessments, including marking, recording and reporting feedback. If you are to be involved, be sure that you

- Have been adequately trained
- Fully understand the process and are comfortable and confident about running the test before you undertake the process on your own
- Are confident in marking/scoring the test
- Are comfortable with providing feedback to others
- Understand that the regularity of such assessments will vary from test to test and that this will be dictated by the instructions provided – these must be adhered to. (I can still recall the child who had repeated a particular reading test so often that he could recite most of it!)



A working relationship



Having looked at a host of ways in which you may be involved in assisting the teacher, there's one final, but key consideration:

'Getting on with the Teacher'.

This is one of the hardest areas to advise on. Where you get on well with the teacher(s) you are working with then there is no real problem. You are likely to feel confident enough to talk about most things and will have a working relationship that shows mutual respect and is consequently productive and rewarding. The problems arise when this is not the case.

What can you do if your working situation with the teacher is not like this?

The examples on the following pages are real situations that TAs have had to deal with.



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Getting on with the teacher



'The teacher doesn't involve me in planning, so when I get to the lesson I don't know what it's about or what I'm expected to do. I just sit amongst the pupils and wait for them to ask for my help.'

The teacher might not even consider that she needs to inform you

Ask politely at the end of the lesson what you are going to be doing next lesson and how they would like you to help.

If this works, as your relationship develops, slowly progress towards asking for longer-term planning and if all goes well, later on ask if you can be involved in the planning.

If no joy, you are unfortunately going to have to 'fly by the seat of your pants' for the time being while you tell your line manager, who should discuss with the teacher.

POINT TO REMEMBER

Many teachers have never been trained to work with TAs. Some find it comes naturally; others find it difficult. With the latter, you are probably going to have to teach them on the job – remember, it's a learning curve for them, so treat them gently!

About the author



Dot Constable



Dot Constable is a former deputy headteacher and SENCO with over 30 years' experience working in the education system. Having worked in schools in challenging circumstances, she has developed expertise in improving the quality of teaching and learning, in providing appropriate support for pupils with special educational needs and in improving classroom management and pupil behaviour. Now working as an education consultant she provides support, guidance and training to schools, LAs and teaching agencies. Her greatest goal is to have a positive impact on the educational provision children encounter to enable them to have that 'feel good factor' about their learning experiences.

Dot would be happy to help you to initiate or develop ideas provided within this book or to offer further help, support and guidance. She can be contacted directly by email at dconstable@wv15.freeserve.co.uk