

Types of work performed during unpaid time	% reporting unpaid time
Coverage for field trips during school hours	49.3%
Student planning meetings	47.5%
Preparing materials for assignments	47.3%
Deal with problematic behaviour at the end of the day or during break	45.0%
Consulting with teachers, administrators or others	41.5%
Dealing with lack of coverage and unfilled absences	34.1%
Dealing with parents who are late picking up their child	29.5%
Accompanying students during work experience or community-based activities	21.8%
Transportation scheduling	15.7%
Coverage for drills or assemblies	14.
Filling in for another staff member	13.8%

Education assistants in B.C. perform unpaid work in the routine course of their jobs. Unpaid work occurs at all times of the school day - before, during and after work, as well as in the evenings and on weekends. As the table above illustrates, unpaid work time covers many different types of work-related activities.

The reasons education assistants give for performing this work vary, but they all focus on the need to deliver the best quality service to students.

**CUPE** / Canadian Union  
of Public Employees



**RECOGNITION & RESPECT**

Addressing the unpaid work of education assistants in B.C.

**B.C.'S EDUCATION ASSISTANTS** play a crucial role in public schools supporting the students who need special assistance. Education assistants are driven by a high level of professional integrity and commitment. They care deeply about their students and their students' families. They deserve to be paid for the work they do. They deserve recognition and respect.

## Reliance on unpaid work affects vulnerable students

The Canadian Union of Public Employees has completed an in-depth survey of the working lives of B.C.'s 12,500 education assistants (EAs). More than 4,000 EAs participated in the 2008 survey.

The survey finds that EAs from all participating school districts, in all types and levels of schools, and working across a wide range of jobs, report that unpaid work is endemic. Of those surveyed, more than 80% regularly work extra voluntary and unpaid hours.

Our survey reveals that:

- The paid work day is simply not long enough for EAs to accomplish their jobs to the high professional standard they demand of themselves.
- The primary reason EAs perform routine unpaid work is professional concern for the well-being, needs and safety of their students.
- On average, EAs across the province work 26 hours per week and earn less than \$23,000 per year. The average amount of unrecognized time performed each week is 1.9 hours.
- Unpaid work represents an unofficial subsidy amounting to millions of dollars every year.
- B.C.'s EAs, more than 90% of whom are women, possess a wide range of formal education qualifications and have a keen interest in pursuing courses, workshops and other upgrading opportunities.

Education assistants in B.C. work an extra 800,000 hours per year in order to keep the system working. The numbers reveal the extent to which the public school system relies on unrecognized and often unpaid work to care for our most vulnerable students.

The findings underscore the need for our public school system to guarantee maximum inclusion and educational opportunity for all students. EAs have clearly shown that in order to fulfill that goal, they require more paid time and that is the true meaning of their call for recognition and respect.

**THE SOLUTION** to routine unpaid hours is straightforward - increase the number of scheduled paid hours. Most EAs are paid "bell-to-bell," but additional scheduled paid hours are necessary to complete their work. More paid work time is fundamental to any attempt to rectify the problems faced by our education assistants for:

- adequate resource development time
- consultation and interaction time with other education assistants or teachers regarding students
- developing and implementing individualized programs for students
- attending meetings directly related to their work
- providing adequate on-the-job coverage that safeguards the safety and well-being of students