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ABORIGINAL VIEWS

THE ROLE OF A CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

Eric Law,
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I see my job as Classroom Assistant at Cherbourg State School divided into three main categories. These categories are;

1. assisting the teacher;
2. assisting the student; and
3. a communications link between the teachers and the home.

Firstly, assisting the teacher. My job is to assist the teachers in duplicating any teaching material they require, preparing stencils and assisting individual students. The value of an assistant in this part of my employment is really 'time-saving'. I also (where possible) give the teacher a bit of background knowledge of each student's home life. This knowledge is of great value to the teacher. Normal playground duties with teachers are also performed by assistants.

The assisting of children, I feel, is the most important part of my job. I feel if I could help the child to be a better scholar, as well as being a better citizen, then I have achieved something worthwhile. I feel that I am spending not nearly enough time in the classroom with the children. There is really great value to the child as well as to myself if there is learning going on between me and the student. I think also that this part of the job is of tremendous value to the teacher because it helps the teacher to spend more time with the other children, who might need the teacher's help. I also think that the children communicate more freely with assistants than with teachers.

The communicating between home and school is very important to all concerned. I think that most of the time parents are really 'kept in the dark' about their children's school. My job at Cherbourg in this specific category has been to go out to the

homes and talk to parents, invite them up to the school to meet teachers. We also take materials (done by the children) into the homes and discuss freely the problems facing their children at school. I feel this is of great value to the parents because it makes the parents feel proud of *their* school. It also gives parents a much wider outlook on school life and gives the parents a chance to meet and talk to the people who are given the responsibility of educating their children. The teachers also benefit in this part of my job because it gives them a chance to discuss any problems or ideas with the parents 'face to face'.

I feel that my job is a rewarding and challenging experience for me but I sincerely hope that the students, the teachers, the parents and the community benefit from my presence in the school.

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I am hoping to encourage more traditional story telling, dancing and singing. The children seemed quite interested in two legends which I told them.

Of course the ability to communicate with the children in their own language has been an advantage. Most of the children will talk to me; many in fact come to me of their own accord to tell me about what they are playing etc.

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