



Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together

Keeping Our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe
Module 2 Workbook



Nāku to rourou
nāu te rourou
ka ora ai te ākonga.

With my basket and
your basket the
learner will thrive.

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Contents

About this resource	1
1 Get started	3
2 Watch the presentation	5
3 Choose an activity	7
4 Plan for practice	9
5 Give it a go	10
6 Talk about how it went	11
Activity options	12



About this resource

Background

Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together is a set of modules that teachers and teacher aides complete together.

Each module in this series is a 'ready-to-use' pack with a presentation, workbook and activities so learning can be put into practice. Some modules include self-paced e-learning. The module materials come in different formats to allow choice about how you learn.

Find out more at [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#).

The modules follow an inquiry cycle. The workbook has a section for each step in the cycle.



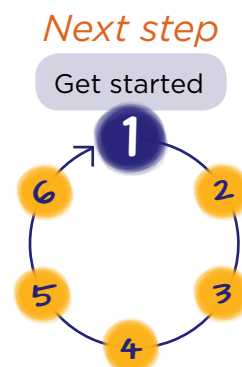
If you are leading the learning, refer to the [Facilitator Quick Guide](#) and gather any additional materials needed to complete the activities.

Download the learning materials from the [Module 2 page](#) of the Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together site.

Note that you have some choices about how you access the module materials. This is the PDF workbook format. It includes links to required resources and printable worksheets for the activities. If you are working with hard copy, you will need to access the online version to activate the links.

For an enhanced online reading experience, access the [e-workbook for Module 2](#). In the e-workbook, activity sheets are Google Docs that you can print, download as Word documents or copy to your own Google Drive for working online.

You also have the option to download a PowerPoint or view a narrated presentation.





1. Get started

Start by watching the short video. Then read the cartoon and key principles. They introduce the main ideas covered in this module. Discuss these as a group. The learning outcomes describe what you'll achieve once you've completed the six steps.



Watch the video about [the valued role of support staff in an inclusive school](#) at the Ministry of Education's teacher aide Vimeo album.

“ Having clear guidelines about confidentiality, communication, advocacy and safety supports teachers and teacher aides to work together professionally and respect the privacy of students, families/whānau and colleagues. ”
Principal



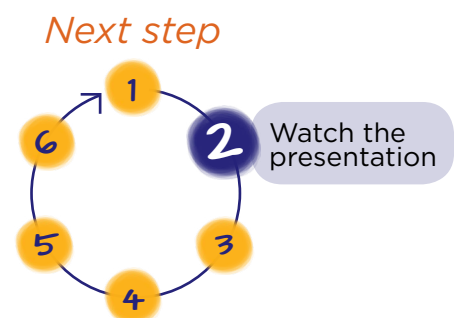
Key principles

- Teachers and teacher aides have professional roles and responsibilities.
- Working collaboratively in a professional relationship requires teachers and teacher aides to identify the ways they are connected to others, both at school and in the wider community. While these connections provide opportunities to promote student learning, they can also place conflicting demands on their roles as professionals.
- Relationships between teachers, teacher aides, students and others in the school community are strengthened by clear guidelines and communication about confidentiality, advocacy and safety.
- Meeting regularly provides opportunities for teachers and teacher aides to identify and discuss the successes and challenges of their personal and professional roles.

Learning outcomes

This module is intended to support teachers and teacher aides to achieve four aims:

1. Develop awareness that people are connected in many different ways, creating both benefits and challenges for their professional roles.
2. Identify and discuss the opportunities and challenges of those connections.
3. Choose one challenge or situation in their work relating to confidentiality, safety or advocacy, identify strategies and develop an approach to address it. Trial this approach.
4. Discuss how the new approach is working and make any necessary changes.

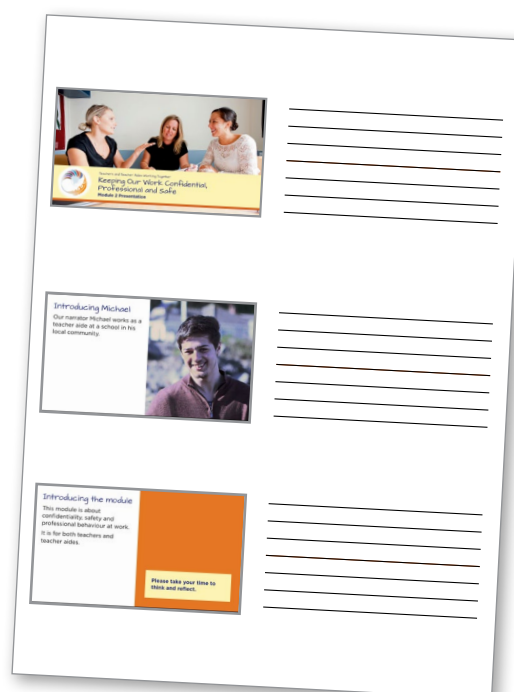




2. Watch the presentation

Watch the presentation about confidentiality, safety and professional behaviour at work. Read the discussion on the next pages for further information.

Visit the [Module 2 e-workbook](#) to download or watch the presentation.



Further information

Why this module?

This module is about how we draw boundaries between our private and professional lives. It will help you think through the connections you have with others and how you can operate so that everybody's privacy is respected and both you and the students can feel safe.

When professional and private lives overlap

When people's professional and private lives overlap, it can be a good thing. It's generally beneficial for teachers and teacher aides to know about their students' backgrounds. For example, knowing that a student loves soccer might be the starting point for a learning task or simply a conversation. Similarly, out-of-school relationships with colleagues or students' parents can be very helpful.

On the other hand, it can be tricky for teachers and teacher aides when they live in the communities they work. The connections you make with other people, both within and outside the school, may create conflicting demands on you, both professionally and personally. At times, you may feel unclear whether you're talking to a parent, colleague or student in your professional role or as a friend or neighbour.

Knowing the Privacy Act 2020

According to the principles of the Privacy Act 2020, teachers and teacher aides must keep information private and confidential. This means any information you learn about students and their families and whānau during work must not be shared with anyone outside of the work environment. Within the school, information should only be shared with colleagues or professionals you are working with, and only as it directly relates to supporting a student.

Creating partnerships with families and whānau

Effective partnerships between school and home are critical to achieving positive outcomes for students. They are built on trust and respect. Teachers and teacher aides demonstrate their respect in the ways they communicate with students' families and whānau. They negotiate with families and whānau on the right time and place for conversations and on how different kinds of information will be shared. Sometimes it is appropriate for teacher aides to take part in conversations with families and whānau, and other times it is best for just the teacher to attend.

Knowing what to do for a student whose safety or well-being may be at risk

Each school has its own policies and guidelines for maintaining confidentiality. It's important that all teachers and teacher aides are aware of the appropriate protocols to follow if a student discloses information or if the teacher or teacher aide becomes concerned about the student's overall well-being or risk of harm.

There are times when the need to protect a student from possible harm outweighs the need for absolute privacy. If you believe a student's safety or well-being may be at risk, it is your responsibility to discuss your concerns with a member of senior management.

Keeping yourself safe

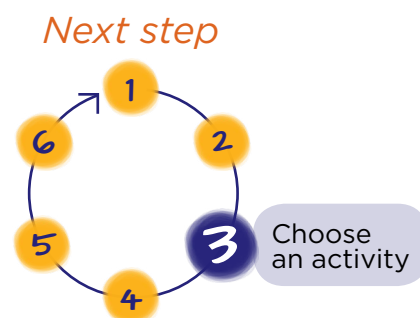
If you provide personal and physical care for students or work with a student one-to-one, it's essential to follow your school's health and safety policy and procedures and receive appropriate training to keep yourself safe. As students get older, these considerations become more important. For example, in secondary schools, it may be safer for a teacher aide to work with a group rather than one-to-one, or it may be that the role is better done by a teacher aide of the same gender as the student.

Working as a team

Working together effectively in a busy classroom environment requires a strong collaborative relationship and effective communication. It's a good idea to identify areas you think might cause conflict, clarify expectations and discuss how you will raise and problem-solve any issues. For example, if teacher aides find themselves working with students who they know well at a personal level, it would be best to start the year by talking to the teacher, student, families and whānau about how to manage this. There are likely to be people, protocols and processes that can help.

Keeping up the good work

Meeting regularly helps build and maintain your professional relationship. As well as providing an opportunity to plan, a regular meeting time lets you reflect. It's important to talk about and celebrate what's going well and discuss and problem-solve anything that's not going so well.





3. Choose an activity

Choose one or two activities to do in pairs or small groups. Go to the back of the workbook for each activity's instructions, worksheets and resources.

Activity 1

Identifying your connections

In this activity, you will consider the different roles people may play in their lives, and the roles you personally play. You will identify the roles that connect you to people at school and how these can benefit or create challenges in your work as a teacher or teacher aide.

Activity 2

Discussing scenarios about connections

In this activity, you will talk about scenarios where the people involved are connected both within and out of school. The scenarios demonstrate how personal connections can be an advantage, but they also show how they can raise issues about confidentiality or privacy.

Activity 3

What Porirua College did

In this activity, you will read about Porirua College, a state secondary school in Porirua East with predominantly Māori and Pasifika students. The case study describes how the college uses the community connections of its support staff to everyone's advantage. There are questions to guide your discussion.



Activity 4

What does confidentiality mean?

In this activity, you will work together to develop a shared definition of confidentiality and look at some suggestions for maintaining confidentiality in your work.

Activity 5

Confidentiality, professionalism and safety

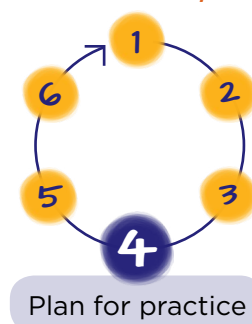
In this activity, you will discuss scenarios where a teacher aide is unsure about how to maintain professionalism or confidentiality or stay safe.

Activity 6

Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide Supporting effective teacher aide practice on the [Inclusive Education](#) website. It covers content about teacher aide induction, yet is relevant for teachers and teacher aides to explore together, even if they have been working at the school for some time. There are questions to guide your discussion.

Next step





4. Plan for practice

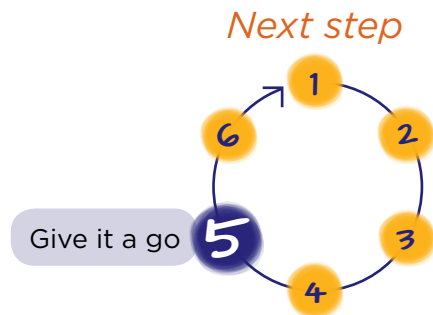
It's time to plan how you will put your learning into practice. Try one of these suggestions in your work together over the next few weeks.

Think about a situation that has occurred or might occur where you would feel unsure about the best way to maintain confidentiality, professionalism, communication or safety.

Work in pairs or a small or large group to identify one or two solutions to support you in this situation. As you consider the right approach to take, refer to your school's policies for privacy, confidentiality, communication and staying safe.

Write down the approach you intend to take together, then talk about it with a senior staff member.

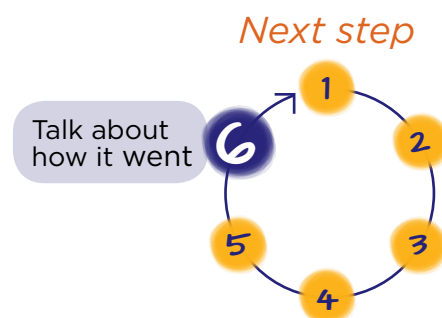
Implement the approach over a few weeks.





5. Give it a go

Implement the strategy you decided on in Step 4. Use the space below to make notes about what you did and how it went.





6. Talk about how it went

Meet to talk about how the strategy from Step 4 went. Discuss and plan how you might adapt or modify your practice. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

- To what extent do we have a better understanding of professionalism?
- To what extent are we more aware of the connections we have with others at work and the impact these connections have?
- What guidelines or policies about privacy, confidentiality and safety can we refer to in our school? Who do we talk to in our school if we need advice about confidentiality, privacy and staying safe in our work?
- What opportunities do we have to meet and talk about our personal and professional roles?
- How successful was our approach in maintaining confidentiality or staying safe? What could we change?
- What are we going to do next to improve our understanding of confidentiality, professionalism and safety?

Possible next steps

When thinking about what you might do next, consider the other topics in this series:

- Teachers and Teacher Aides: Who Does What?
- Supporting Students with Complex Needs
- What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?
- Identifying Students' Strengths
- Students Participating in their Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Understanding the New Zealand Curriculum
- Fostering Peer Relationships
- Creating Inclusive Classrooms
- Supporting Student Learning in the Whole Class
- Teacher Aide Interaction that Supports Student Learning

Visit [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#) to access these modules.



Activity options

Activity 1: Identifying your connections	13
Activity 2: Discussing scenarios about connections	17
Activity 3: What Porirua College did	19
Activity 4: What does confidentiality mean?	20
Activity 5: Confidentiality, professionalism, and safety	23
Activity 6: Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice	27

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe

Identifying your connections

Activity 1

In this activity, you will consider the different roles people play in their lives, and the roles you play yourself. You will identify the roles that connect you to people at school and how these can benefit or create challenges in your work as a teacher or teacher aide.



Work in pairs or small groups and refer to the diagram over the page. Talk about the roles you play in your family/whānau, at work and in other areas of your life. This is a good opportunity to talk with your colleagues about the roles you play outside of school.



On the worksheet over the page, write down any roles you have that connect you with people in and out of school.



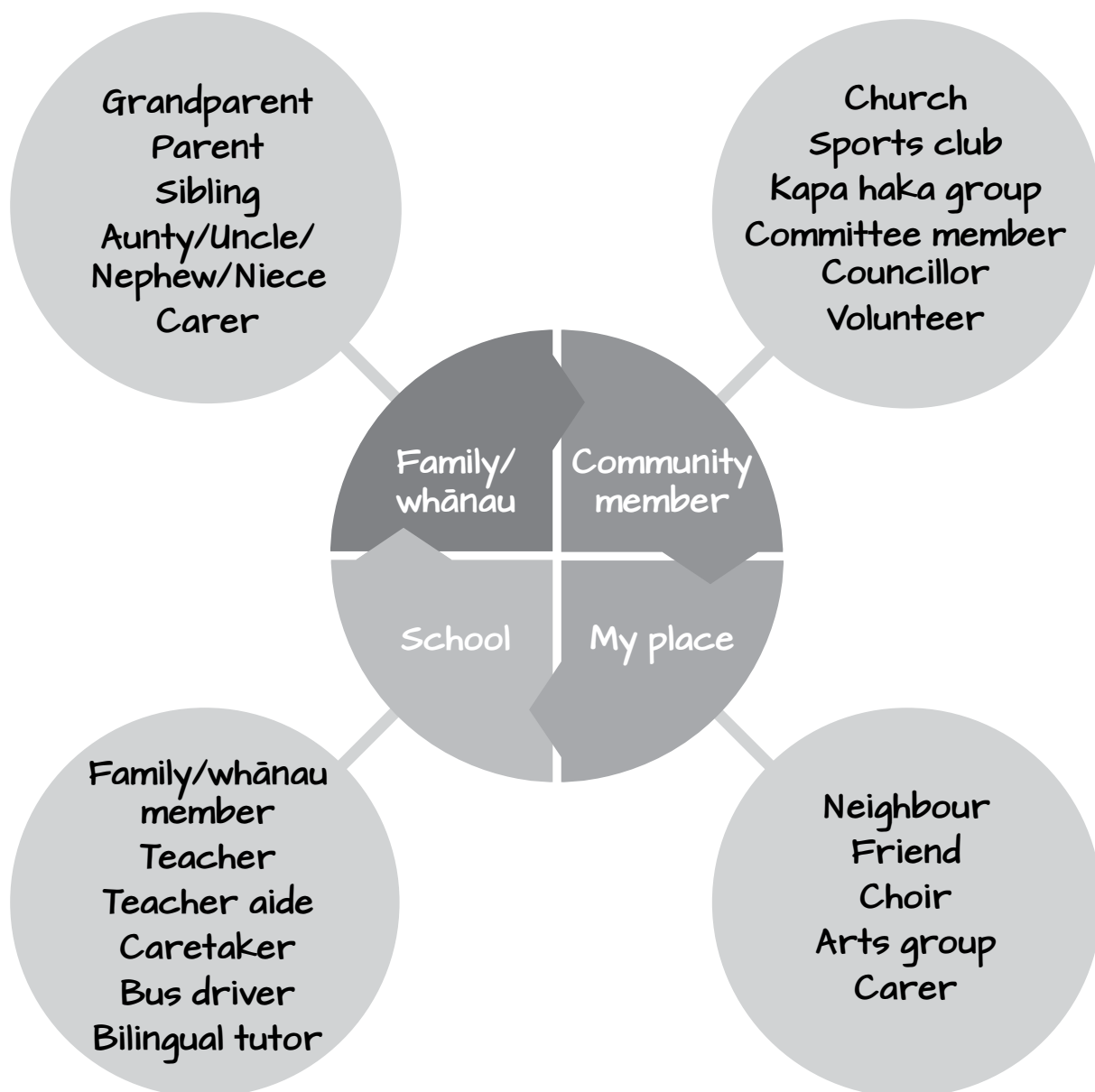
Working in pairs or small groups, discuss each role and identify how it helps you in your professional work or any challenges it creates. Record your discussion on the worksheet.



If you have questions or are unsure how to deal with the challenges you discussed, talk about this activity with others in your school, such as a member of the leadership team.

Identifying your connections
(continued)

Activity 1



Identifying your connections (continued)

Activity 1

What roles do I play that connect me with people in and out of school?

Example:

I'm a teacher aide and the sister of a student at school.

Example:

I'm the kapa haka coach and a teacher aide.

Example:

I play netball with the parents of students in my class.

How could this role create opportunities in my work?

I have lived experience of disability – my sister is on the autism spectrum. As a teacher aide, this makes me empathetic with other students with an autism spectrum disorder and their family/whānau.

The Pākehā teachers at school ask me about Te Ao Māori and how they can use Māori stories, concepts and language in their classroom.

I see the kids on the weekend at netball games. I feel like I know the kids better for seeing them outside of school.

How could this role be challenging at work?

Sometimes I hear staff talking about my sister in the staffroom.

The kids act a certain way at kapa haka. I can't assume they will be the same in the classroom – I need to give them a chance to show me what they are like in different situations.

I have overheard some of the parents complaining about one of the teachers at school. They say he's great with the kids but not very good at communicating with the parents.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe

Identifying your connections (continued)

Activity 1

What roles do I play that connect me with people in and out of school?

Connection 1:

Connection 2:

Connection 3:

How could this role create opportunities in my work?

How could this role be challenging at work?

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

Discussing scenarios about connections

Activity 2

In this activity, you will talk about scenarios where teacher aides have connections both in and out of school. The scenarios highlight the ways that being connected can be advantageous and the ways that these connections can raise issues about confidentiality or privacy.



Working in pairs or a small group, discuss these questions for each scenario:

- What is the teacher aide's connection in the school?
- What is the teacher aide's connection out of the school?
- Does this connection create opportunities in the teacher aide's work? If so, how could the teacher aide make the most of these?
- Does this connection create challenges for the teacher aide? If so, what is the best way for the teacher aide to manage this situation?



If you have questions or are unsure how to deal with the situations you discussed, talk about this activity with others in your school, such as a member of the leadership team.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

Discussing scenarios about connections (continued)

Activity 2

1. A student who recently started at our school bullied my child at their previous school.
2. I sing in the church choir with one of our school's teachers. She has asked me to help her take music practice after school.
3. I'm having a coffee with my neighbour, and he wants to discuss something at school.
4. I see Mali at soccer on the weekends, and I know he loves it. At school, we're finding it hard to motivate Mali during class. The teacher has asked me if I've got any suggestions.
5. I overhear a conversation in a café. A parent is complaining that their child didn't make the school team.
6. Jiao's mum and I speak the same language. Sometimes when she picks Jiao up from school, I translate for her and the teacher.
7. I meet with a parent who criticises the teacher for picking on her child.
8. I meet with a parent who says the teacher has got his child's assessment wrong.
9. One of the teachers often sets homework that requires the Internet. I know quite a few school families who don't have a computer at home.
10. My friend wants me to be the assessment assistant for her daughter's NCEA exam.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

What Porirua College did

Activity 3

In this activity, you will read about Porirua College, a state secondary school with predominantly Māori and Pasifika students. The case study describes how the college uses its support staff's community connections to everyone's advantage.



Working individually to begin with, read the case study, *Helping build the bridge between the school and the community: Porirua College*. You can download it from www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Managing-your-school/School-support-staff

As you read, highlight any ideas that are new or interesting.



In pairs or small groups, talk about Porirua College's approach to using support staff who have community connections. Discuss the sections you highlighted.

To support your discussion, consider these questions:

- What roles do the support staff at Porirua College play within the school?
- What roles do the support staff at Porirua College play outside of the school?
- What benefits has Porirua College found in having support staff with community connections?
- How does your school link with its community? What roles do teacher aides play in this? Could support staff help the school to link with its community?



If you have questions or are unsure how to deal with the challenges you discussed, talk about this activity with others in your school, such as a member of the senior leadership team.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

What does confidentiality mean?

Activity 4

In this activity, you will work together to develop a shared definition of confidentiality and look at some suggestions for maintaining confidentiality in your work.



Working in pairs, small groups or a large group, discuss these questions about confidentiality:

- What does 'confidentiality' mean?
- Does confidentiality mean different things in your personal and professional lives? If yes, in what ways?
- Are there clear guidelines and expectations about confidentiality at your school? Do you know how to find out about these?
- What is the protocol at your school if a student discloses information or if you are concerned about a student's overall well-being or risk of harm?



Read the suggestions over the page for maintaining confidentiality.



In pairs, small groups or a large group, discuss how a teacher aide should respond when:

- someone at the school asks about a student they don't work with
- peers ask for information about a fellow student
- people talk about school matters in social situations outside of school
- they become concerned about a student's overall well-being or risk of harm.



If you have questions or are unsure how to deal with confidentiality in your school, talk about this activity with others, such as a member of the senior leadership team.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

What does confidentiality mean? (continued)

Activity 4

Some suggestions for keeping your work confidential

- Hold discussions about students in private spaces in the school, such as a classroom when students are not present. If an issue or a discussion arises in a public space in the school, politely stop the conversation and set up an appropriate time and place to talk.
- Discuss students only with people who require that information for their work. Be clear about which staff are directly involved in supporting a student.
- Do not discuss staff members, school issues or student issues with any school-based people if you are not directly involved in the situation.
- At the beginning of each year, agree and record teacher and teacher aide responsibilities for discussing information about students with specialists, visiting teachers, families and whānau.
- If you are talking about your job out of school, do not talk about students or confidential school matters.
- If school matters are being discussed in the community or at social events, do not offer information when you are unsure if it is confidential. If in doubt it is best to say nothing.
- Know what information you are able to share with whom in your particular role. Know who you can talk to within the school to clarify confidentiality.
- Most schools have specific staff who are responsible for setting up files about students. Those members working with a student may contribute information about the student. Respect the school guidelines for who accesses this information.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

What does confidentiality mean? (continued)

Activity 4

Some suggestions for keeping your work confidential

If a person approaches you seeking information about a student or school situation respond with statements such as:

“Sorry, but school confidentiality doesn’t allow me to talk about that.”

“Perhaps you could talk to (school staff member) about that.”

“Feel free to ask (school staff member) about that.”

“Sorry, but it would be inappropriate for me to discuss another family or student with you.”

“I’m not sure I can discuss this. I’m happy to check with (school staff member) before I talk to you about this.”

“Sorry, but I’m not comfortable talking to you about this. Perhaps (school staff member) could discuss it with you.”



If you become concerned about a student’s overall well-being or risk of harm, discuss your concerns immediately with a member of senior management, as directed by the school policy.

The resources listed here provide additional information about confidentiality, privacy and keeping children safe.

Causton-Theoharis, J. (2009). *The paraprofessional’s handbook for effective support in inclusive classrooms*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Child, Youth and Family (2011). *An interagency guide: Working together to keep children and young people safe*. Wellington: Ministry of Social Development.
www.cyf.govt.nz/documents/about-us/publications/27713-working-together-3-0-45ppi.pdf

Doyle, M.B. (2008). *The paraprofessional’s guide to the inclusive classroom. Working as a team*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Hammeken, P.A. (2009). *The paraprofessional’s guide to inclusive education (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press.

Ministry of Education website: <http://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/student-wellbeing/>

Privacy Commissioner website: www.privacy.org.nz

Te Kete Ipurangi: *Inclusive Education Guides for Schools: Supporting effective teacher aide practice*
<http://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/teacher-aide-practice/>

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

Confidentiality, professionalism and safety

Activity 5

In this activity, you will talk about scenarios where a teacher aide is unsure about maintaining professionalism or confidentiality, or staying safe.



Work in pairs or small groups, with at least one teacher and one teacher aide per group. Complete the worksheet over the page.



Discuss each scenario and consider the issue the teacher and/or teacher aide is facing. Discuss and agree on appropriate actions for each scenario.



If you have questions or are unsure how to deal with confidentiality in your school, talk about this activity with others, such as a member of the senior leadership team.

Confidentiality, professionalism and safety (continued)

Activity 5

Teacher aide scenarios

Example:

I am working with a student who doesn't have glasses and can't seem to see the whiteboard.

What should the teacher aide do?

Talk with the teacher (or a member of senior staff, as appropriate) about what I have observed.

What should the teacher do?

Follow up on the teacher aide's observation, and observe the student in class. Talk with the student and family/whānau about the student's vision. If there is a senior staff member responsible for pastoral care (e.g., dean), involve them in this discussion.

Scenario 1:

A student says to me, "I am going to tell you something, but you're not allowed to tell anyone."

Scenario 2:

At pick-up time, a parent raises concerns with me about how the classroom teacher is treating his child.

*Confidentiality, professionalism
and safety (continued)*

Activity 5

Scenario 3:

I am working with a student whose family uses physical punishment. I'm worried that if we ever talk to the family about the student's behaviour, the child might get punished at home.

Scenario 4:

One of our students is touching me inappropriately when I am working one-to-one with them. I talked to another teacher aide and she said it's just the way the student is.

Scenario 5:

I'm friends with some of the students on Facebook. One of them often makes personal comments about my posts and has asked for my cellphone number.

*Confidentiality, professionalism
and safety (continued)*

Activity 5

Scenario 6:

I overheard some students at school discussing questionable activities they have done on the weekend. I know their families.



Remember: If you become concerned about a student's overall well-being or risk of harm, you must discuss your concerns with a member of senior management.

2 Keeping our Work Confidential, Professional, and Safe

Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice on the Inclusive Education site

Activity 6

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice on Inclusive Education*. It covers content about teacher aide induction, yet is relevant for teachers and teacher aides to explore together, even if they have been working at the school for some time. There are questions to guide your discussion.



Explore the section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice* about Develop a programme of induction, with a focus on vision, protocols, and processes, to introduce new teacher aides to your school



Discuss the content you have just explored.

To support your talk, consider these questions:

- How clear are we about our school's policy on confidentiality? In what situations have we had to put it into effect?
- Are we confident that we know how to keep ourselves and the students safe? What about when dealing with personal care? Is there something we could do better?
- What did we learn about each other from the questions on the tab, "Sharing experiences and motivations"?



If you have questions or are unsure how to deal with confidentiality in your school, talk about this activity with others, such as a member of the senior leadership team.