



RECOGNITION & RESPECT

Addressing the unpaid work of Education Assistants in BC

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Author's note

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Trish Mack (CUPE Servicing Representative) and Kathryn Farr (CUPE Local 441) who are CUPE's representatives on the Education Assistants Committee struck in the aftermath of 2006 support staff bargaining to provide follow-up on recommendations regarding education assistant unpaid work.

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Executive summary

Education assistants (EAs) play a unique and critical role in our public school system, supporting students who require special assistance in order to fully achieve their potential. As this report demonstrates, EAs are driven by a high level of professional integrity and commitment. They care deeply about their students and students' families. They are an often invisible force in making schools safe and in fostering productive learning environments. But unlike teachers and administrators, EA do not receive a salary. Instead, they are paid on an hourly basis and the issue of paid allocated work time is at the heart of a critical problem facing BC's public education system.

In the spring of 2008, CUPE launched an online survey of working conditions affecting the province's 12,500 EAs. The survey had its origins in reports from across the province related to unpaid work and the systematic underfunding of EA work time. Unpaid work occurs when education assistants find their paid allocation of hours insufficient to complete their work to a high standard of quality capable of providing for the safety and well-being of students. Faced with these circumstances, EAs often need to contribute extra unpaid time to ensure their jobs are done properly.

The process of identifying and responding to this issue began with the 2006 round of collective agreement negotiations for school support staff in BC. Employer and union representatives created a joint committee to investigate and make recommendations regarding the problem of unpaid work. The work of this committee led to the implementation of an EA survey with a primary focus on unpaid work time.

More than 4,000 surveys were completed in early 2008, representing a 40-per-cent response rate for EAs employed on either a continuing or temporary basis within BC public schools. CUPE sought full participation of all EAs and staff from 54 of BC's 60 school districts took part, including many from districts where EAs are represented by other unions.

Major survey findings include the following:

- EAs from all participating school districts, within all types and levels of schools, and working across a wide range of specific EA jobs overwhelmingly report performing unpaid work. This confirms unpaid work is endemic to the entire school system.
- Education assistants report their jobs as entailing significant unrecognized work obligations, and the paid work day as not having sufficient time to accomplish their jobs to the high professional standard they expect of themselves.
- The primary situation giving rise to unpaid work is the bell-to-bell organization of EA work that sees an average of 26 hours of remunerated work per week and offers no real opportunity for EAs to plan, prepare, meet or collaborate within their paid work schedule.
- The primary reasons cited by EAs for performing unpaid work centre around professional concerns for the well being, needs and safety of their students, and the lack of adequate time to meet these needs to a high professional standard.
- The average amount of unpaid time performed each week amounted to 1.9 hours. The research shows that EAs work 800,000 extra hours a year in order to make the system work.

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- Unpaid work represents an implicit subsidy, the annual value of which approaches several millions of dollars.
- EAs perform unpaid work in the routine course of their jobs. Such work is performed at all times of the day —before, during and after work, as well as in the evenings and on weekends.
- EAs see additional paid work time as fundamental to any effort to rectify problems with unpaid work.
- EAs say they need more paid hours to do adequate resource development related to their work, to have necessary consultation and interaction time with other EAs and teachers regarding students, to develop and implement individualized programs for students, to attend meetings directly related to their work, and to provide adequate on-the-job coverage that safeguards the safety and well-being of students.
- Survey findings confirm that EAs in BC possess a wide range of formal educational qualifications and have a keen interest in pursuing courses, workshops and other upgrading opportunities.
- EAs do voice strong dissatisfaction with the lack of support given their professional development and educational upgrading needs. They express interest in having greater support for paid and supported educational upgrading opportunities to better address the issues and challenges they encounter on a daily basis with the students they serve.
- Survey data shows that, on average, EAs in BC work about 1,040 paid hours a year and have annual earnings of less than \$23,000.

These findings come at a time of rising awareness of the need for our school system to guarantee maximum inclusion and educational opportunity for all students. Within this context, EAs have used the survey to underline the fact they need more paid time to properly fulfill the demands of their jobs. For EAs, this is the true meaning of their call for recognition and respect.

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Introduction

In the 2006 round of collective agreement negotiations for support staff in BC's public school system, employer and union representatives agreed on the following provisions in the *Framework Letter of Understanding*:

- "28. During this round of collective bargaining, representatives of support staff unions raised concerns with educational assistants working hours and not being paid.
29. The parties agreed to establish an educational assistants committee which shall consist of two (2) representatives of support staff unions who are signatories to this LOU and two (2) representatives of BCPSEA by no later than July 1, 2006. The committee shall investigate and make recommendations concerning this issue, including directions for resolution to Districts and locals. "

These provisions came in the wake of mounting evidence of the widespread reliance on unpaid work time by education assistants (EAs), particularly those working in the delivery of special education services.

EAs represent a category of public school employee that has grown considerably in size over the past two decades. The title "education assistant" refers to a large job classification that covers many different positions within the ranks of public school support staff. EA jobs have titles that vary by district as well as content. Some common titles are special education assistant (SEA), certified education assistant (CEA), special education aide, aboriginal support worker, teacher assistant, and youth care worker.

Much of the impetus for growth of this job category has come from changes in special education, in particular the implementation of policy mandating the inclusion of special education students and their integration where appropriate into regular classrooms. EAs play a critical role in implementing these changes; indeed, without the work EAs perform in special education, classrooms that integrate special needs students would not be able to function.

Section 18 of BC's *School Act* gives recognition to this work and the workers who perform it by referencing the staff category of "teacher assistants." The Ministry of Education's *Special Education Services Manual* (July, 2006)¹ paraphrases Section 18 by specifying that teacher assistants work "under the general supervision of a teacher or administrative officer." The manual also states that teacher assistants "may play a key role in implementing the program" delivered to special education students.

Use of the term "teacher assistant" is far less common now than even a decade ago. The BC Ministry's data collection and reporting relies on the more generic "educational assistant" with the latter seen to comprise special education support staff as well as childcare workers, cultural support staff, settlement workers, ESL-centred staff and a host of other categories. While "teacher assistant" is still used in some districts, the shift in terminology reflects the fact that EA jobs are today less focused on helping teachers and more oriented to providing a range of direct services and supports to students.

¹ Available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/specialed/ppandg/toc.htm.

Following support staff bargaining in 2006, representatives from the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association began meeting to implement Sections 28 and 29 of the *Framework Letter*. These meetings led to the concept of conducting a joint online survey.

In the spring of 2008, following an inability of this joint committee to agree on key elements of how to fulfill its mandate, CUPE decided to proceed with its own online survey of EAs. The survey was officially launched in mid-April at CUPE's BC Division Convention, and data collection continued until the end of June. Through this period 4,068 surveys were completed. EAs in 54 of the province's 60 school districts and education authorities participated.² After adjustments are made to separate out casual EAs, the 3,910 completed surveys represent a 40-per-cent response rate.³

This report provides an analysis of overall results from the survey. CUPE anticipates preparing and releasing a series of follow-up reports to look in greater detail at specific aspects of EA working conditions arising from survey data. These will include a report on the working conditions of First Nations education assistants, a report on education assistants working on a casual basis with school district employers, and a more detailed look at education assistant aspirations in regards to educational upgrading opportunities related to their profession. In addition, a series of district-specific summary reports based on survey data will be prepared for release starting later this fall.

The online survey was organized into the following five sections.

- Demographic information
- Regular (paid) hours of work
- Voluntary and unpaid hours on the job
- Record of voluntary and unpaid hours
- Training and qualifications

The concluding section of the survey gave education assistants an opportunity to contribute comments of their own regarding the nature of their work, the problem of unpaid work time, and any ideas they had regarding possible solutions to this problem.

What follows is an effort to tabulate and analyze the survey results. In approaching this, efforts were to stay with the natural sequence of topics set forth in the survey itself. Consequently, the next section begins the analysis with a look at demographic information.⁴

² Appendix A of this report provides a more detailed discussion of methodological and data gathering issues arising in the course of survey implementation.

³ Because of the distinctive nature of their employment relationship, casual-status education assistants will be this object of a separate research report to be released at a later time.

⁴ Where appropriate, efforts have been made to compare demographic breakdowns with those derived from other available information regarding the education assistant population. In particular, this report compares survey information with that made available under the auspices of a *Support Staff Education and Adjustment Committee* (SSEAC) data gathering initiative also set in motion following the conclusion of the 2006 round of bargaining. The

Who are the education assistants?

1. Gender breakdown

Survey respondents were asked to indicate their gender. This question was included to enable an examination of the gender profile of this job and the degree to which the job of education assistant is female-dominated. The following table offers graphic confirmation of this fact.

1. Survey responses by gender

Gender	Survey count	% of total	SSEAC data	Variance	<i>The work of education assistants is heavily female-dominated</i>
Male	234	6.0%	9.4%	- 3.4%	
Female	3,663	93.9%	90.6%	+ 3.3%	
Transgendered	4	0.1%	-	+ .1%	
n =	3,901				

The survey gender breakdown varies somewhat from that found in the SSEAC information. The rightmost column calculates the degree of variance of the SSEAC data from the online survey. With either data source, the picture of an overwhelmingly female-dominated workforce is clear.

2. School district breakdown

British Columbia's public school system comprises 59 school districts and a single Francophone Education Authority. In implementing the survey, efforts were made to ensure maximum participation from all school districts and areas of the province.

Survey respondents were also asked to indicate where in the province (i.e. in which school district) they worked. This was intended to ensure that respondents came from a wide variety of locations. In addition, school district identifiers were included to facilitate district-specific analysis. The following table provides the breakdown of response rates for the 54 school districts where EAs participated.⁵

SSEAC is a joint union-management committee established in 2006 to preside over a series of issues related to the implementation of K-12 support staff collective agreements including trades apprenticeship opportunities, skills enhancement and labour market pay adjustments.

⁵ Educations assistants in the following school districts did not participate in the survey: SD 27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin), SD 49 (Central Coast), SD 52 (Prince Rupert), SD 59 (Peace River South), SD 81 (Fort Nelson), and SD 92 (Nisga'a).

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2. Survey responses by school district and union identification

SD	Name	Union	Union Local	Survey Responses	District EA Count (SSEAC data)	% Response Rate
5	Southeast Kootenay	CUPE	4165	55	119	46.2%
6	Rocky Mountain	CUPE	440	41	102	40.2%
8	Kootenay Lake	CUPE	748	38	119	31.9%
10	Arrow Lakes	CUPE	2450	15	23	65.2%
19	Revelstoke	CUPE	523	12	25	48.0%
20	Kootenay-Columbia	CUPE	1285	42	71	59.2%
22	Vernon	CUPE	5523	55	124	44.4%
23	Central Okanagan	CUPE	3523	137	334	41.0%
28	Quesnel	CMAW	2545	25	74	33.8%
33	Chilliwack	CUPE	411	78	208	37.5%
34	Abbotsford	Teamsters	31	35	296	11.8%
35	Langley	CUPE	1260	138	327	42.2%
36	Surrey	CUPE	728	407	889	45.8%
37	Delta	CUPE	1091	125	359	34.8%
38	Richmond	CUPE	716	143	327	43.7%
39	Vancouver	CUPE	15	139	905	15.4%
40	New Westminster	CUPE	409	66	162	40.7%
41	Burnaby	CUPE	379	116	248	46.8%
42	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	CUPE	703	126	231	54.5%
43	Coquitlam	CUPE	561	182	452	40.3%
44	North Vancouver	CUPE	389	147	330	44.5%
45	West Vancouver	WVMEA	n.a.	50	129	38.8%
46	Sunshine Coast	CUPE	801	45	78	57.7%
47	Powell River	CUPE	476	15	43	34.9%
48	Sea to Sky (Howe Sound)	CUPE	779	12	57	21.1%
50	Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte	CUPE	2020	4	33	12.1%
51	Boundary	CUPE	2098	27	32	84.4%
53	Okanagan Similkameen	CUPE	523	25	56	44.6%
54	Bulkley Valley	CUPE	2145	31	66	47.0%
57	Prince George	CUPE	3742	219	353	62.0%
58	Nicola-Similkameen	CUPE	847	29	57	50.9%
60	Peace River North	CUPE	4653	46	122	37.7%
61	Greater Victoria	CUPE	947	66	386	17.1%
62	Sooke	CUPE	459	97	193	50.3%
63	Saanich	CUPE	441	132	146	90.4%
64	Gulf Islands	CUPE	788	3	38	7.9%
67	Okanagan Skaha	CUPE	523	69	148	46.6%
68	Nanaimo-Ladysmith	CUPE	606	162	327	49.5%
69	Qualicum	CUPE	3570	36	117	30.8%
70	Alberni	CUPE	727	37	89	41.6%
71	Comox Valley (Courtenay)	CUPE	439	77	161	47.8%
72	Campbell River	CUPE	723	69	119	58.0%
73	Kamloops/Thompson	CUPE	3500	29	244	11.9%
74	Gold Trail	CUPE	173	16	47	34.0%
75	Mission	CUPE	593	67	167	40.1%
78	Fraser-Cascade	CMAW	2423	20	55	36.4%
79	Cowichan Valley	CUPE	606	99	147	67.3%
82	Coast Mountains	CUPE	2052	53	167	31.7%
83	North Okanagan-Shuswap	CUPE	523	74	133	55.6%
84	Vancouver Island West	CUPE	2769	7	19	36.8%
85	Vancouver Island North	CUPE	2045	31	57	54.4%
87	Stikine	CUPE	3234	8	16	50.0%
91	Nechako Lakes	CUPE	4177	85	154	55.2%
93	CSF	CUPE	4227	43	83	51.8%
Total (includes five survey forms where the SD was left unspecified)				3,910	9,764	40.0%

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The above table also shows the total education assistant population in each of the districts (as taken from SSEAC information, for continuing and temporarily-employed EAs). This allows for the calculation of response rates by individual school district.⁶

3. Age breakdown

Education assistants were asked to provide their age. The primary reason for this was to see if the age of EAs had any bearing on their willingness to provide unpaid work.

The following graph shows the age breakdown. It also provides a comparison of age information drawn from the survey with that available from the SSEAC. The latter allows for a determination to be made regarding the age-representative nature of EAs electing to participate in the survey.

2. Age profile of survey respondents

Age Group	Survey count	% total	SSEAC % breakdown	% point variance	<i>Over 56% of education assistants fall in the 'over 45' age groups</i>
Less than or equal to 20 years	40	1.0%	0.1%	0.9%	
Over 20 and up to 25 years	99	2.5%	2.5%	0.0%	
Over 25 and up to 30 years	219	5.6%	6.2%	-0.6%	
Over 30 and up to 35 years	296	7.6%	8.6%	-1.0%	
Over 35 and up to 40 years	422	10.8%	10.8%	0.0%	
Over 40 and up to 45 years	600	15.4%	16.0%	-0.6%	
Over 45 and up to 50 years	915	23.5%	21.1%	2.4%	
Over 50 and up to 55 years	815	20.9%	18.6%	2.3%	
Over 55 and up to 60 years	392	10.1%	11.9%	-1.8%	
Over 60 years	94	2.4%	4.1%	-1.7%	
Average age	Survey: 45.9 years SSEAC: 45.7 years				

There is only minor overall variance between survey and SSEAC age data; indeed, the average age of an education assistant varies by only 0.2 years.⁷ This lends support to the idea that the survey population is highly age representative of the overall EA population in the province.

4. Years of experience by group

Survey respondents were invited to disclose years of actual employment in the capacity of an education assistant. The following table summarizes this information.

⁶ Apart from limited data gathered by the Ministry of Education for the purpose of documenting annual funding allocations, no support staff demographic information is routinely collected within the province, whether by government or other public agency. The Ministry of Education's *Revenue and Expenditure Information* for 2007/08 (Table 11) contains a summary of FTE staffed by broad occupational category, taken from school district annual budgets. The data showed a total of 8,161.5 full-time equivalent education assistants working in BC public schools in that year. This data represents estimates provided by school district employers at the start of the school year. For further information on this, see www.bced.gov.bc.ca/accountability/district/revenue/.

⁷ SSEAC data shows that EAs are on average younger than most other support staff categories (clerical, trades, bus drivers, and custodians). The only groups with a lower average age are IT workers and ground/maintenance staff.

3. Experience profile of survey respondents

Experience group	Count	% Total Survey Respondents	<i>The average EA has substantial experience working in this capacity</i>
2 or less years	444	11.4%	
Over 2 and up to 4 years	473	12.1%	
Over 4 and up to 6 years	369	9.5%	
Over 6 and up to 8 years	415	10.7%	
Over 8 and up to 10 years	368	9.4%	
Over 10 and up to 12 years	313	8.0%	
Over 12 and up to 14 years	301	7.7%	
Over 14 and up to 16 years	366	9.4%	
Over 16 and up to 18 years	351	9.0%	
Over 18 and up to 20 years	280	7.2%	
Over 20 and up to 25 years	154	4.0%	
Over 25 and up to 30 years	44	1.1%	
Over 30 years	17	0.4%	
n=	3,895		
Average years of EA work experience	10.5 years		

The overall data pattern indicates that education assistants experience levels are more concentrated in the lower experience categories. Indeed, close to a quarter of all EAs have four years or less working experience and more than 42 per cent have eight years or less experience.⁸

5. Education assistants of First Nations background

A total of 227 respondents indicated themselves to be of First Nations background. The survey gathered information in this area to determine whether there were patterns of employment and involvement in unpaid work which might be specific to those working with First Nations students.

Although the ranks of First Nations EAs are, like the larger employee population, heavily female-dominated, those completing the survey had a higher proportion of males as compared with the larger group – 9.3 per cent of First Nations EAs were male as compared with 6.0 per cent overall. First Nations EAs also reported less overall work experience as an EA than the larger population – almost 41 per cent of First Nations EAs report six or less years or work experience while the corresponding figure for the entire survey population was 33 per cent.

The data also show First Nations EAs to be, on the whole, younger than the overall EA population. The following table provides an age group breakdown for First Nations EAs completing the survey, as well as a comparison with the larger survey population.

⁸ While the SSEAC database contains similar information, it was limited to the employment history of education assistants for the time they worked with current employers and did not include total work experience.

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4. Age profile of First Nations survey respondents

First Nations EA Age Group	Survey count	% Total	Difference from overall survey population	<i>First Nations EAs tend to be younger than their non-aboriginal counterparts</i>
Less than or equal to 20 years	8	3.5%	+2.5%	
Over 20 and up to 25 years	6	2.6%	+0.1%	
Over 25 and up to 30 years	9	4.0%	-1.6%	
Over 30 and up to 35 years	20	8.8%	+1.2%	
Over 35 and up to 40 years	45	19.8%	+9.0%	
Over 40 and up to 45 years	42	18.5%	+3.1%	
Over 45 and up to 50 years	42	18.5%	-5.0%	
Over 50 and up to 55 years	31	13.7%	-7.2%	
Over 55 and up to 60 years	17	7.5%	-2.6%	
Over 60 years	7	3.1%	+0.7%	
n =	227			

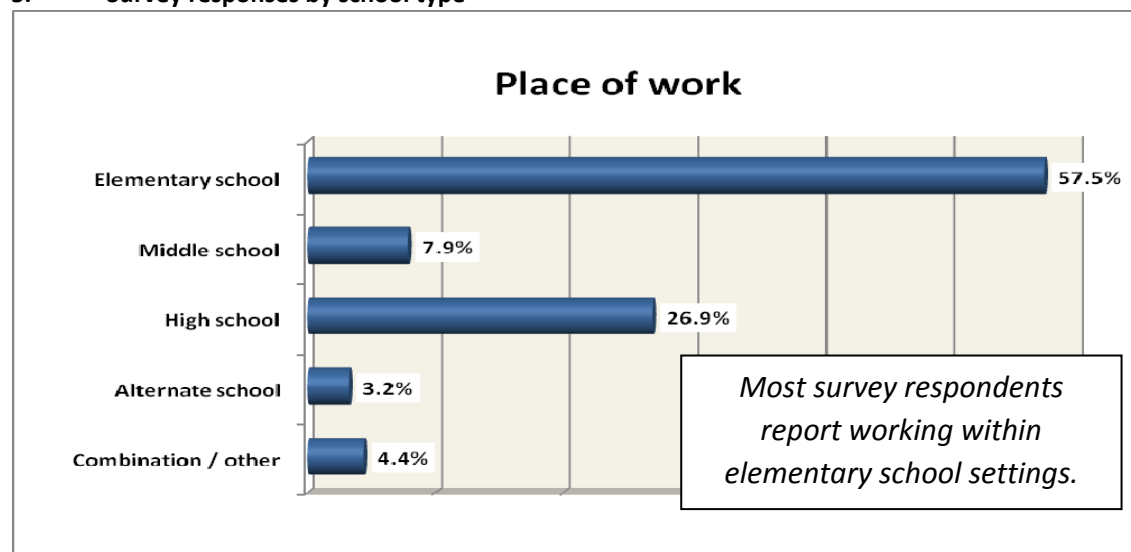
Almost 39 per cent of First Nations EAs are age 40 or under compared with less than 28 per cent of the overall EA population. An average First Nations EA was 44, almost two years younger than the overall average. Further analysis of the First Nations sub-group will be the object of a separate report.

6. School level breakdown

Education assistants were asked where they worked within the public school system. A range of standard school types were offered, as was the possibility that assistants might work in multiple locations. The overwhelming majority of education assistants – some 96.8 per cent – reported working in one school location. Most of the remainder reported working in two school locations with a small group (less than 1.0 per cent) indicating they worked in more than two locations.

The following graph shows survey responses for the school type options provided in this question.

5. Survey responses by school type



The data indicates that the largest group of EAs works at the elementary level of the school system.⁹

7. Assignment breakdown

EAs were questioned on their specific work assignments. Tabulating this involved differentiating EAs who worked with special education students from those who did not. It also involved differentiating EAs who worked predominantly with one as opposed to multiple students. The following table shows the breakdown.

6. Work assignments of education assistants

Focus of EA work assignment	Total	% Total	<i>Working either solely or predominantly with multiple special education students is the norm for EAs in BC.</i>
Multiple special education students	1,474	37.8%	
Predominantly with special education students	1,252	32.1%	
One special education student	694	17.8%	
Predominantly with non-special education students	196	5.0%	
Other	281	7.2%	
n =	3,897		

The data show that most education assistants – close to 70 per cent – report working either exclusively or predominantly with multiple special education students. A further 18 per cent report working exclusively with one student in the special education field, while the remaining 12 per cent report not working predominantly in the special education field or working in some other capacity.¹⁰

Does work assignment vary by school type? The following table presents a cross comparison of work assignment and school type location data. Data on each line of the table show the percentage distribution of education assistants broken out by work arrangements (columns). Each line therefore totals 100 per cent.

⁹ There is no comparable SSEAC or BC Ministry information to measure this survey result against.

¹⁰ Significant numbers of education assistants working in the British Columbia public schools are currently employed providing services to either First Nations learners or to “English as a Second Language” students. The BC Ministry of Education’s *Revenue and Expenditure Information* (Table 11) shows that in 2007/08 about eight per cent of the total education assistant workforce was employed in these two program areas. The data is available at www.bced.gov.bc.ca/accountability/district/revenue/.

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7. Work assignments of education assistants by school type

In what type of school do you work?	Is most or all of your work assignment directed to:				
	One special education student	Multiple special education	Predominantly special education students	Predominantly non-special education students	Other
Elementary	23.1%	34.0%	33.7%	3.9%	5.3%
Middle	14.8%	43.1%	30.6%	4.4%	7.1%
High school	12.1%	46.2%	29.6%	5.9%	6.2%
Alternate	0.0%	35.2%	25.4%	10.7%	28.7%
Other	11.4%	35.5%	27.1%	10.8%	15.1%

Elementary level EAs have a higher likelihood of working with a single student.

The data indicate that EAs working at the elementary level have the highest likelihood of working exclusively with one special education student. EAs working at middle and high schools have a greater likelihood of working in multiple student arrangements, yet variances across major school types (i.e., elementary–middle–high school) are not pronounced percentage-wise. A similar lack of substantial variance applies to EAs working predominantly with special education students but who may work with other students outside special education field. The exception is EAs who work in “Alternate” schools and in “Other” school types and who have a higher likelihood of working with non-special education students or in other kinds of work arrangements.

8. Education assistant work with student Individual Education Plans

The previous tables confirm that the vast majority of EAs’ work is devoted to assisting special education students. Within BC’s public school system, designated special education students typically have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) developed to specify learning goals, approaches and anticipated outcomes. Such plans are typically adapted in accordance with the specific learning circumstances of and challenges faced by individual students. EAs were asked whether the students they worked with had IEPs.

8. Work with students having individual education plans

Do your students have IEPs?	Total	% Total
Yes	2,450	63.4%
No	65	1.7%
A mix of ‘Yes’ and ‘No’	1,305	33.7%
Unsure	47	1.2%
n =	3,867	

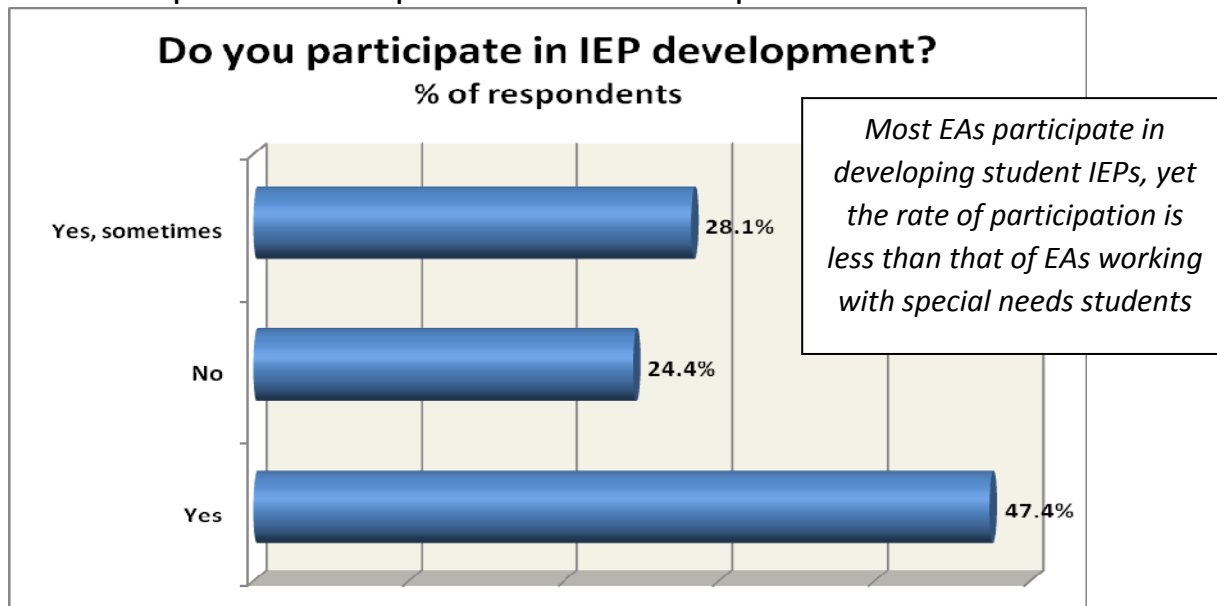
Most EAs work with students who have Individual Education Plans

For roughly five-eighths of those completing the survey, students had IEPs. Another third indicated that at least some of their student’s had IEPs. This indicates that the overwhelming majority of EAs – more

than 97 per cent – work with at least some students carrying a special education designation and requiring an individual education plan.

As a follow-up, respondents were asked whether they had the opportunity to participate in the development of student IEPs. The following table indicates the pattern of responses.

9. Participation in the development of individual education plans



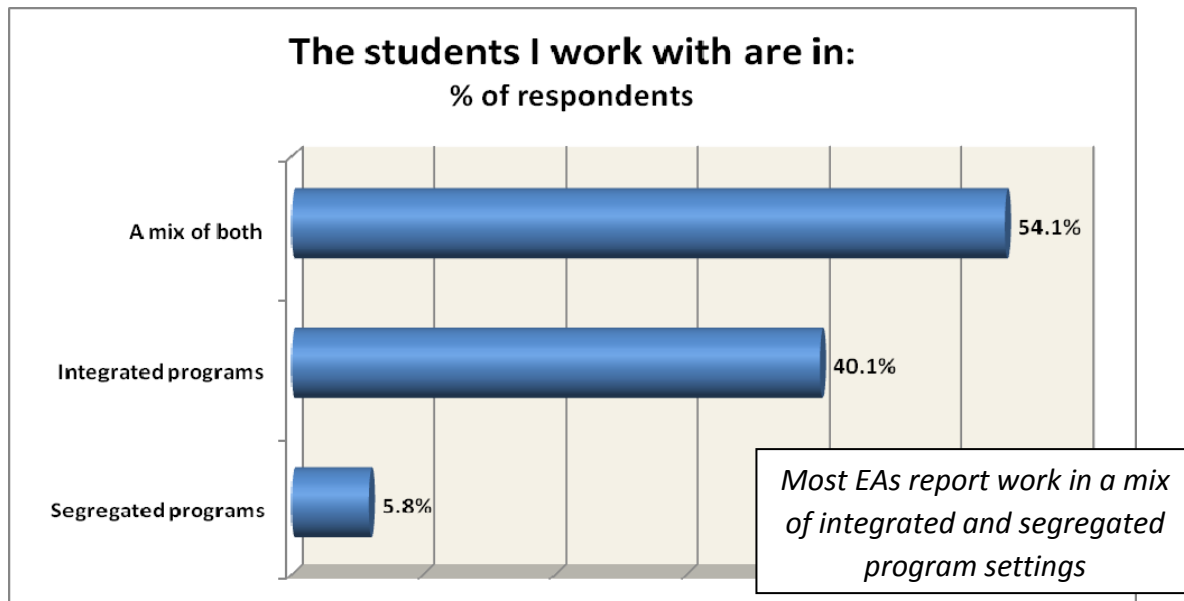
The data show that while only 47 per cent of education assistants indicated they participated in the development of IEPs, another 28 per cent reported participating some of the time. Together these figures would indicate that about three-quarters of education assistants have some IEP involvement. This being said, a comparison of this finding with information contained in Figure 9 shows that about 22 per cent of EAs who work with special needs students do not have the opportunity to participate in the development of student IEPs. This situation reflects both the problematic status and lack of recognition of the work EAs do with special education students.

EA work in integrated or segregated programs

For a number of years, special education in BC public schools has operated in accordance with a model of service delivery geared, where educationally appropriate, to promoting the maximum integration of special needs students into regular classroom settings. With this in mind, the survey asked education assistants whether they worked with students in programs that were integrated, segregated or a mixture of both. The following table presents the results.

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10. Work area by a degree of program integration



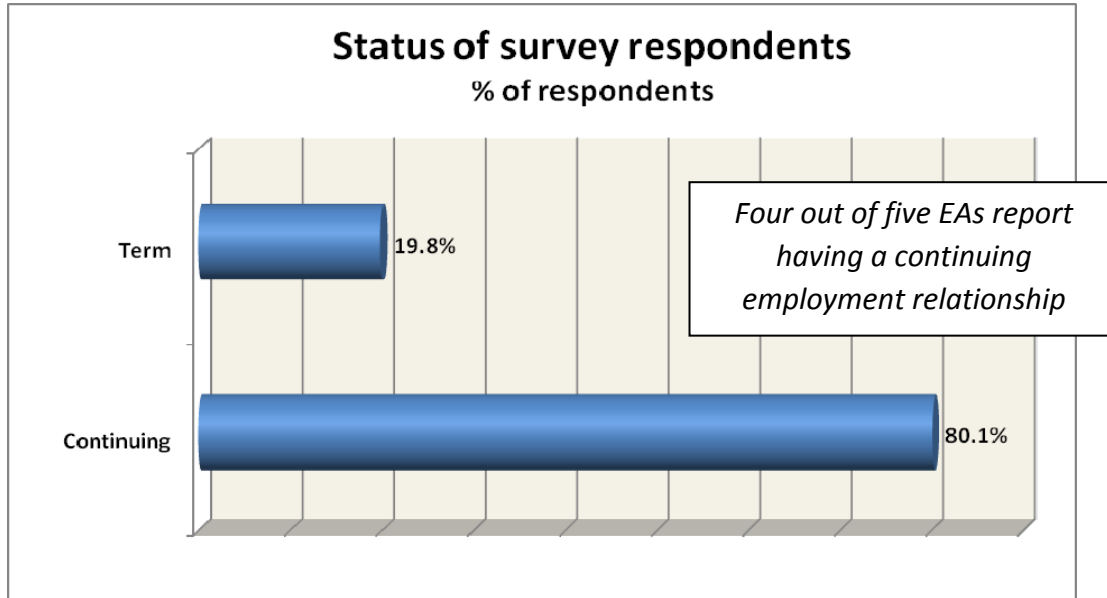
The results confirm that segregated programming models (and education assistant employment within these models) are a definite minority. Close to seven times as many education assistants report working in integrated programs. However, an even larger percentage report dividing work responsibilities between segregated and integrated programs. This result would suggest that the majority of education assistants working in the province's public schools have work assignments where they attend to children who are integrated into regular classrooms for part of the school day but who are also pulled out of classrooms for other parts of the day. Alternately, it might suggest that education assistants work with some students in integrated programs and other students in programs that are not integrated.

Are integrated programming models more prevalent in certain school types as opposed to others? A comparison of survey responses involving school type and degree of program integration showed that segregated programming options are far less likely to occur at the elementary level. This finding likely reflects the impact of smaller school size and the reduced viability of 'pull-out' segregated program models at this level. Conversely, alternate schools were far more likely to have segregated programs than any other school type. This finding is not surprising given that many alternate schools are designed to offer specialized programs targeting different categories of special needs students and may not enroll students who are not in these programs.

9. Employment status breakdown

Respondents were asked to describe their employment status with school districts.

11. Education assistant employment status



The information confirms that the overwhelming majority of EAs have continuing employment relationships with their districts.¹¹ The percentage of EA respondents with continuing employment relationships did not vary significantly by school type; indeed, close to 80 per cent in all school types reported having a continuing employment relationship with the employer.

The information in this section paints a broad demographic profile of the EA population. At the same time, comparisons with relevant data found in SSEAC data suggests that, with relatively minor variance, the demographic characteristics of EAs who elected to take part in the survey are broadly consistent with those of the overall EA population in BC. This broad concurrence lends support to the contention that findings from the survey's research into both paid and unpaid work will be broadly reflective of the overall EA population.

The next section of this report proceeds to an examination of survey data related to paid hours of EA employment.

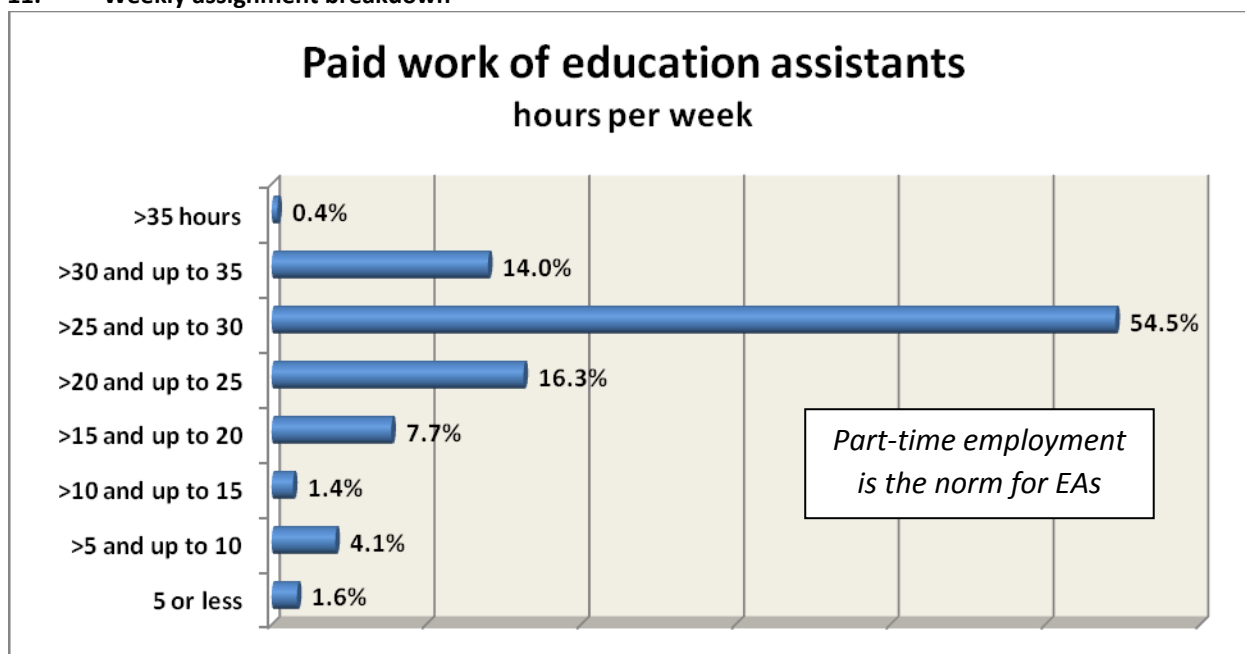
¹¹ SSEAC data showed approximately 82 per cent of education assistants having either continuing or term employment relationships in 2007/08. This figure corresponds closely to the findings in Figure 12.

Paid assignments of education assistants

EAs in BC typically work in jobs that run 10 months of the year, paralleling the public school calendar. While these jobs carry a notional full-time equivalency of 35 hours per work week, the on-ground reality falls well short of anything approaching full-time status for the vast majority of EAs. To gain a broader picture of the actual work life of BC EAs and to develop a context for the examination of unpaid work, the survey asked a series of questions related to formal paid work assignments.

Education assistants were initially asked to record how many paid hours per week they had in their assignment. The following chart shows the overall pattern of responses.

11. Weekly assignment breakdown



Data in the above chart show that approximately 14 per cent of EAs had paid assignments of 20 or fewer hours per week with a similar percentage reporting paid assignments in excess of 30 hours per week. By far and away the most common paid work assignment – and one which accounted for almost 55 per cent of those participating in the survey – was “more than 25 and up to 30 hours per week.”

Only 182 EAs reported working 35 or more hours per week. This represents 4.7 per cent of the total number and would indicate the percentage of EAs who have what can normally be described as full time work assignments. The remaining 95 per cent of EAs work part-time (and part-year) for their school district employers.

For the survey population, the average reported paid work assignment came to 26 hours per week. Given the norm of 10-month employment for this classification, this makes for average annual employment of 1,040 hours.¹²

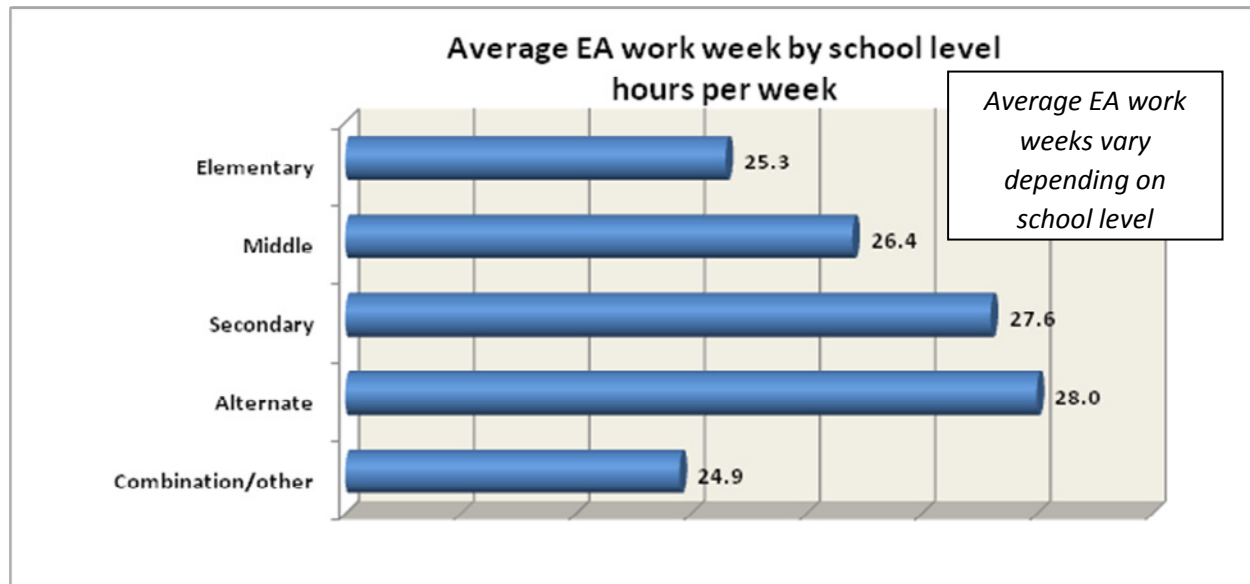
The following table shows the most commonly reported weekly assignments. The assignments listed below comprise more than 70 per cent of all survey respondents.

12. Reported weekly assignments: most common assignments

Weekly hour assignments	Number of survey respondents	% of total survey respondents	<i>Paid assignments falling between 25 and 30 hours per week account for a sizeable majority of EAs</i>
27.5 hours	729	19.2%	
30 hours	580	15.3%	
25 hours	468	12.3%	
20 hours	230	6.1%	
35 hours	168	4.4%	
28 hours	161	4.2%	
26.75 hours	121	3.2%	
31 hours	115	3.0%	
26 hours	110	2.9%	

Paid weekly assignments vary somewhat according to the school level where an EA is employed. The following table shows the range of variance in average assignments.

13. Average work week by school level



¹² SSEAC data referenced earlier in this report shows the average hourly wage of EAs working on a term or continuing basis as \$21.93 in the 2007/08 school year. With a 1,040 hour work year, the average annualized wage for EAs calculates out to \$22,807 – less than \$2,000 per month averaged over the course of the calendar year.

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

Information provided in the previous three tables confirms that part-time abbreviated work weeks predominate. To put the figures in context it should be remembered that weekly allocations of 27 to 30 hours – the most common range to emerge from the survey – amount to a “bell to bell” organization of recognized work time in the regular school day. Within this context, EAs are formally expected to begin and end their work days at points that coincide precisely with student contact time. Next to no time is formally allocated or paid within this framework for EAs to get themselves prepared, to assemble necessary materials, to organize spaces of work or to communicate with others, whether individually or in meetings. It is this radical compression of recognized work time which by its very nature creates the pressure giving rise to the phenomenon of unpaid work.

EAs were asked whether they were ever requested to put in additional paid work time above and beyond their normal weekly assignment. A total of 53.6 per cent said ‘Yes’ while the remainder said ‘No’. The results such as this would appear to indicate that the formal request for overtime is not an uncommon occurrence within the public school system.

EAs were then asked to indicate the manner in which extra time was remunerated. The following chart shows an overall tabulation of responses.

14. Payment method for extra paid time

Method of payment for extra time	Number of survey respondents	% of total survey respondents	<i>Genuine overtime consideration is a rarity for EAs</i>
Straight time	515	24.8%	
Overtime	78	3.8%	
Both	1,434	69.0%	
Time in lieu	332	16.0%	
n=	2,079		

The results are curious for a number of reasons. Firstly, less than four per cent report full overtime consideration for extra time they formally log on the job. Roughly a quarter say they are paid out via a straight time calculation while another 69 per cent indicate a mixture of overtime and straight-time consideration. Of those selecting the ‘time in lieu’ option, a wide margin (88 per cent) stated that the standard method of determining time owed centred on a ‘straight time’ calculation. This pattern of results confirms that genuine overtime consideration for extra work performed is a rarity. It also points to the absence of any consistent or regularized method of overtime consideration and remuneration.¹³

When asked as to their preference for extra time compensation, the responses were split amongst three available alternatives. About 28 per cent expressed a preference for banked time. Another 34 per cent cited a preference for being paid for extra time and the remaining 38 per cent noted a preference for some combination of the foregoing two methods.

¹³ It is important to remember with this calculation that the measure here refers to paid overtime and not unpaid work done by education assistants in the course of their work. Unpaid work time is the subject of the following section of this report.

The survey asked for information regarding the normal rate or frequency with which EAs accumulate formal overtime. The following table shows the breakdown of responses.

15. Rate of extra hours accumulation

Rate of extra hours accumulation	Number of survey respondents	% of total survey respondents	<i>Paid overtime averages an hour or less per week for most EAs</i>
Less than 1 hour per week	1,061	41.6%	
1 hour per week	531	20.8%	
2 hours per week	322	12.6%	
3 hours per week	102	4.0%	
4 hours per week	55	2.2%	
5 hours per week	133	5.2%	
Other	344	13.5%	
n =	2,548		

For the survey population as a whole, well over 60 per cent report one or fewer hours of paid overtime in an average week. The average formal paid overtime for the entire survey population came to 1.4 hours per week.¹⁴

Survey respondents were asked to indicate where within the school year extra paid work might be concentrated, if it all. The following table summarizes responses received.

16. Concentration of unpaid time during school year

Where is paid overtime concentrated in the school year?	Number of survey respondents	% total survey respondents	<i>Unpaid time does not appear to be concentrated in any particular period for most EAs</i>
At the start of the year	360	13.2%	
At the end of the year	251	9.2%	
At other times	1,516	55.4%	
None of the above	610	22.3%	
n =	2,737		

Less than 23 per cent indicated that paid extra work was concentrated at either at the beginning or the end of the school year. The largest block indicated that this time was to be found at other times of the year while a substantial block selected ‘none of the above’. This breakdown suggests that there is little by way of a predictable pattern in the way EAs received the opportunity for extra paid work.

¹⁴ This calculation assumes that the 344 respondents who provided an ‘Other’ answer worked an average of seven additional extra hours per week, and those who left the question blank performed no extra paid work.

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Amidst survey questions regarding allocations of paid work, the survey asked: “Which of the following best describes your expectations of your hours of work as an EA?” Three response options were given along with an opportunity for EAs to record their view of an optimum total weekly assignment.

17. Work hours expectations

Expectations of hours of work	Number of survey respondents	% of total survey respondents	<i>Close to two-thirds of EAs want more paid hours</i>
“I am content with the current allocation of paid hours for my position.”	1,234	35.0%	
“I would like to get more paid hours for my current position than are now allocated.”	1,962	55.6%	
“I intend to bid into other EA positions that come available in order to increase my allocation of paid hours.”	333	9.4%	
n =	3,529		

More than a third of respondents indicated contentment with their allocation of paid hours. The largest group – close to 56 per cent – reported an interest in getting more paid hours in their current position. Slightly over nine per cent indicated an interest in seeking out other positions to increase their paid work time. These results indicate that almost two-thirds of EAs are not content with the allocation of hours and either would like an increased allocation or are willing to switch positions to increase their paid hours.

How many additional hours are sought? The following table provides the responses.

18. Additional work hours wanted

I would like total additional work hours of:	Total respondents	% of survey respondents seeking more hours	<i>Most EAs want between one and five additional paid hours of work per week</i>
Less than or equal to 1 additional hour	56	3.3%	
Over 1 and up to 3 additional hours	488	28.5%	
Over 3 and up to 5 additional hours	595	34.8%	
Over 5 and up to 7 additional hours	126	7.4%	
Over 7 and up to 9 additional hours	202	11.8%	
Over 9 and up to 11 additional hours	125	7.3%	
Over 11 and up to 13 additional hours	32	1.9%	
Over 13 and up to 15 additional hours	22	1.3%	
Over 15 additional hours	64	3.7%	
n =	1,710		

Of those seeking additional paid hours, the largest group, accounting for over 62 per cent, indicated an interest in having between one and five additional weekly hours. A smaller group totaling slightly over 19 per cent report wanted five to nine additional paid hours.

In looking at data in the previous two tables, it would be useful to examine the degree to which factors such as age, years of work experience, and work location have a bearing on work expectations. Similarly, it would also be interesting to examine the degree to which current allocations of paid hours have an impact on interest in seeking an increased allocation. With these needs in mind, the following set of tables makes an effort to ‘cross tabulate’ these demographic variables with the area of work hours’ expectations.

The first measure under examination is current weekly work assignment. The following table shows the average weekly assignment of those voicing a preference regarding expected weekly hours.

19. Average assigned weekly hours for ‘work hours expectation groups’

Expectations of hours of work	Survey respondents	Average weekly assigned hours	Variance of weekly hours from survey average	<i>EAs with the smallest current assignments have the most interest in getting more paid hours</i>
“I am content with the current allocation of paid hours for my position”	1,234	26.2	+ 0.2 hours	
“I would like to get more paid hours for my current position than are now allocated”	1,962	26.5	+ 0.5 hours	
“I intend to bid into other EA positions that come available in order to increase my allocation of paid hours”	333	23.3	- 2.7 hours	
Overall average weekly assigned hours		26.0		

The group of respondents reporting an interest in moving to another EA position to increase their weekly assignment had, on average, a significantly smaller current work assignment than the other two groups. The conclusion to be drawn is that reduced current assignments play a role in increasing the interest of incumbents in seeking additional paid hours.

However, of greater significance is the fact that the average weekly hours of those content with their current allocation does not vary greatly from that of EAs indicating an interest in getting more hours. This suggests there are two predominant currents of opinion within the ranks of EAs with respect to allocations of hours. The first or ‘contented’ group, reflecting slightly over a third, is satisfied with the current part-time allocation. The second group comprises the two subgroups interested in increased hours and reflects close to two-thirds of the total EA population. Of this second group, a smaller fraction indicates a willingness to change positions for the purpose of augmenting paid hours, while the largest block, comprising approximately 55 per cent of the total survey population, wants to retain current work positions while increasing hours in the direction of full-time employment status.

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Does the age of an EA have a bearing on interest in additional work hours? The following table provides a breakdown of data along the variables of age group and interest in additional work hours.

20. Additional work hours wanted by age group

Additional hours wanted	Survey respondent age group (% of total age group)					<i>Interest in larger amounts of additional work is generally more prevalent amongst younger EAs</i>		
	Less than or equal to age 25	Over 25 and up to age 30	Over 30 and up to age 35	Over 35 and up to age 40	Over 40 and up to age 45			
Up to 1 more hour	4.5%	5.8%	2.7%	3.0%	2.9%	Over 45 and up to age 50	Over 50 and up to age 55	Over age 55
Over 1 & up to 3 more hours	21.2%	25.6%	24.0%	26.6%	23.4%	31.9%	31.8%	31.0%
Over 3 & up to 5 more hours	27.3%	26.4%	30.0%	34.9%	38.5%	31.9%	38.3%	41.0%
Over 5 & up to 7 more hours	9.1%	9.9%	4.0%	8.3%	8.4%	8.9%	5.9%	5.5%
Over 7 & up to 9 more hours	6.1%	15.7%	20.7%	10.7%	11.3%	12.1%	10.3%	8.5%
Over 9 more hours	31.8%	16.5%	18.7%	16.6%	15.5%	12.1%	10.3%	11.5%
n =	1,708							

Generally speaking, the desire for additional paid work hours is greatest amongst younger EAs. Indeed, those under the age of 35 are most interested in longer work hours.

Survey respondents were asked whether they spent time in their regular work assignment traveling from one school or work site to another. A total of 11.5 per cent of indicated they did spend time traveling on the job. This latter group was then asked two additional questions. The first related to how much time they spent traveling. The following table shows the response pattern.

21. Weekly travel time

How much time do you spend time traveling from one work site to another in a regular week?	Survey responses	% of total reporting travel time	<i>Close to 12% of EAs report travel time related to their jobs</i>
Up to 2 hours per week	301	77.4%	
Greater than 2 and up to 4 hours per week	53	13.6%	
Greater than 4 and up to 6 hours per week	23	5.9%	
Greater than 6 hours per week	12	3.1%	
n =	389		

More than three-quarters of those with travel time spend up to two hours per week ‘on the road.’

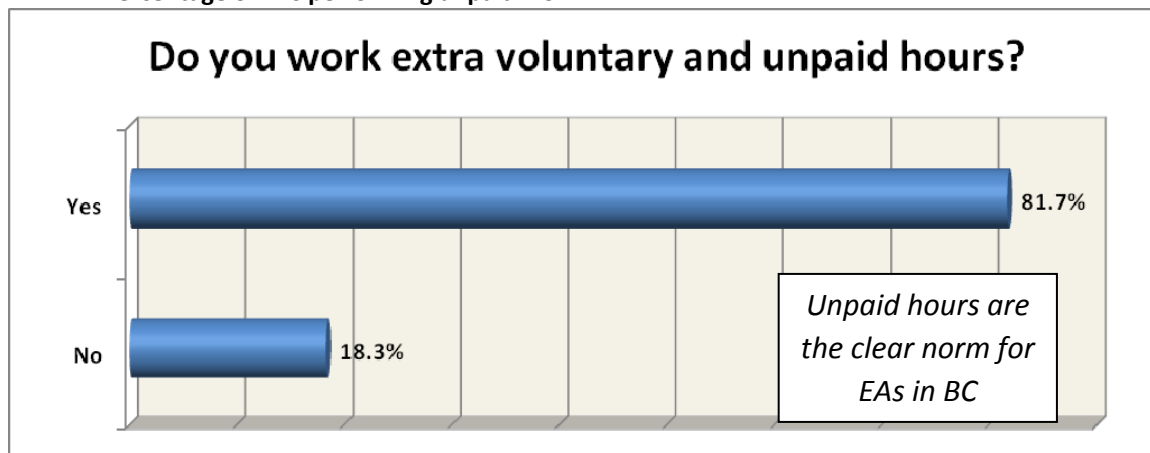
The second question related to compensation for time spent traveling. When asked if they were compensated for travel time during work, 43.4 per cent said ‘yes’ and 56.6 per cent said ‘no’. This indicates a clear problem with inconsistent practice regarding compensation for this type of work time. There appears to be little consistency within and across school districts in regards to whether the travel time is compensated. Of the districts where EAs participated, only two – District 28 Quesnel and District 50 Queen Charlotte Islands/Haida Gwaii — had consistent reports that travel time was compensated, and three – District 10 Arrow Lakes, District 48 Howe Sound and District 87 Stikine – had participants consistently reporting that travel time was not compensated. The other 50 districts had fluctuating percentages of ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. This pattern underlines widespread administrative inconsistencies between and within districts.

Perspectives on current paid assignments and aspirations for an additional paid work time offer key insight into the expectations EAs have. They also serve to frame the subject of the next report section, which looks at unpaid hours logged by EAs on the job.

Unpaid hours on the job

The overwhelming majority of EAs report providing unpaid work to their employers. As the following chart indicates, 81.7 per cent of EAs say they perform unpaid work in their jobs.

22. Percentage of EAs performing unpaid work



This result indicates that unpaid work time for EAs is a clear norm in the province. Those answering ‘yes’ were then asked how much unpaid time was involved. The following table provides a breakdown of the 2,763 answers received.

23. Weekly hours of unpaid work time

Do you work extra voluntary and unpaid hours on the job? If yes, how many hours?	Number of survey responses	% of total responses	<i>An average EA in BC logs almost two hours per week in unpaid work time</i>
Two or fewer hours per week	1,877	67.9%	
Over 2 and up to 4 hours per week	512	18.5%	
Over 4 and up to 6 hours per week	271	9.8%	
Over 6 and up to 8 hours per week	47	1.7%	
Over 8 and up to 10 hours per week	38	1.4%	
Over 10 hours per week	18	0.7%	
Average for those who report unpaid hours on the job		2.4 hours	
Average for all survey respondents		1.9 hours	

As the table indicates, the largest block of EAs reporting unpaid time – close to 68 per cent – say they work two or fewer hours per week. Another block, representing close to a fifth of EAs, falls in the two to four hour category, and the remaining 13.5 per cent report higher levels of unpaid time.

The average amount of unpaid work time from the survey came to 2.4 hours per week. When calculated in relation to the total survey population – including those who reported not working unpaid hours – this figure drops to 1.9 hours per week.

This latter amount allows for a calculation of unpaid work to be extrapolated up to the provincial level. A total of 9,764 EAs worked on a temporary or continuing basis with school district employers in 2007/08. If each of these EAs worked 40 weeks per year (as per a 10 month calendar), unpaid work time calculates out to 742,000 hours for the school system as a whole. When allowance is made for the fact that there are more than 2,700 additional casual EAs, it can be reasonably expected that total unpaid time is close to 800,000 hours per year.

Calculating net or “unclaimed” work time must take into account that 40 per cent of EAs report recovering all unpaid time, and, for the remaining 60 per cent, approximately 40 per cent of time is recovered. In view of this, the net contribution of unpaid time probably resides in the vicinity of 287,000 hours per year.¹⁵

EAs in all participating school districts report unpaid work time, varying from a low of 1.2 hours in District 67 Okanagan-Skaha, to a high of 4.3 hours in District 87 Stikine.¹⁶ As the next table indicates, the problem is both chronic in nature as well as endemic.

¹⁵ See Figure 35 of this report for further information regarding the amount of unpaid time that EAs reclaim from their employers through the different banking arrangements currently in place.

¹⁶ These figures are weighted averages of unpaid weekly time by individual school district, for education assistants reporting such time on the survey.

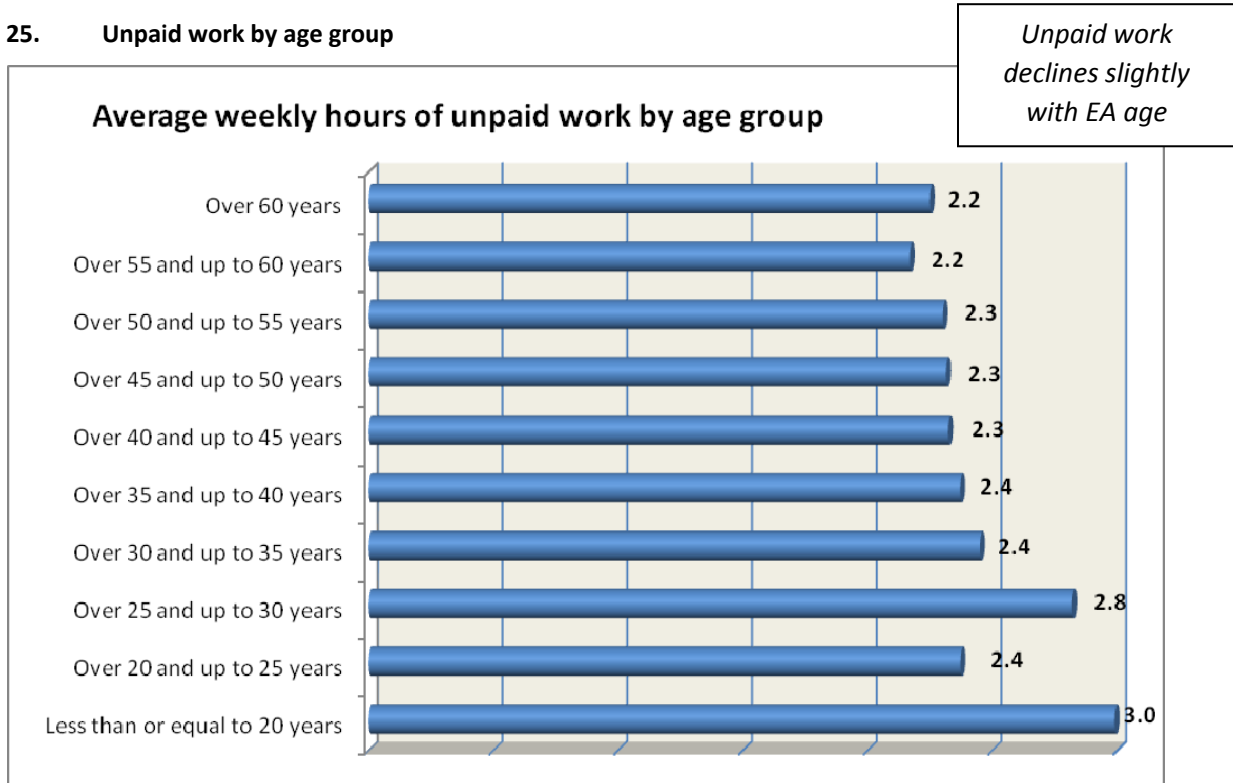
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24. Average weekly unpaid time by school district

SD	SD Name	Average unpaid time/week	Rank (high to low)	SD	SD Name	Average unpaid time/week	Rank (high to low)
5	South East Kootenay	1.8	51	53	Okanagan-Similkameen	2.1	41
6	Rocky Mountain	2.5	21	54	Bulkley Valley	2.1	38
8	Kootenay Lake	2.0	43	57	Prince George	2.2	34
10	Arrow Lakes	2.5	19	58	Nicola-Similkameen	1.8	49
19	Revelstoke	2.9	7	60	Peace River North	2.2	30
20	Kootenay-Columbia	2.6	17	61	Greater Victoria	2.8	9
22	Vernon	2.4	25	62	Sooke	2.5	24
23	Central Okanagan	2.2	31	63	Saanich	2.1	39
28	Quesnel	1.8	50	64	Gulf Islands	2.3	29
33	Chilliwack	2.0	45	67	Okanagan-Skaha	1.2	55
34	Abbotsford	2.5	23	68	Nanaimo-Ladysmith	2.7	13
35	Langley	2.0	44	69	Qualicum	1.6	54
36	Surrey	2.1	36	70	Alberni	3.3	4
37	Delta	2.6	15	71	Comox Valley	2.1	42
38	Richmond	2.4	28	72	Campbell River	2.4	27
39	Vancouver	2.8	10	73	Kamloops/Thompson	2.6	16
40	New Westminster	2.5	20	74	Gold Trail	2.1	40
41	Burnaby	2.8	8	75	Mission	2.5	22
42	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	2.2	35	78	Fraser-Cascade	3.0	6
43	Coquitlam	2.6	18	79	Cowichan Valley	1.6	53
44	North Vancouver	2.7	12	82	Coast Mountains	1.9	48
45	West Vancouver	2.2	32	83	North Okanagan-Shuswap	2.0	46
46	Sunshine Coast	1.9	47	84	Vancouver Island West	2.8	11
47	Powell River	1.7	52	85	Vancouver Island North	2.2	33
48	Howe Sound	4.1	2	87	Stikine	4.3	1
50	Haida Gwaii/Q. Charlotte	3.5	3	91	Nechako Lakes	2.7	14
51	Boundary	2.1	37	93	CSF	3.2	5

Do age and length of working experience bear on EAs' willingness to work unpaid time? As the following chart indicates, younger EAs are slightly more inclined to provide unpaid time.

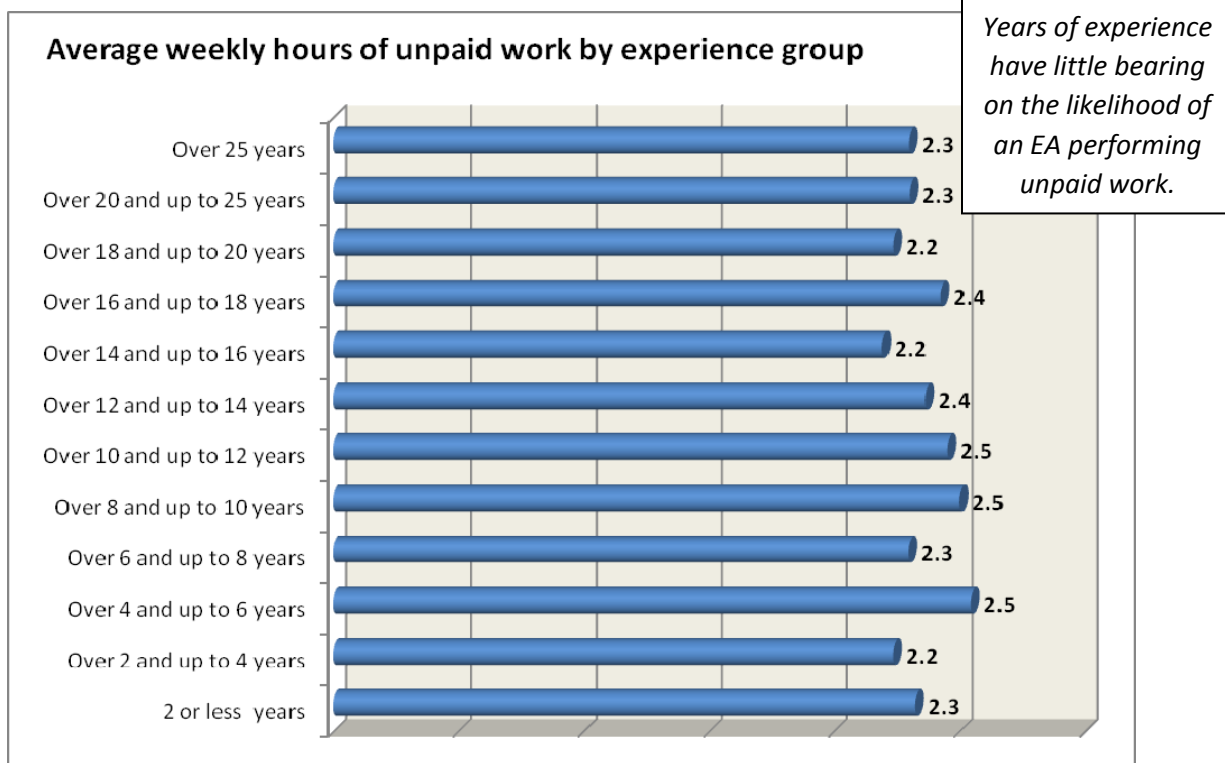
25. Unpaid work by age group



In contrast, years of work experience appear to have little bearing on EA participation in unpaid work. The following table shows random and only minor fluctuation when calculations based on experience groups are compared with the overall survey average.

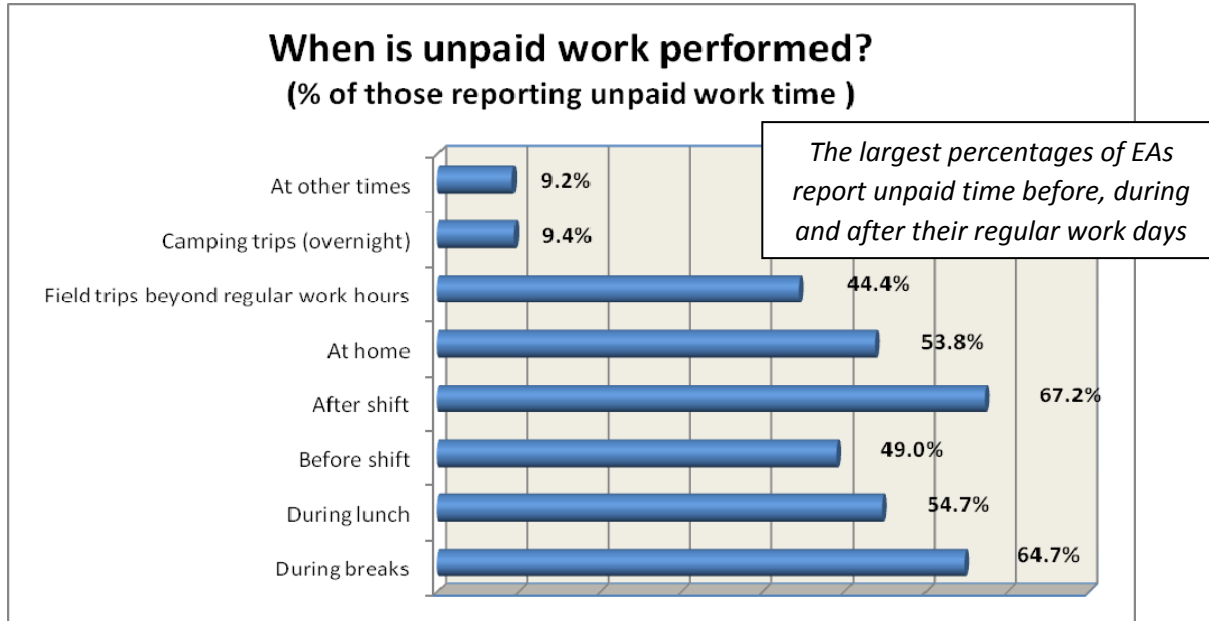
Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

26. Unpaid work by experience group



To probe the issue of unpaid work, EAs were asked when during the day they provided unpaid work time. As the following chart shows, unpaid work time occurs at all times.

27. When unpaid work is performed



The most probable times when unpaid work is performed are after shift and during break time. However, substantial numbers also report performing unpaid work at home, during lunch break and

before their shift begins. In addition, most EAs – close to seven out of eight – report unpaid work at a multiple points, during and outside the regular workday.

28. Performing unpaid work at multiple points in times

Education assistants reporting unpaid work time it multiple points in time	Survey respondents	% of those reporting unpaid work time	<i>Most individual EAs perform unpaid work at multiple points in time</i>
Those reporting unpaid work at two points in time	554	17.6%	
Those reporting unpaid work at three points in time	695	22.1%	
Those reporting unpaid work at four points in time	592	18.8%	
Those reporting unpaid work at five points in time	505	16.1%	
Those reporting unpaid work at six points in time	298	9.5%	
Those reporting unpaid work at seven points in time	104	3.3%	
Those reporting unpaid work at all eight points in time	12	0.4%	
Total reporting multiple points in times		87.8%	

The performance of unpaid time before, during and after shift raises a disturbing issue in regards to the lack of even minimal break time for many EAs. To probe this issue, effort was made to look at the number of EAs who report performing unpaid work before, during (at break times) and after shift. The data shows that almost 46 per cent of those with unpaid work time report routinely donating time during work day breaks and lunch time. Results also confirm that almost 22 per cent of all EAs work unpaid time before shift, during breaks, at lunchtime and after shift. For many of this group, schedules appear routinely to offer the prospect of no ‘on the job’ break time whatsoever, a finding which raises troublesome implications in regards to stress, fatigue and burnout.

Younger EAs appear more likely to work during break time. Those between the ages of 25 and 40 are most likely to work during lunch time and after shift. EAs age 25-30 and 45-50 are most likely to work before shift. And those between the ages of 20 and 40 are most likely to report working on field trips and overnight camping trips.

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

What type of unpaid work are EAs performing during the periods when they report it? The following table shows the overall pattern of responses, sorted in descending order of frequency.

29. Type of work performed during unpaid time

What type of work do you do during this time?	% of those reporting unpaid time	
Provide coverage for field trips during school hours	49.3%	<i>EAs use unpaid time to prepare, to provide student coverage and to meet or consult with others about their work</i>
Attend IEP meetings	47.5%	
Prepare materials for my assignment	47.3%	
(Deal with) problematic behaviour of student at the end of the day or during break	45.0%	
Consult with teachers or administrators or others	41.5%	
(Deal with) lack of coverage and unfilled absences	34.1%	
(Deal with) parent late picking up child	29.5%	
Accompany students during work experience or community-based activities	21.8%	
(Deal with) transportation scheduling	15.7%	
Provide coverage for drills or assemblies	14.6%	
(Deal with) another staff member not reporting on time	13.8%	

The first five categories are cited by the highest numbers of respondents. Apart from the leading issue of coverage for field trips, the most important categories relate to unpaid work which is primarily on-site and within the routine course of the work day. EAs report attending Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, preparing necessary learning materials, dealing with problematic student behaviour, and making time to consult with teachers and others about student plans and progress.¹⁷ Taken together, these categories paint a complex portrait of pressures to make up for shortcomings in the scheduling of paid work hours and in the provision of on-site coverage for students, both within the regular school day and beyond.

¹⁷ The lack of necessary time for resource development and work preparation as well as time to meet collaboratively with teachers figure as prominent recommendations for change to come from open-ended comments EAs attached to their surveys.

To complete the overall picture, EAs were asked to specify the primary reasons for providing unpaid time to their employers. The following table shows reasons in descending order of importance.

30. Reasons for performing unpaid work

Reasons for performing unpaid work	Count	% of those reporting unpaid time	
“I feel obliged to meet my students’ needs“	2,547	81.2%	<i>Professional concerns and time pressures rank highest as reasons for unpaid work</i>
“I have a professional commitment to my job and work”	2,523	80.5%	
“There is not enough time in my regular work schedule to do my job”	2,113	67.4%	
“I feel obliged to guarantee my students’ safety”	1,824	58.2%	
“I feel obliged to cover emergency situations with my students”	1,638	52.2%	
“My day’s routine improves when I work these hours”	1,534	48.9%	
“The schedule does not allow for coverage for break times”	597	19.0%	
“Teachers expect me to work extra voluntary and unpaid hours”	396	12.6%	
“Administrators expect me to work extra voluntary and unpaid hours”	328	10.5%	
“Other reason(s)”	342	10.9%	

Interestingly, the most frequently cited reasons relate to EAs’ intrinsic awareness of what it takes to perform their jobs. They point squarely to a perceived need to take care of students as well as to provide quality support for students’ learning. In this sense, the top items listed together reflect an enduring sense of professional responsibility and commitment. Other high-ranking categories include an awareness of the need to guarantee student safety and to deal with emergency situations. Overall, these reasons confirm a widespread and strongly held sense of professional obligation and responsibility.

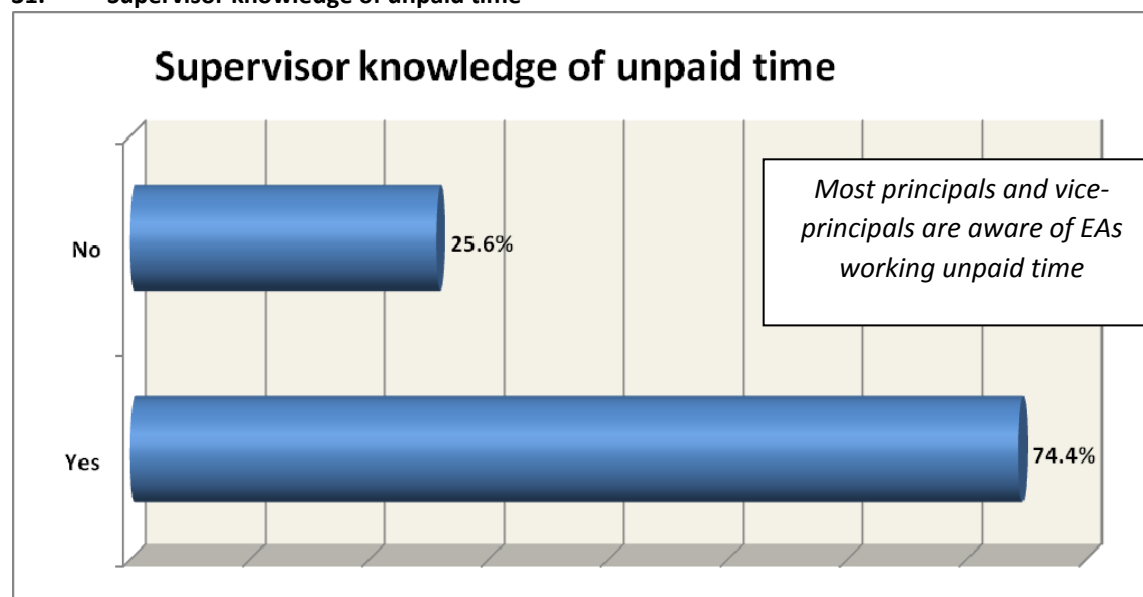
At the same time, EAs are less likely to cite pressure from others to perform unpaid work – whether other EAs, teachers, administrators or parents. These results should be considered carefully. As will be shown later, when efforts are made to present comments and suggestions by EAs themselves, there is a strong perception that some pressure exists, but that it is mostly subtle and implicit. This kind of pressure is often perceived by EAs to be part of the internal culture and style of school operation. It takes shape in the context of EAs constituting an hourly paid workforce within a system staffed by larger numbers of salaried employees.

Keeping records of unpaid work

To what extent has unpaid EA work become part of a formalized expectation of job performance? An important indicator of 'formalization' can be found in the way records are kept of unpaid hours, in the methods used to track this time, and in the opportunities given to EAs to reclaim the unpaid time they donate to employers. The survey examined arrangements made to regulate these issues.

The first question was whether those in supervisory positions know that EAs contribute unpaid time in the course of their work assignments. As the following table indicates, three-quarters of EAs report their administrators are aware of the situation.

31. Supervisor knowledge of unpaid time



EAs were then asked whether there was an arrangement in place allowing for the banking of unpaid hours. Only 51 per cent reporting the performance of unpaid time said that such an arrangement existed. If EA perceptions of administrator awareness are accurate, this indicates that close to a quarter of all school-level administrators are aware of unpaid work yet made no effort to develop an explicit arrangement to administer this time on behalf of those who are performing it.

Those EAs who say an arrangement is in place were asked for further details on how the arrangement operated and how the system of 'banking hours' worked. The following chart shows the breakdown.

32. Method for using banked hours

How are banked hours taken?	Count of survey respondents	% of total reporting unpaid work	<i>EAs may 'reclaim' some unpaid time during Pro-D days, 'on-the fly' or by request</i>
During Pro-D days	980	45.4%	
When I can fit it into my schedule	969	44.9%	
When I request it	758	35.1%	
When a student with special needs is ill	618	28.6%	
During exams or turnaround days	355	16.4%	
Other (please specify briefly)	254	11.8%	
Via a payout of banked time	182	8.4%	

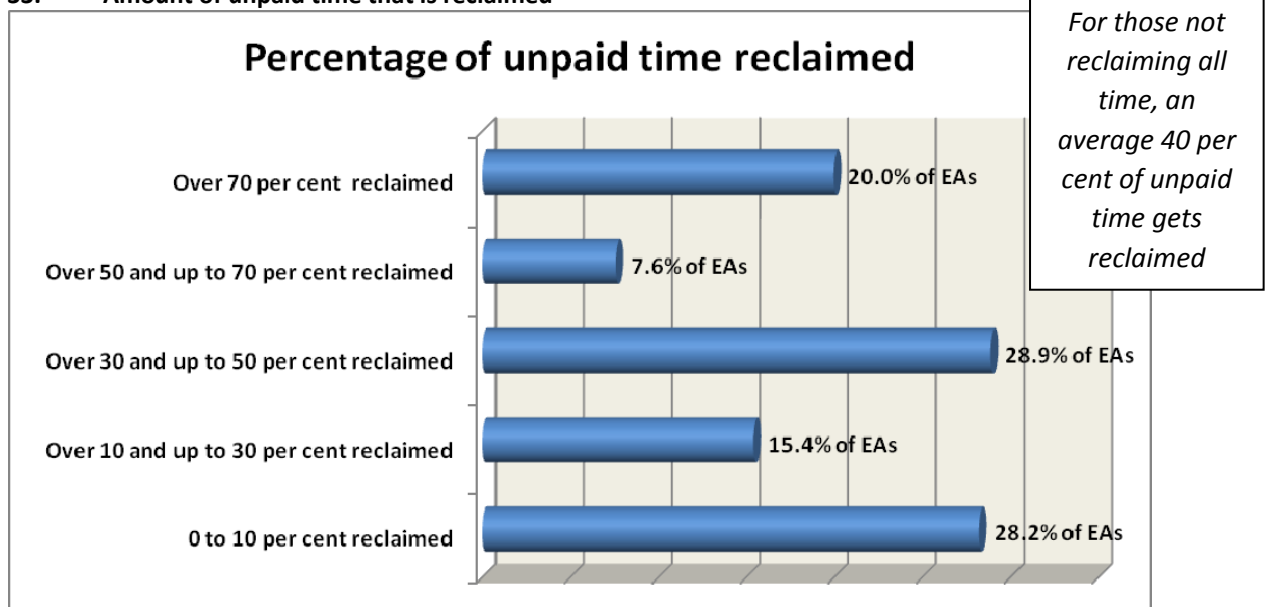
The most commonly cited ways that banked hours might be reclaimed relate to the use of professional development days, followed by whenever an EA might be able to fit reclaimed time into her schedule. The first of these reasons suggests that Pro D days are used as a safety valve for the reclamation of unpaid time, rather than as an opportunity for involving education assistants in professional development activities. Such an approach suggests that the Pro D needs of EAs are not adequately recognized, nor are appropriate efforts being made to address these needs.

The second reason cited in the above table – whenever the education of assistant might fit the time into her schedule – underlines the largely informal and *ad hoc* nature of recording and reclaiming unpaid time. The other items in the table are reflective of the same approach. The only exception is the final item which looks at a payout of banked time and which, according to EAs, applies only in a small minority of cases.

An important issue in the context of systems used to record and reclaim unpaid time is the degree to which EAs are successful in reclaiming the full extent of unpaid time. About 40 per cent of EAs indicated they did reclaim the full extent of their unpaid time and 60 per cent said they did not. For the latter group, the following table shows the breakdown by broad percentage bands of time reclaimed.

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

33. Amount of unpaid time that is reclaimed



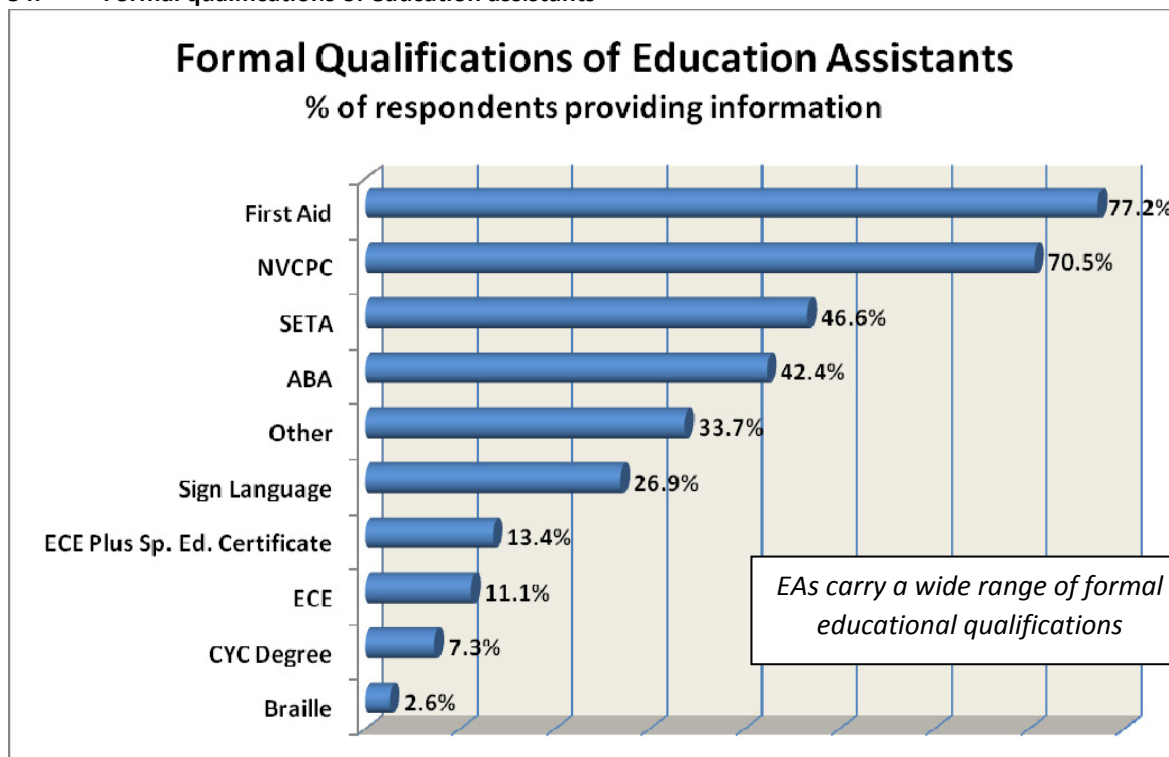
On average, the results show that EAs who do not recoup all unpaid time get an average of 40 per cent of it back. The rest of the time – close to 287,000 annual hours province-wide – is effectively lost to EAs and gained by district employers as a free contribution to the operation of schools.

Are there any significant differences with regard to the age or experience level of education assistants? An examination of time reclaimed in relation to age indicates there are variances amongst age groups, yet little by way of a pattern or trend. Similarly, EAs showed varying inclination to reclaim time by experience group; however, there was no clear trend across experience groups.

Qualifications and educational aspirations of EAs

In addition to analyzing unpaid work, the survey also gathered information on EAs’ formal skill levels and credentials. Respondents were invited to specify in which areas they held formal certificates and qualifications. A number of standard options were provided. The following chart shows the 3,310 responses provided.

34. Formal qualifications of education assistants



As the information in the chart demonstrates, a substantial majority of EAs have received formal training in providing first aid assistance. A sizable block also holds Non-Violent Crisis Prevention Certificates (NVCP). The next largest area lies with a college-level qualification known as the Special Education Teacher Assistant certificate (SETA) held by just under 47 per cent of survey EAs.¹⁸ Over a third also report training in Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA), a specialized qualification intended for working with students with autism. More than a quarter of EAs report having some level of qualification in sign language interpretation. Smaller percentages report other types of formal qualifications including Early Childhood Education diplomas or certificates (ECE, and ECE plus special education certificate), Child and Youth Care degrees (CYC)¹⁹ and Braille.

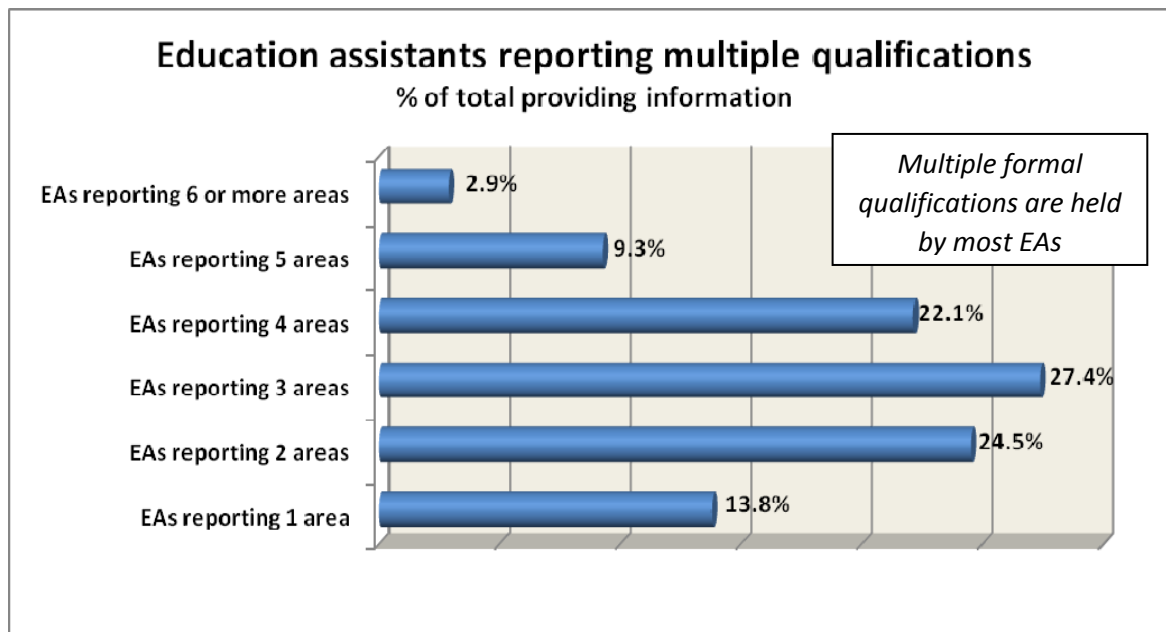
¹⁸ To take one example, at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, the “Special Education Teacher Assistant (SETA) Certificate Program prepares students for a variety of paraprofessional duties in schools” and is a one-year program.

¹⁹ A number of BC institutions offer bachelor degrees in Child and Youth Care, including the University of Victoria, Douglas College, the University of the Fraser Valley (formerly University College of the Fraser Valley), and Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina University College).

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Most EAs report multiple areas of educational qualification. The following chart shows a statistical breakdown.

35. Education assistants reporting multiple qualification areas



As the chart indicates, the largest group holds qualifications in three areas and accounts for over 27 per cent of those providing this information. A further 24 per cent report qualifications in two areas and 22 per cent report qualifications in four areas. Together these groups comprise close to three-quarters of those surveyed.

The most common areas of multiple qualifications involve First Aid and Non-Violent Crisis Prevention certificates. For those reporting three areas of qualification, the most common are SETA certificates in addition to First Aid and Non-Violent Crisis Prevention. For those who report four areas of qualification, the most commonly reported group involved SETA certificates, First Aid, Non-Violent Crisis Prevention and Interventions in Autism (ABA).

There are significant differences in levels of education and qualifications that centre on the age of EAs. Younger EAs are less likely to report more than two areas of formal qualification, as compared with those in the middle age groups (between the ages of 30 and 45) and older groups (over age 45). A different pattern is found when analyzing differences in levels of educational qualification by reported experience levels. When years of work experience are examined, only EAs with two or fewer years of experience report significantly different levels of formal qualifications (in this case fewer) than the average for all experience groups within the survey. There was little variance in this measure amongst other EA experience groups.

There may be different patterns of skill acquisition amongst EAs in the province. Younger EAs can be expected to carry sets of formal qualifications directly out of the post-secondary education system into their jobs. These individuals may also acquire additional skills or qualifications over the course of their work careers. At the same time, another group of EAs may enter this line of work at a later stage, carrying more life experience and less by way of formal qualifications. These and other issues will be

examined in a forthcoming and more detailed look at the educational qualifications and aspirations of education assistants.²⁰

Education assistants reported having taken more than 7,600 workshops related to their work. At a general level, this additional training reflects keen interest in the pursuit of educational opportunities relevant to EA work. In addition, EAs offered more than 5,700 prioritized suggestions on the survey for further training.

²⁰ Efforts will be made to tabulate at a more detailed level the educational qualification, additional training and stated training priorities of EAs in a special report, to be published at a later time by CUPE.

EAs on their jobs and pressure to perform unpaid work

In a 'comments' section at the end of the survey, EAs voiced a number of concerns about working conditions that give rise to unpaid hours. Together these comments comprise a collective narrative – on the commitment and professional dedication that EAs bring to their work as well as on the problems they encounter on the job. The series of tables in this section gives an opportunity for the views and perspectives of EAs to be heard directly.

EAs overwhelmingly raise a **need for more paid hours to do their jobs properly**. Many cite the presence of **unrecognized and unsupported student needs** in the special education area and feel they need more hours to address these unrecognized needs.

36. Unrecognized need of students

Many officially unidentified kids need help too and if they could get it at this stage in life, more of them might be more successful later in life and the justice and social systems would save more money. Many identified kids will be supported by social systems no matter how they do in school - though it is wonderful to see them as successful as possible.

- Educational Assistant, age 55, from the Kootenay region

There are so many needy children! The services the schools provide are not enough and/or adequate to cover the needs of those children.

- Educational Assistant, age 61, from the Fraser valley region

Many students are left to work independently, yet are unable to even read the instructions. Support for these kids is verbally acknowledged, yet with the funding cuts an EA is basically only able to assist the student they are assigned to. Kids are asking for help, and no one is there to assist them. The school system is not creating an environment for success for all its students... especially the ones who fall between the "labels".

- Education assistant, age 48, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

I believe over the more recent years our jobs have changed as we continue to see more and more students with specific learning disorder such as FAS and autism. I've availed myself of every opportunity provided by my district to help further my education in preparing me to work with these special children. I have found the methods and practices I've learned to be highly effective however it also requires much prep work to do the job properly – i.e. pick schedules, daily worksheets and programming, etc.

- Education assistant, age 50, from the Fraser valley region

For a minority group, unpaid work is not a problem. For some, this is combined with emphasis on the fact that extra time is freely and voluntarily provided by EAs and, in some cases, it leads to the idea that **self-policing** is the most effective answer. In all of this, EAs repeatedly cite that the donation of unpaid time stems from an underlying **commitment to the needs and welfare of their students**.

37. Commitment to student needs

I personally feel so bad for all the children I have to work with. There are probably 100 more things I could be working on with them but because I do not have the time or even the energy to create materials these kids do not get all the help they can. I wish I had more time to give to these kids and when you have more than one child it gets very hard because you cannot be everywhere at once. So when you are working with one student the other ones just sit there because they are not capable of working on their own. It's just a very sad system for our kids we could be doing so much more to help them become independent but because of time and I'm guessing money they are getting the shaft!

- Teaching assistant, age 33, from the Fraser valley region

I've had to deal with a child with seizures and behavior problems who had no coverage after my 4 hour shift and I would have to stay up to another 1/2 hour because... the teacher was unable to keep an eye on him in the washroom. The same school would not compensate us for working the night of the Christmas concert but we were told if we didn't go then our student would not be able to attend. I've also had telephone calls from parents at home that have lasted a long time because they have looked up my number and have concerns regarding their child. Many of us buy treats, stickers, books or other materials for our students to encourage and help them.

- Special education aide, age 48, from the Metro Vancouver region

I don't ask for the extra money when I work overtime because we were told there is no money. I often just leave the room when it is time to take my break because I know if I don't I won't get me break. I am not comfortable doing this because it is unfair to the students to leave them in class without support. I don't complain to the administration because I worry that if I complain and ask for more that the next time they run the budget that I may not have job the next year. I know I am dispensable. So I just don't rock the boat.

- Education assistant, age 44, from the North central region

EAs are emphatic on the need for **additional paid time to prepare** for the demands of working with the students assigned to them.

38. The need for time to develop necessary resources for students

Any unpaid work is done for the good of the children/youth we work with. If I want to be the best at what I do I put in the time to do it, preferably paid but in reality it isn't always... In order to fulfill all the requirements within my job description I need to prepare, plan and meet with many individuals in a little amount of time.

- Aboriginal education assistant, age 35, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

It always bothers me that we are considered part-timers because we work the full school day. We spend more hours in the classroom than teachers because we do not get prep time. Additionally, we are expected to work in any environment with no notice – it could be academics one block and shop classes the next.

- Educational assistant, age 53, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

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It would be greatly beneficial to increase the hours of SEAs in order to ensure the social, emotional and physical well-being of the students we work with. It is very difficult to get everything accomplished in the hours that we are given during the school day. Prep time is essential and time to de-brief with staff member and colleagues would be an asset.

- Special education assistant, age 34, from the Metro Vancouver region

The work that I do with my student requires a PCS schedule to be done for him to follow the daily routine. I usually do this on my own time first thing in the morning so that it is ready to start our day. Also, I usually take home work that I cannot do (prep) for symbols etc. that I will need for different projects or themes. This is all done on my own time and without anyone really knowing about it!

- Education assistant, age 54, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

My job is my passion! I want to provide the best support possible for the students I work with, which entails unpaid prep work - some years more than others. For this reason, paid prep time should be available to Education Assistants when needed. My work varies from moment to moment/year to year depending on each individual's situation.

- Educational assistant, age 53, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

The demand for time to develop student resources is connected with education assistants' perceptions regarding the need for **collaborative meeting time with teachers**. Increased recognition for "coverage time" is also a high priority for many.

39. The need for collaborative meeting time

I feel that there needs to be time to network with the classroom teacher ... In order to work together as a team, there needs to be time made available to confer with each other and build a successful relationship so we can create a "unified front" so to speak.

- Special education assistant, age 57, from the Metro Vancouver region

There is no time to talk to teachers and come up with strategies to support the educational and behavioural needs of the student.

- Education assistant elementary, age 28, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

It is extremely important that we have time each day to discuss educational and behavioural issues with our teachers. It is also important that we have time to talk about plans that are coming up within the classroom, such as special events, so that we can prepare communication scripts, symbols for our student so that he/she can prepare for changes... If we are expected to provide a quality education for our students then we need more time to prepare, communicate with teachers and other resource people that are involved with the student.

- Educational assistant, age 46, from the Metro Vancouver region

I work in a behaviour program and often there is not the time to strategize as I am to arrive to start my day at the morning bell and leave before the end of last class. Information/strategies are done on the fly as we don't often have time to meet as a team. The result is we are often not as in sync as we would prefer and should be, given the fragile state of the students we work with.

- Educational assistant, age 47, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

The call for additional paid time to prepare and consult is connected to EAs seeing themselves as having to assume major and in some cases primary responsibility for the **development of specialized curriculum**.

40. The need for time to develop specialized curriculum

When asked to implement IEP components there needs to be attention given to the amount of time given to develop materials, photo copy, and learn about the programs. One year I had three programs to implement, with far too little time to prepare for them. I feel caught in the middle at times when there are conflicts between professional opinions regarding what needs to be accomplished with some students. The text book perfect situation and reality are at times far apart. Time to be organized for the day, e.g. preparing materials for schedules, time for touching base with the teacher regarding concerns for the day, time for preparing materials e.g. communication books, strategies e.g. calm down books, fine motor materials, photo copying materials are some examples of student specific needs that require extra time to compile.

- Special education assistant, age 54, from the Metro Vancouver region

The Special Needs Itinerant Teachers have far too many students on their caseload to expect them to provide the materials and equipment for the students who need it right away. Often we just "do it ourselves" when it comes to these supplies. The students can't wait when we need to adapt or modify assignments in order for them to keep up with the rest of the class.

- Education assistant, age 52, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

If I did not donate my time, my student (who is mostly out of the classroom) day would not be pre-planned. His schedule wouldn't be prepared. Even his work area would not be cleaned (that area of the school is supposed to be closed off, so the custodians won't clean our room). I am the only one who works with him, so I am the only one able to create his curriculum, and it's easier if I prepare the materials I need (rather than trying to track down his case manager and ask her to make something for me).

- Education assistant, age 47, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

I put in the extra time, on my own time, in order to best help the students that I work with. I do not receive a prep time even though I must organize and find all the materials for my student's entire program. The teacher has little time to 'assist' me! When a previous high academic, physically disabled/non verbal student needed a specialized communication device, I took the equipment home with me for the summer to learn the specific language and programming. Time was not allocated at my work place for this.

- Teacher assistant, age 52, from the North central region

The request for time to develop specialized resources is important because it has historically been a teacher responsibility; however, many EAs say that teachers either have no time or lack the necessary training or background to prepare specialized resources for students. EAs also cite declines in the number of specialist teachers working with special needs children. For these reasons, developing specialized resources has increasingly fallen into the laps of EAs.

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41. Reduced teacher involvement in developing needed resources

Support staff also do curriculum development for social skills teaching and adapt many materials which is outside of what we are paid for. Curriculum development is the job of a teacher but if the students you support are in regular curriculum then there is no resource teacher. We are qualified and more than capable of doing this curriculum development and teaching on line courses however, our pay cheques do not reflect this work.

- School support worker, age 32, from the Metro Vancouver region

The support teachers are usually too busy with other students (LA LD ESL) to give our kids adequate time or they are not trained in the field. i.e.: new teachers. Classroom teachers also never have enough time, resources or training to meet the needs of our kids. Thus we must do so on our own in our own time much of the time. We are at the bottom of the rung of the ladder yet we are the ones that know the students, have the knowledge and care enough to do the job correctly.

- Special education assistant, age 49, from the Metro Vancouver region

One never works with an individual student anymore. I always have groups of 4 - 8 which include the student I'm assigned to and the other most challenging (and usually) boys. The teachers are unable to meet their needs in the classroom. I work with them using every trick I've ever learned. I plan my lessons based on the needs of my groups occasionally touching base with the teacher. They are overwhelmed with the needs of the classroom. There are not enough hours to do all the things that need to be done. The kids who are not aggressive, demanding attention, are simply falling through the cracks.

- Education assistant, age 52, from the Metro Vancouver region

In the present school system there are not enough specialized skill development teachers ... Often the SEAs need to educate the teacher and as soon as that teacher gets a change to get another position they are gone and you are stuck with another rookie. With autism such a specialized field yes we do get training but there is never prep time to adapt/develop materials schedules etc. for a lot of the severe students which often result in difficult behaviour of those students. So I do a lot of that at home.

- Special education assistant, age 61, from the Metro Vancouver region

EAs also report that their work situation is made worse by the **lack of adequate coverage time** during the work day.

42. Lack of proper coverage time on the job

Many SEAs do not receive the proper coverage for breaks at work because other SEAs are unable to leave their class to cover them ... Many SEAs cannot leave classrooms for a break if it is a safety issue (e.g. leaving a woodworking/metal shop class - you can't always leave a student without proper supervision around potentially dangerous equipment). Many SEAs don't receive breaks during these types of classes.

- Special education assistant, age 50, from the Metro Vancouver region

We are not given credit for the many times we have a shorter lunch time or recess break because a student, parent or teacher has stops up to discuss work/student. Same with entering the school, we often start immediately and often stay late passed working hours. And we work evenings for concerts or school activities, as well as give up our free lunch time or recess break during field trips. These times are often not recognized as working overtime.

- Educational assistant, age 57, from the Kootenay region

As a CEA here I find you need a lot of flexibility. My VP at the school and I had my hours, breaks and lunch breaks figured out to work my needs as well as the school. Then we were told I had to take a 15 minute break in the morning, had to take a ½ hour lunch and had to take a 15 minute break in the afternoon. No, there is no flexibility, so I find I am working through my breaks.

- *Certified educational assistant, age 37, from the Okanagan region*

We often don't get replaced when ill, making those who are at the school have to double up on students that should not be doubled up on. This is unfair to the EA and students.

- *Special education assistant, age 52, from the Metro Vancouver region*

EAs also reference the **efforts made by administrators** to elicit more unpaid work time from them.

43. Problems with administrator 'management' of unpaid time

I have found with the principal at my school will tell all of the SEAs that we should partake in IEP meetings but on our own time (usually before school), then the principal would then tell us later on that we will get paid for our time. He is 'wishy washy' with what he tells us.

- *SEA, age 29, from the Metro Vancouver region*

I am never requested to put in more hours, however I could never be absent from IEP meetings or meetings when our deaf/blind consultant comes in from Vancouver. My supervisor and I have an agreement as to reclaiming my banked time; however this is done 'under the table' so to speak.

- *Educational assistant, age 45, from the Kootenay region*

When asked to work extra, administration suggests we leave early for that day and not bank time. Sometimes this isn't possible or reasonable. I can't leave student(s) 15 minutes before the end of class when assisting them with a test or assignment. Therefore I don't.

- *EA, age 29, from the Kootenay region*

It is a very uncomfortable situation when you are asked to cover time outside of your schedule. You don't know what to say or what to ask. Are they paying you or is it banked, or are you doing it for nothing. It is very awkward and this situation should be avoided. You feel bad asking the questions, but you should not have to work for nothing.

- *Teacher's aide, age 32, from the North central region*

Administrators do not necessarily see or acknowledge the extra time and efforts put in by EAs. When we are told to bank or keep track of any extra time when it is brought up to them, it still isn't received due to the same old saying – you can take the time when your student is sick – however most of these students are not kept home and so the time is never paid back by any means.

- *Education assistant, age 56, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region*

Many EAs also says that **informal arrangements use to bank and reclaim overtime are shoddy, inconsistent and haphazard at best**; indeed, the survey comments are replete with complaints of inadequacy, inconsistency and unfairness.

Within this, there is a minority current of opinion which suggests many problems with unpaid work could be addressed through improved scheduling/timetabling practices. In some cases, this view overlaps with the idea that **greater internal differentiation amongst EA positions** could help by providing incentives for EAs to upgrade skills.

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44. Internal differentiation of EA roles and jobs

I feel that CEAs such as myself who have taken numerous workshops... should be paid at an increased rate. Many CEAs take no further training and are paid the same amount. I refer to specialties such as Braille, Signing, Autism, etc.

- Certified education assistant, age 54, from the Okanagan region

(O)ur position is not classified according to our credentials (no room for financial/status advancement like teachers). As a result many well-qualified SEAs and YFW's leave their positions in order to advance their careers.

- SEA, age 28, from the Metro Vancouver region

It took approximately 500 study hours to become a Certified Literary Braille Transcriber. And an additional 300 study hours to complete the course work for Nemeth Braille. There is no pay differential in my district when filling a "Braille-required" position.

- Special education assistant, age 48, from the Metro region

However, at the same time, another current of EA opinion moves in the opposite direction and sees **provincialization of EA rates and qualifications** as a progressive step forward.

45. Cross district equity in EA jobs and qualifications

There should be no pay differences and all districts across the province should be equal. There should be no pay differences according to specific job placements.

- Teacher assistant, age 57, from the Fraser valley region

It would be better if all districts required the same courses and training. It is important that the district (human resources) and the union have the same expectations.

- Special education assistant, age 35, from the Metro Vancouver region

I would like to see equitable hours and wages across the province. I would like some system of credentialing EAs. I would like a common name for people who do this job.

- Educational assistant, age 47, from the Metro Vancouver region

Many EAs cite the need for more emphasis **on training and training support** to enable them to do their work better. EAs are strongly of the opinion that **efforts they make to enhance their skills and training are not sufficiently recognized, acknowledged for supported** by school administrators and employers. Such training is often undertaken at the initiative of the EA, on the EA's time and at the EA's expense.

46. Unmet training needs and lack of training support for EAs

The last workshop I attended was last summer. It was a two-day workshop in Victoria that I was required to pay for, including all costs for ferries, hotels, etc. I wasn't reimbursed for any of it, so I find myself not feeling overly compelled to seek out other seminars. We have Pro-D workshops that are offered during the school year, but they tend to be the same material, with very little new information OR they are totally unrelated to the job.

- Educational assistant, age 55, from the Metro Vancouver region

I know of no other profession in which the employees are expected to fully fund their own upgrades in education... We are expected to work with the most difficult youth in the district and yet we are not compensated for any upgrades to education, nor are we compensated through salary.

- Special education assistant, age 50, from the Fraser valley region

We don't get the resources to go for workshops... We need workshops conducive to the special needs of our students, i.e. behavioural strategies, FAS, aboriginal needs, understanding brain damages, autism and more. Like the teachers, it would be nice to go to other schools to observe other programs and get coverage.

- SEA, age 49, from the Metro Vancouver region

I personally seek out educational opportunities. This may be because I also work at a daycare and am encouraged to take more training with that job. Next month my other job is paying for two days of workshops which will benefit both my jobs. Unfortunately to attend them I will need to book two days without pay from my school job. That's the difference in things being valued.

- Special education assistant, age 51, from the Metro Vancouver region

I stopped taking additional training years ago. I found the courses to be very expensive, plus if I asked to go to a workshop on work time and no funds were available at the board office I paid for it and was not paid for the day. My extra workshops were never acknowledged in any way... We are needed, we are wanted but not respected at the work place.

- Special education assistant, age 31, from the Metro Vancouver region

For many EAs, the use of school Pro D day for redeeming banked unpaid time provides an ongoing and graphic confirmation of the **lack of value placed on the work they perform**.

47. Lack of Pro-D time for EAs

I feel that there should be programs offered to CEAs on every pro-d-day rather than a day with no pay!

- Certified education assistant, age 50, from the Okanagan region

The current practice of redeeming our banked time on Pro-D days robs us of valuable learning/upgrading opportunities.

- Educational assistant, age 50, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

Professional development is important. We are laid off on some of the Pro D days. We should we working and learning together to build relationships. Get our Pro D days back!!! Promote professionalism!

- Special education assistant, age 54, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

These comments on training underscore a strong sense a professional obligation and responsibility, and a burning sense of frustration at the lack of official support for or recognition of EAs professional development needs. At a more general level, these sentiments form a **call for increased respect** on the part of EAs for the important contribution they make.

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

48. Need for increased respect for what EAs contribute

More and more is expected with less and less paid assigned time and without ongoing professional upgrading in our training. This is unfair to CEAs, students and parents. It is overly "stressing" CEAs and short changing all of our futures.

- CEA, age 53, from the Okanagan region

I would like to feel that I am respected and paid for the work I do with integrating special needs children into a classroom and school; to be an active a part of the team of teachers involved in IEP's and then implementing the work to meet the needs. The climate of schools today is that administrators (lack of government funding) are chipping away at hours and expecting you to work at a full time capacity; doing more with less.

- Educational assistant, age 55, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

I feel that most SEAs jobs and positions are under appreciated, not as respected in the field of education even though we are the ones that have specialized in special needs. Also we do not get nearly enough hours in are day to complete the tasks we need to make a better learning environment for our students to excel in.

- Special education assistant, age 34, from the Metro Vancouver region

I think that EAs need more recognition for their work. I do not feel that they are genuinely valued in the school system... If we had more paid hours to attend staff meetings and other school activities outside of the regular school hours, then maybe we could get the respect, equality and value that we deserve within the school team.

- Educational assistant, age 32, from the Metro Vancouver region

I believe that many education assistants at all levels are working WELL beyond the requirements/parameters of their jobs are not being recognized or compensated for it appropriately. EAs are integral players in the education field and in the success of our students/future leaders. It becomes an expectation that we constantly meet the needs of the students and their ever expanding worlds without truly being valued financially or emotionally for this devotion...

- Youth care worker, age 36, from the North central region

The majority of us are WOMEN, and because we are naturally givers, we do way more above and beyond our job descriptions, without being compensated.

- Educational assistant, age 44, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

Perceptions of isolation, that work is not properly appreciated or valued, continued exclusion from meetings regarding students, the lack of coverage for break time, the lack of recognition of the diversity of tasks required to do the job satisfactorily – all of these elements combine in a **general sense of disaffection and disenchantment** for many EAs. There are a substantial number of EAs who, in referencing these problems, go on to signal health and safety issues, including the prospect of burnout.

49. EA disaffection, disenchantment and burnout

If a workshop is held during a school day there is the issue of not getting coverage therefore a heavier workload for those left in the school and the workshops are longer than our paid time is, again cutting into our jobs. There is the large danger of this workforce facing burnouts and the younger workers want nothing to do with this field. Can you blame them?

- Education assistant, age 45, from the Metro Vancouver region

There is little understanding that our hours have been cut so we are sometimes looked upon as slackers. This puts pressure upon us to try to squeeze more in our shorter hours. It's a constant game of catch up that we never win. This increases the stress level which can also bring on illnesses... These stresses cause us to take sick time off which reduces our banked sick time which we have in our district which will be paid out upon retirement. So we lose part of our pension benefits by excessive sickness.

- Education assistant, age 62, from the Vancouver Island and coastal region

Also because of cutbacks in staff and/or sick staff not being replaced I am asked to "double or triple" up with students. Often when this happens I will have different academic, behavioral and or health issues and so resort to "babysitting" these students just to maintain a safe environment. The stress level with this job has skyrocketed and I am seriously considering looking for other employment.

- Special education assistant, age 53, from the Metro Vancouver region

More and more is expected with less and less paid assigned time and without ongoing professional upgrading in our training. This is unfair to CEA, student and parents. It is overly "stressing" CEAs and short changing all of our futures.

- CEA, age 53, from the Okanagan region

Burnout occurs when there is a sense of injustice and not being recognized for the work we do.

- Youth care worker, age 62, from the Kootenay region

In many cases EAs feel that this commitment is not fully recognized or appreciated by others in the public school system. On a more general level, this stated commitment underlines the degree and level of professional commitment that EAs bring to their work.

Comments and conclusion

The results of this survey confirm the depth and extent of the problem with unpaid EA work within BC's public schools. Unpaid work happens in every participating school district, at all times during and outside the regular work day, amongst EAs of all ages and levels of experience, at all levels of the school system, and in all jobs comprising this broad work classification.

The sheer extent of unpaid time documented in this report shows the system used to allocate EA work time to be fundamentally flawed. "Bell to bell" determination of EA hours has little to do with meeting student needs. Rather, it has more to do with stretching inadequate staff resources in the interest of maintaining a semblance of student coverage during the time schools are in session. The fact that districts and schools have become accustomed to organizing service delivery in this manner offers graphic and worrisome confirmation of the financial and programming stress now placed on the system as a whole.

The survey also confirms just how far special education has come to rely on the informal "off the radar" system that unpaid EA work represents. EAs face an implicit expectation that they participate in this system. Inconsistent norms and practices govern how unpaid time is banked and reclaimed. Significant and ongoing student coverage issues routinely get left to an informal swapping of EA break and other time. Underpinning the whole arrangement is a widespread willingness on the part of EAs to work unpaid time rather than see their students' education short-changed.

All of these factors point to unpaid EA work as a critical safety valve for an under-resourced system of special education service delivery. And, the lack of recognition accorded EAs' work serves to keep a low profile for these problems while reinforcing a perception that EA contributions to the education of students are both under-recognized and under-valued.

To address pressures related to the performance of unpaid work, EAs need additional paid work time. They seek these hours not simply to augment levels of pay. EAs collective voice a demand for more time to deal with the pressing educational needs of their students. In so doing, they demonstrate deep commitment to the work they perform.

The survey indicates that no clear strategy is in place within our schools for dealing with the issue of unpaid time. Most school administrators are aware of the issue and are party to different informal arrangements for the banking and partial reclamation of unpaid time. This being said, it would be wrong to characterize the collective views of EAs as 'pointing a finger' at school-level administrators. Rather, EAs generally see administrator involvement as reflecting a system that develops skewed priorities to cope with a critical shortfall in resources. What EAs want from administrators and other decision-makers is a commitment to moving beyond the role of unwitting functionaries within problematic work arrangements, to participation in the quest for real and lasting solutions to the issue of unpaid work.

BC is not the only jurisdiction where the working conditions of EAs have been placed on the policy agenda. In Ontario, a Provincial Discussion Table agreement negotiated in the spring of 2008 is expected to increase professional development funding for EAs and to lengthen the work days of EAs –

to seven hours by 2011/12. The latter will see the annual work time of Ontario EAs rise to a level 30 per cent higher than that currently found in BC. In the United Kingdom, an August 2008 government ruling is expected to lead to enforcement of a 52-week employment calendar for “class assistants”, an occupational classification equivalent to EAs. This ruling also condemned reliance on unpaid overtime as “unacceptable.”²¹

What can be done here in BC? EAs say the problem of unpaid work time must be formally acknowledged and reflected in how EA work is administered and supported. EAs underline the need for recognized resource development time as well as guarantees of meeting time and collaborative opportunities with others. EAs also cite the need for increased training and professional development support. Their frustration with the problem of unpaid work is made worse by a realization that the pressing professional development needs of this job classification remain largely invisible.

EAs represent a vital, committed and professional staff resource, and one increasingly central to the delivery of quality educational programs and services. It is time for the value of this contribution to be recognized in the way our schools are organized, and in the way decisions are made regarding the allocation of staff resources. For this to happen, financial resources must be made available by the provincial Ministry of Education to enable school districts to develop and implement budgets that contain earmarked additions to EA work time.

The survey results confirm that problems associated with unpaid work take shape around issues relating to *time*: time to prepare, time to work with students, time to strategize and debrief with work colleagues, and time to develop necessary skills for the complex and demanding work that EAs perform. Yet the issue is more fundamentally one of recognition of and respect for the work of EAs. Only increased recognition and respect can provide the necessary foundation to address time-related issues that EAs have collectively identified in this report.

This report comes at a time of rising awareness of the need for our public school system to maintain its commitment to inclusion while offering all students maximum opportunities for educational success. Its findings confirm that the system needs to step up with a commitment of adequate resources to ensure that these important objectives can be met, in the best interests not only of educational support staff, but also of the thousands of BC school children who on a day-to-day basis rely on the encouragement, support and commitment that education assistants provide.

²¹ See www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6001166

Appendix 1: Survey tabulation issues

In total, the survey was completed by 4,293 education assistants. Over the course of survey implementation anecdotal report emerged with some EAs having difficulty completing the online survey. While this affected only a small minority of survey respondents, care had to be taken to ensure those experiencing difficulty did not come back to complete additional and possibly multiple survey responses. To safeguard against this possibility, surveys that matched demographic criteria across a range of six variables including age, years of experience, school district identifier, and work location were deleted as likely double entries into the online data file. This had the effect of eliminating 217 surveys from the total.

A further 167 survey responses were filtered out because they were completed by education assistants who reported working on a casual basis. By the very nature of their employment relationship, casual employees can be expected to have a unique perspective on issues related to unpaid work that would differ substantively from those employed on a temporary or continuing basis. It was decided therefore that survey responses from casual EAs be filtered out and analyzed separately. To this end, CUPE intends to release a separate report documenting survey findings for casual education assistants early next year.

Factoring out duplicate responses and those received from casual education assistants left a total of 3,910 valid survey responses. This figure reflects a response rate of 40 per cent. (See the chart on page 8 of this report for greater detail).

Education assistants from 54 of the province's 60 school districts participated in the survey. Those declining the invitation to participate were EAs in District 27 Cariboo-Chilcotin (represented by the IUOE), District 49 Central Coast (represented by the Central Coast Non-Teaching Staff Association), District 52 Prince Rupert (also represented by the IUOE), District 59 Peace River South (represented by the BCGEU), District 81 Fort Nelson (also represented by the BCGEU), and District 92 Nisga'a (represented by CUPE).

Appendix 2: The survey instrument

PROVINCIAL CUPE EDUCATION ASSISTANT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

CUPE is undertaking this survey of unpaid Education Assistant (EA) work in order to fully document a widespread and pressing problem with how work hours are allocated for this category of school system employee. The Union is encouraging all EAs – including those belonging to other unions – to participate in the survey by completing this questionnaire.

The generic title of Education Assistant applies to many positions within K-12 support staff. These jobs have labels that vary by district as well as job content. Some common labels are special education assistant (SEA), certified education assistant (CEA), special education aide, aboriginal support worker, teacher assistant, and youth care worker.

This survey contains no information that can be used to personally identify those who complete it. No names are gathered, nor are there any questions that identify where in the district an education assistant is employed. And, the privacy of individual EAs will be protected at all times when survey data is compiled.

Please complete the survey if all of the following apply:

- *You work for your school district in a support staff educational capacity directly with students,*
- *You work together with and under the general supervision of teachers and/or school administrators, and*
- *You are paid by the hour.*

Index of Survey Contents	
Section A	Demographic information
Section B	Regular (paid) hours of work
Section C	Voluntary and unpaid hours on the job
Section D	Record of voluntary and unpaid hours
Section E	Training and qualifications

When complete, either fax this survey to (604) 291-6248 or mail it to:

John D. Malcolmson
c/o Canadian Union of Public Employees
5th Floor 4940 Canada Way
Burnaby, BC V5G 4T3

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

Please complete this survey if you are an EA! Please encourage other EAs you know to complete it! It is important that the survey reach as many EAs working in BC's school system as possible! The survey can also be completed online at:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=NiMf_2fT5_2b1UQuyM9e4_2fJAwQ_3d_3d

Section A. Demographic and basic work information (please fill in all Section A questions)

1. What is your gender? Male Female Transgendered
2. In which school district do you work?
SD Number _____
3. What is the name of your school district?
SD Name _____
4. What is your current age? _____ years
5. How many years of experience do you have working in an education assistant job? _____ years to one decimal point
6. Are you of First Nations background?* Yes No

** The purpose of this question is solely to enable this survey to pinpoint issues of particular concern to First Nations education assistants.*

7. What is your formal job title? _____
8. Do you work at:
 Elementary school
 Middle school
 High school
 Alternate school
 Combination or other _____

9. Is most or all of your assigned work directed to:
 One (1) special education student for the year
 Multiple special education students for the year
 Predominantly special education but also other students
 Students predominantly outside the special education field
 Other

10. Do the students you work with have Individual Education Plans (IEPs)?
 Yes No A mix of both Unsure

11. If you answered yes to Question 10, do you participate in developing student IEPs?
 Yes No Yes, but for some students only

12. Are the students you work with:

In fully segregated programs In fully integrated programs A mix of both

13. Which of the following best describes your job status?

Continuing position Casual position
 Temporary or term position Other

Section B. Regular (paid) hours of work

Note: all questions in Section B focus on "paid" time only; unpaid work time is covered in Section C of the survey.

1. How many total hours per week (regular & temporary) are you assigned?
 _____ hours/week (to one or more decimal places)

2. Are you requested to put in extra time, over and above your regular & temporary assigned hours?
 (Note: this applies only to paid time)
 Yes No

3. If yes, is this time reimbursed by,
 (Select as many answers as apply)
 Straight-time (paid)
 Overtime (more than 7 hours/day or more than 35 hours/week – paid)
 Both (paid)
 Time in lieu

4. My preference for compensation for extra time is:
 Banked
 Paid
 Combination of both

5. If it is time in lieu, is this extra time banked at the rate of:
 Straight time
 Overtime (a rate of ‘time and a half’ or greater)
 Other (please specify briefly) _____

6. If you are asked to work extra paid straight-time hours or extra paid overtime hours, how many hours would you work in this capacity in a typical week?
 Less than 1 hour
 1 hour
 2 hours
 3 hours
 4 hours
 5 hours
 Other (specify _____ hours)

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

7. Is this extra work concentrated at:
- The start of the school year
 - The end of the school year
 - Other
 - None of the above
8. Which of the following best describes your expectations of your hours of work as an EA?
- I am content with the current allocation of paid hours for my position
 - I intend to bid into other EA positions that come available in order to increase my allocation of paid hours.
 - I would like to get more paid hours for my current position than are now allocated. If more paid hours are wanted, I would like to have a total assignment of ___ hours/week
9. Do you routinely spend time traveling from one work site to another in the regular course of your work assignment? Yes No
- If yes, how much time in a regular work week would you spend traveling? ___ hours
- Are you compensated for the time spent traveling from one work site to another?
 Yes No

Section C. Voluntary and unpaid hours on the job

By "voluntary" or "unpaid" work time, we mean any time you spend working at your job site or away from it preparing for your job, for which you are not paid. This can include many things: preparing modified or adapted materials, interpreting another language for parent/teacher interviews, staff meetings, coaching, evening events such as Xmas concerts, career fairs, fun fairs, field trips or multi-cultural nights. It also includes all student supervision outside of assigned hours or during paid break time. There are many possibilities.

1. Do you work extra voluntary and unpaid hours on the job?
 Yes No
2. If yes, how many extra voluntary and unpaid hours do you work in a typical week?
_____ hours/week.
3. If you put in extra voluntary and unpaid hours on the job, at what points during the day do you work in this capacity? (Check as many items as apply)
- During breaks
 - During lunch
 - Before shift
 - After shift
 - At home

- Field trips beyond regular work hours
- Camping trips (overnight)
- Other (specify) _____

4. If you work extra voluntary and unpaid hours on the job, what type of work do you do during this time? (Check as many items as apply)

- Prepare materials for my assignment
- Consult with teachers or administrators or others
- Provide coverage of child outside assigned hours because of:
 - a. Problematic behaviour of student at the end of the day or during break
 - b. Transportation scheduling
 - c. Parent late picking up child
 - d. Lack of coverage and unfilled absences
 - e. Another staff member not reporting on time
- Attend IEP meetings
- Provide coverage for drills or assemblies
- Provide coverage for field trips during school hours
- Accompany students during work experience or community-based activities

5. If you work extra voluntary and unpaid hours on the job, what are the reasons for doing this work? (Check as many items as apply)

- There is not enough time in my regular work schedule to do my job
- I have a professional commitment to my job and work
- My day's routine improves when I work these hours
- Administrators expect me to work extra voluntary and unpaid hours
- Teachers expect me to work extra voluntary and unpaid hours
- Co-workers (other EAs or support staff) expect me to work extra voluntary and unpaid hours
- Parents expect me to work extra voluntary and unpaid hours
- I feel obliged to meet my students' needs
- I feel obliged to guarantee my students' safety
- I feel obliged to cover emergency situations with my students
- The schedule does not allow for coverage for break times
- Other reason (please describe briefly)

Addressing unpaid work by Education Assistants in BC

D. Record of voluntary and unpaid hours

1. If you work extra voluntary and unpaid hours on the job, does your supervisor/administrator know about it?
 Yes No

2. Is there an arrangement with your supervisor/administrator to bank voluntary extra and unpaid hours on the job?
 Yes No

3. If there is an arrangement, how are banked hours taken? (Check as many items as apply)
 Via a payout of banked time
 During Pro-D days
 During exams or turnaround days
 When a student with special needs is ill
 When I request it
 When I can fit it into my schedule
 Other (please specify briefly) _____

4. Do you use all banked time?
 Yes No

5. If no, what approximate percentage of your banked time do you use?
_____ % used (no decimals)


E. Training and qualifications

1. Do you have any of the following formal training or qualifications?
(Check as many items as apply)
 SETA Certification (college diploma)
 ECE (Early Childhood Education)
 ECE + Special needs certificate
 Non-Violent Crisis Prevention Certificate
 First Aid
 Child and Youth Care Degree
 Sign Language (Level ____)
 Braille
 Interventions in Autism (ABA)
 Other _____

2. Have you taken any additional workshops related to your job as an education assistant?
(List the most recent five).

3. What are your top priorities/needs for additional training?
(List your five top choices in descending order of importance).

4. Do you have any other comments regarding the issues covered in this survey, or suggestions regarding the unpaid work performed by education assistants?



CUPE / Canadian Union
of Public Employees

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