

Education Assistants

Working Group Report

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Executive Summary

Purpose of EA Working Group (EAWG)

CUPE and the Ministry formed the Education Assistant Working Group (EAWG) in May 2021 to gather information and data to better understand the current state of the EA workforce and potential implications of standardized certification.

In Scope

The scope of the EAWG was simple: to gain a better understanding of the current state of EAs in the British Columbia education system. To do this, the EAWG analyzed data from the Ministry, CUPE and the Support Staff Initiative for Recruitment and Retention Enhancement (SSIRRE) on workforce demographics, jobs, and training programs. As well, scope of practice and hiring requirements were informed by EA job descriptions submitted by school districts. The EAWG also conducted a survey of EAs on their education background, and career aspirations. A scan on how other jurisdictions approach EA standards and regulation was also included. This report summarizes the findings of the EAWG.

Out of Scope

The report does not provide any recommendations to the Minister on any changes that may affect the workforce (e.g., standardization, certification, compensation) as this was not within the scope of the EAWG's terms of references.

Demographics

As of quarter 1 of the 2021/2022 school year, there were just over 13,500 Education Assistants (EAs) actively working in public schools. The provincial average salary for education assistants in B.C. is \$43,519. Average annual salaries vary widely between districts, with a significant difference of \$28,582 between the highest and lowest in the province. 91% of EAs are female and over half are between the ages of 45 and 59. Though male EAs only make up 9% of the workforce, they tend to have higher FTEs than female EAs. Most EAs are part-time: only 21% of EA's worked fulltime in quarter 4 of the 2020/2021 school year. In 2018/2019 (the most recent data available) the attrition rate for EAs was 13.6% as opposed to teachers which was 6.3%.

Highlights of Survey Results

The survey results indicate that the part-time nature of the work is both what attracts people to the role (flexibility, hours align with caregiving responsibilities, etc.) and what acts as a barrier for them to continue in their role. EAs also mention the low wages as an obstacle for remaining in the K-12 sector. While the average hourly wage for EAs is competitive (\$28/hour as of quarter 1 2021/2022), annual salaries for EAs tend not to be due to the part-time nature of this role. Consultations with EAs indicate that though many education assistants express a desire to remain working with students in the K-12 sector, the part-time nature of the work and the consequent low pay as well as a perception of being undervalued make their working conditions challenging. Though EAs experience a higher rate of turnover than teachers, it is important to note that over a third of EAs who responded to the survey have been in their position for over ten years, which indicates that many EAs are committed to their role and see their jobs as long-term careers.

When EAs were asked about their five-year career goals three main themes emerged: aspirations to full-time work, hoping to enter a teacher education program or go back to school, and retirement. Survey respondents expressed how much they loved working with children and felt that being an EA made a difference in the lives of students and their families. However, many feel that low wages due to lack of hours and respect and feeling undervalued made the prospect of remaining in their roles challenging.

Demand

In addition to the existing experienced workforce, the number of EAs have increased by 35% since the 2015/2016 school year. Like educators, the demand for EAs is driven by student enrolment, policy shifts (e.g., the memorandum of Agreement on class size and composition) and attrition. However, unlike teachers, EAs are unique; their demand is particularly impacted by the number of students with diverse needs. Between 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 alone, the number of students with special needs enrolled in public schools increased by 5.9%.

Though the demand is there, districts report the supply of EAs is lagging. During consultations, many districts mentioned ongoing challenges recruiting and retaining EAs. Districts that fared better were those near certifying institutions. Many were able to fill positions but struggled with having enough EAs on their casual list. The pandemic has exacerbated these challenges with increased workforce absences and attrition; districts mention that due to the part-time (and consequently lower paid) nature of the work, many EAs are often bringing home the secondary income in a family and thus are the ones more likely to stay at home with the children.ⁱ

EA scope of practice

These challenges may have their roots in the confusion around what exactly the roles and responsibilities of an EA are. The term “education assistant” is an umbrella term for a wide variety of roles ranging from unskilled positions such as supervision, cafeteria worker, and crosswalk attendant to positions that require special qualifications and skills such as Special Education Assistant (e.g. for complex behaviours), Visual Language Interpreter or Brailist. However, the scan of job descriptions submitted by districts revealed there was no consistency in the way these roles and responsibilities are framed. For example, one district reported having 18 job descriptions under the umbrella of Education Assistant while a quarter of districts only had one role for all education assistants. For the five districts that reported having two job descriptions (EA 1 and EA 2), these were usually divided between positions that require less qualifications and those that require a more specialized skill set. However, there was no consistency across districts in how they defined the positions.

For the EA positions that provide direct supports to students, the way they are deployed depends on school districts: some school districts assign EAs to an individual student depending on students’ needs, while some districts assign EAs to an entire classroom (or even school) with the EA being expected to work with all students (while sometimes focusing on a student in particular) under the direction of teachers and principals. The latter model aims to support student independence, though there are exceptional circumstances where an EA is assigned to an individual student (i.e., a student requiring tube feeding). However, in the last five years, districts have put a greater emphasis on understanding students' needs when deciding how to allocate education assistants. In addition, the EAWG noted that

not all school staff are well-versed in the ways to best utilize EAs (in alignment with the latest inclusion practices). This is also a factor that can explain the variety of approaches in terms of EA deployment.

Hiring Requirements & Training

The wide variety in EAs' scope of practice spills over into district hiring requirements. However, there are certain similarities among districts: for instance, most districts require a high school diploma as well as a post-secondary certificate from an education assistant program (between 1 to 2 years) to be an Education Assistant. Yet many positions that require an Education Assistant certificate will also accept other types of education and training such as related post-secondary years or an ECE certificate. This was confirmed by the survey results which indicated that 77% of respondents had obtained an EA certification while 13% had an Early Childhood Certificate.

In terms of additional required training, 45% of submitted job descriptions did not require any, though districts mentioned that they provided additional training once the EA had been hired. Of those that did require additional training, most were for autism & related disorders, with the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism & related Disorders (POPARD) being the most popular. Crisis prevention and intervention training was also frequently cited as well as specific training to support those with visual impairments and/or hearing differences (Braille transcriber, deafblind intervenor, etc.).

While there are no provincial credentials for EAs, many public and private institutions offer EA training. Once again, there is no consistency in terms of content, length, and tuition. There are 15 public and 19 private post-secondary EA training programs around the province. Some of these are exclusively for education assistants while some are combined with community support worker training. The EAWG is also aware of five school districts who have developed their own in-house training programs to address recruitment pressures. Most public EA programs take 8 to 12 months to complete, while private programs range from 6 to 24 months and district programs range from a couple of weeks to six months. Some programs require as little as 50 hours of practicum while some require upwards of 500. Tuition fees are generally higher for private EA programs and range from \$5,000 to \$20,000 while public program tuition fees range from between \$3,000 to \$9,500.

B.C. is not alone in taking a relatively hands off approach to the work of EAs. Very few jurisdictions have any standards of practice, regulations, or standardized training for EAs. In Canada, only Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland have implemented some sort of regulations concerning their EA workforce. A cross-sector comparison of similar occupations was also undertaken between early childhood educators (ECEs), the designation of "Responsible Adults", Health Care Aides (HCAs), and Community Support Workers (CSWs). Education Assistants are among the least regulated support occupation while ECEs are the highest. EAs also have the largest scope in definition, encompassing a range of positions that require varying levels of education and responsibility. In contrast, the definition scopes for ECEs, Responsible Adult, and Health Care Aides (HCAs) are a lot narrower.

Conclusion

EAs are dedicated to their work in supporting students, but the wide variety of approaches at the local level, the lack of consistency across EA jobs and between EAs and other similar occupations, as well as the fact that EAs feel undervalued as educators, make create some challenges for EAs. Standardized credentials would bring much needed consistency and support equity across the province, but it could

have a significant impact on the EA supply when most districts are facing recruitment challenges. In addition, considerations should be given to ensuring teachers are well-versed in the latest inclusion practices and know how to best utilize and work with EAs. The upcoming transition of early childhood educators (ECEs) into education presents a window of opportunity to further explore how best to introduce more consistency within the scope of practice, methods of hiring and training of EAs.

Introduction

Over the last few years, education partners have expressed interest in introducing standardized credentials and standards of practice for education assistants. Recent resolutions from BCCPAC (in 2015) and BCSTA (in 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2021) have called for professional standards and regulation. As well, in January 2021, CUPE BC published a position paper advocating for standardizing credentialing for all new Education Assistants by 2025. Following discussions between CUPE BC and the Ministry of Education, the parties formed the Education Assistant Working Group (EAWG) in May 2021 to gather information and data to better understand the current state of the EA workforce and potential implications of standardized certification. (See Appendix 1: EAWG Terms of Reference)

Scope of the EAWG

The scope of the EAWG was narrow: to collect information and data on the education assistant workforce to gain a better understanding of the current state of EAs in the British Columbia education system. This included collecting data and information on the following:

- Demographics
- Hiring requirements and scope of practice
- Training programs
- Educational background
- Years of experience
- Career aspirations
- Practices related to EAs in other jurisdictions

This report summarizes the findings of the EAWG.

Out of Scope

This report does not provide any recommendations to the Minister on any aspects that may affect the EA workforce nor take a position on the issue of standardized credentials.

Methodology

The Education Assistant Working Group's analysis was informed by the following sources of information:

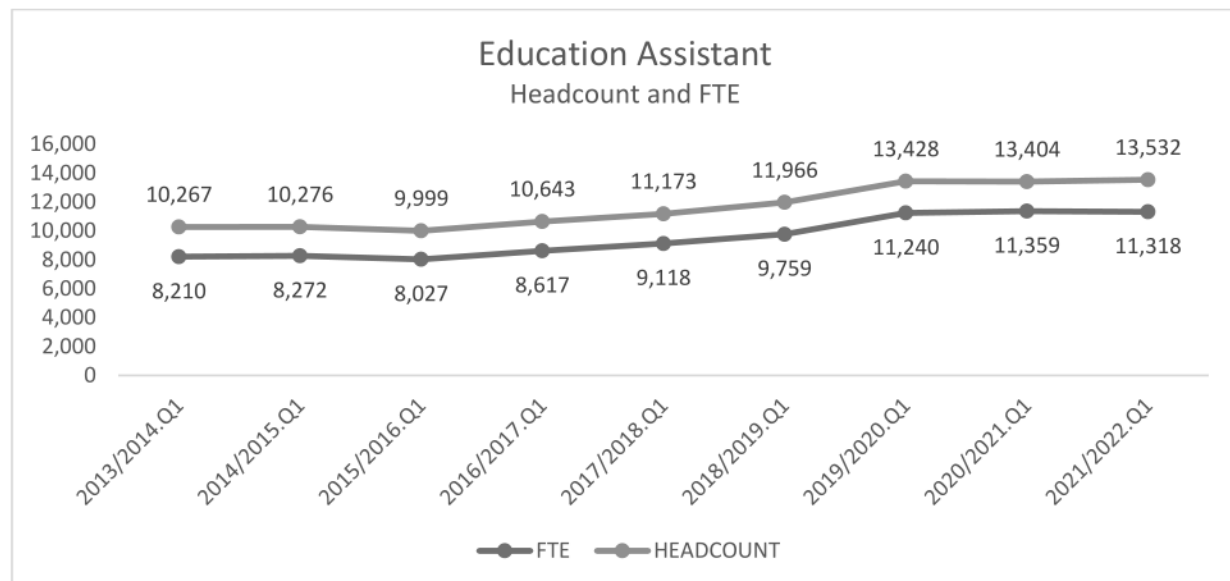
1. The Ministry of Education contributed demographic data on EAs and performed an analysis of job descriptions posted on Make a Future at the beginning of June 2021.
2. The Support Staff Initiative for Recruitment and Retention Enhancement (SSIRRE) group¹ shared a summary of their EA job description review and school district interviews. In all, they reviewed a total of 106 positions in 36 districts and conducted qualitative interviews with select districts. Their findings have been incorporated into this report.
3. The EAWG sent out a job description matrix for school districts to complete in November 2021. 40 school districts responded with a total of 181 job descriptions (see Appendix 2 for respondents by type and size of district).
4. The working group developed a survey for EAs that included questions on their current education, work experience, and career aspirations to better understand the needs, issues, opportunities, and

¹ The Support Staff Initiative for Recruitment and Retention Enhancement (SSIRRE) group is a working group between BCPSEA and CUPE that was established under the Provincial Framework Agreement (2019-2022).

challenges of the EA workforce (See Appendix 3 for the Education Assistant Survey). The survey launched on January 6 and closed on January 14, 2022. In all, 5,206 people responded to the survey, just over 38% of EAs working in the province. Respondents represented every district except for SD 87 Stikine. (See Appendix 4: Respondents by district). 97% of respondents were actively working as Education Assistants at the time of the survey. ECEs working as Strong Start facilitators as well as child and youth care workers also responded to the survey. Survey results are interspersed throughout the report and clearly defined as survey results.

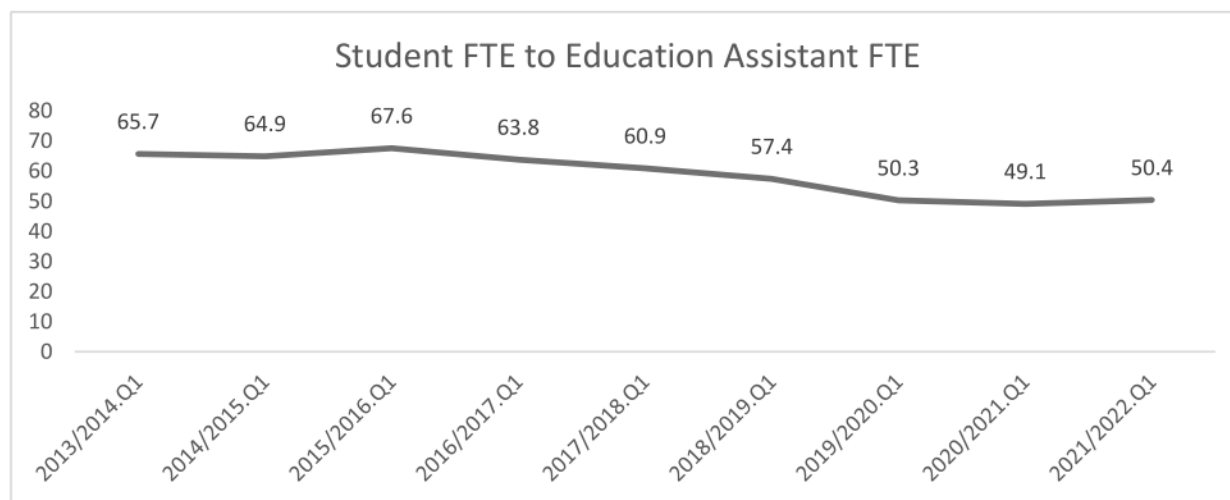
Workforce Demographics

Figure 1: B.C. Public School Education Assistant Workforce Headcount and FTE



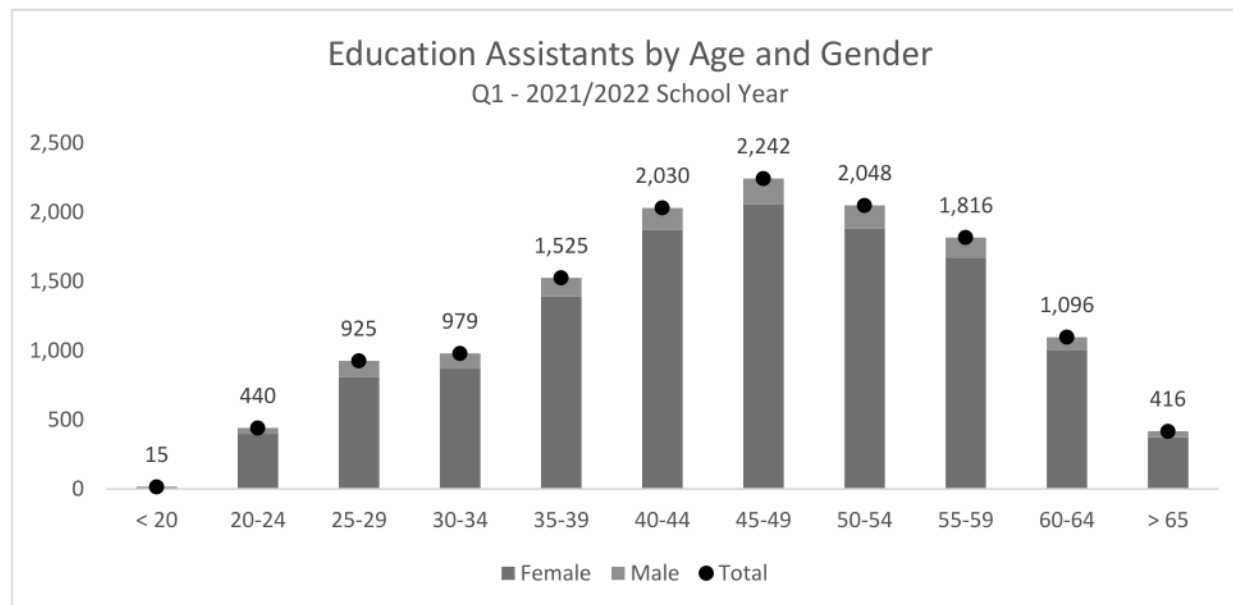
- As of quarter 1 of the 2021/2022 school year, there were just over 13,500 EAs actively working in public schools.
- The EA workforce has grown by 35% since the 2015/2016 school year.
- Only 21% of EA's worked fulltime in quarter 4 of the 2020/2021 school year.
- Though it depends on the collective agreement between the support staff and the district, most districts define one EA FTE as working between 35 to 37.5 hours a week.

Figure 2: B.C. Public School FTE Student to FTE Education Assistant Ratio



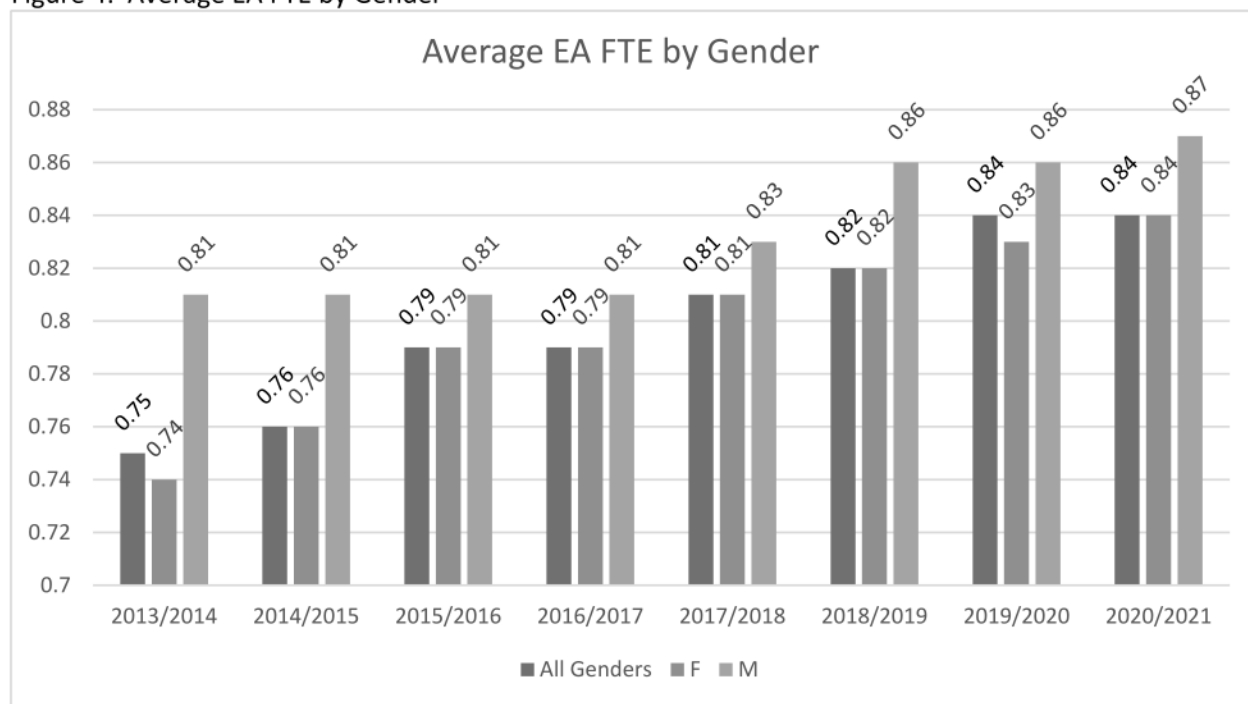
- The number of full-time equivalent EAs to full-time equivalent students has been rising over the past 5 years.
- At the start of the 2021/2022 school year, there was an average of 1 full-time equivalent education assistant per 50 full-time equivalent students.

Figure 3: B.C. Public School Education Assistant Workforce by Age and Gender 2021/2022



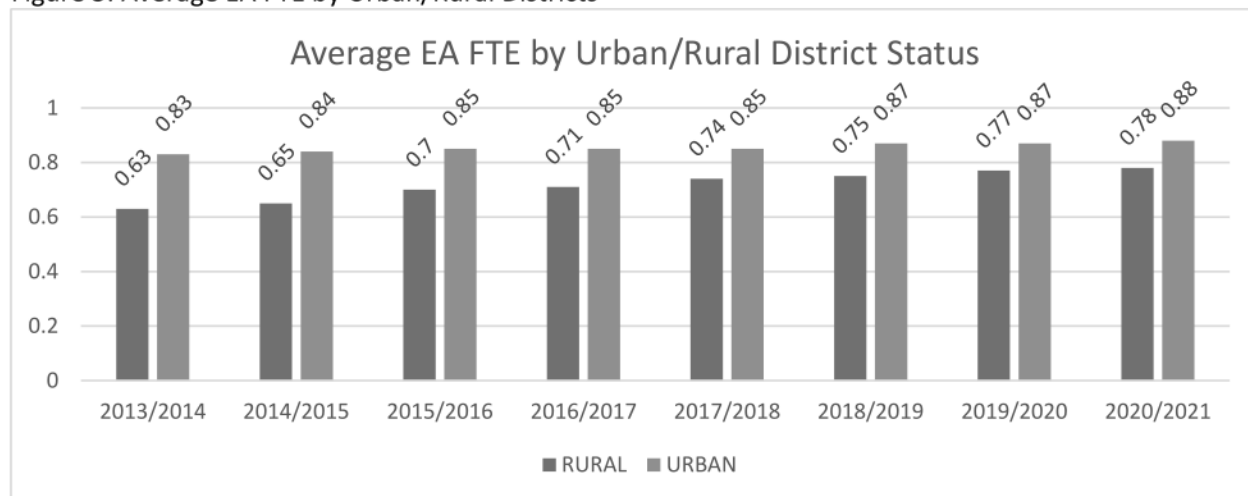
- The largest group of education assistants are between the ages of 45-59.
- 91% of all education assistants identify as female.

Figure 4: Average EA FTE by Gender



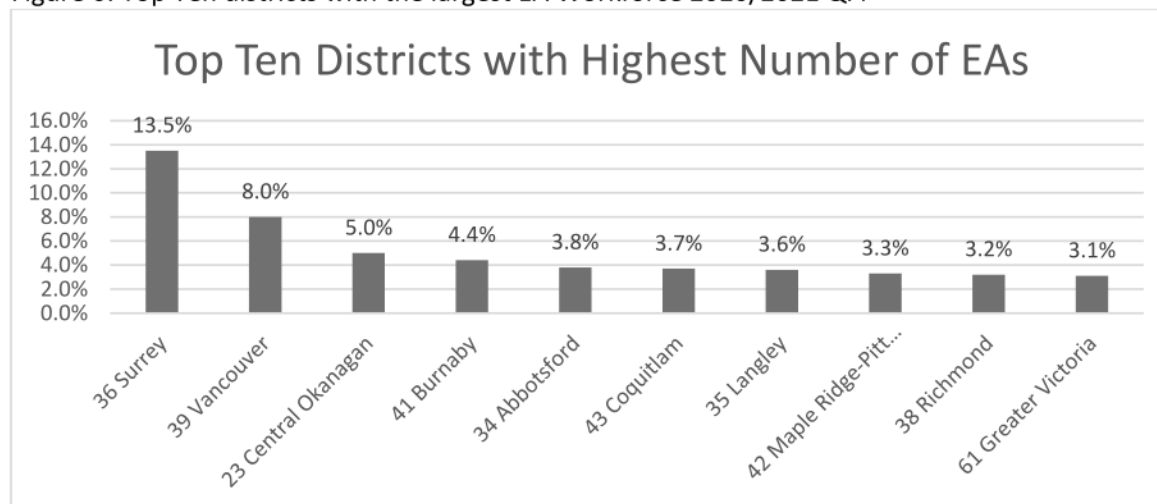
- Though male EAs make up only 9% of the workforce, they have a 4.4% higher workload (calculated in FTE) compared to female EAs.

Figure 5: Average EA FTE by Urban/Rural Districts



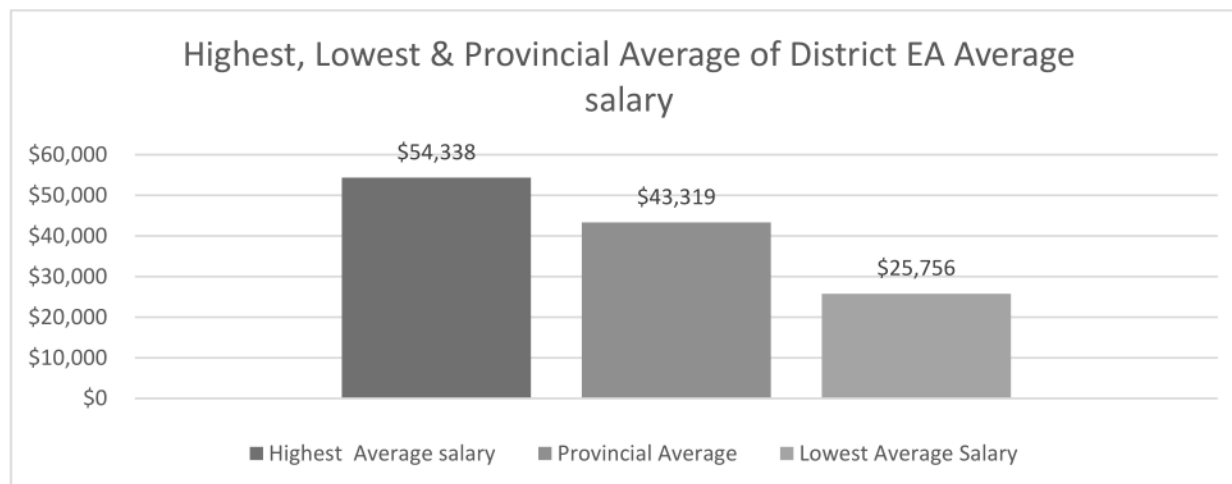
- EA's employed in rural districts have smaller average FTE's compared to those in urban districts.
- Urban school districts employed EA's have closer to full deployment rates.
- There is very low correlation between low EA FTE and EA attrition which suggests EA attrition is not heavily influenced by low EA FTE.

Figure 6: Top Ten districts with the largest EA Workforce 2020/2021 Q.4



- SD 36 Surrey has by far the most EAs in the province with 1916 EAs, or 13.5% of the EA workforce. This is aligned with its stature as the district with the largest workforce serving the largest population.
- The district with the least amount of EAs is SD 87 Stikine; they employ only 4 EAs for the whole district. This is also predictable given that SD 87 Stikine serves a very small, dispersed population with only four schools in the district.

Figure 7: Highest, Lowest & Provincial Average of District EA Average Salary



- The provincial average salary for education assistants in B.C. is \$43,519.
- The lowest average salary is \$25,756 and the highest is \$54,338, a significant difference of \$28,582. However, the lowest salary is an outlier—the second lowest salary leaps up around \$7000 to \$32,258.

Note: Though there is a lot of data available on the current EA workforce, it is important to note that information on the ethnicity or gender identity of EAs is currently unavailable. Efforts to collect data on the ethnicity of the K-12 workforce will be invaluable in better understanding to what extent the EA workforce is representative of the students they serve.

Demand

Student Enrolment

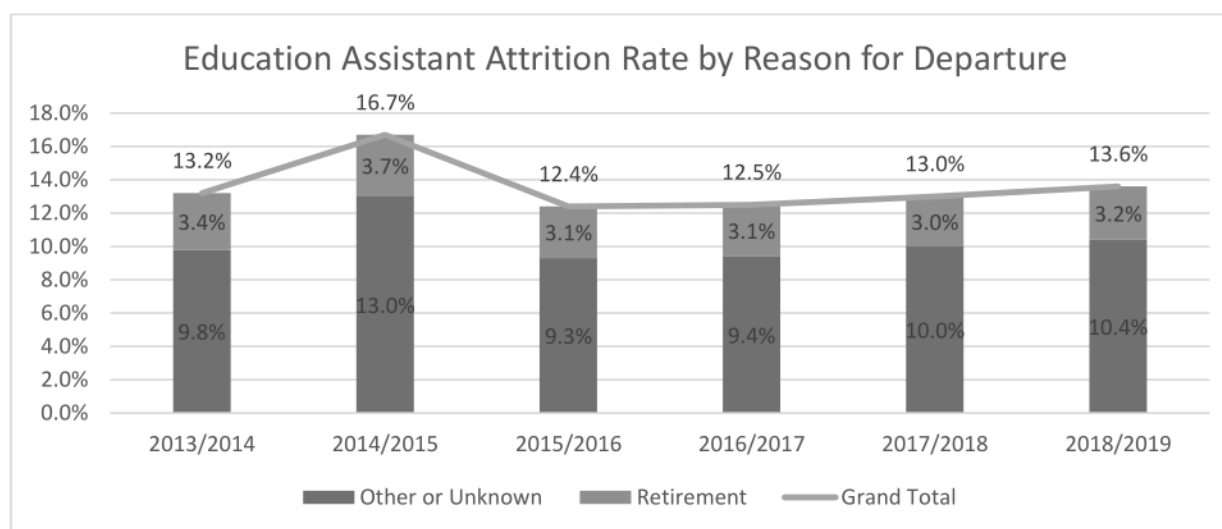
Like educators, the demand for EAs is driven by student enrolment, policy shifts and attrition. However, unlike teachers, EAs are unique; their demand is particularly impacted by the number of students with diverse needs. There were 72,739 (12.6%) students with disabilities and diverse abilities enrolled in public schools in 2021/22, up by 4,023 (+5.9%) from 2020/21. From 2013/2014 to 2020/2021 there has been consistently positive, statistically significant correlations between EA FTE and students with disabilities and diverse abilities FTE which suggests changes in students with disabilities and diverse abilities FTE is a large driver of EA demand.

Memorandum of Agreement

In the first quarter of 2018/19 school year, 9,759 FTE EAs were employed in B.C. public schools: up by 642 FTE (+7%) compared to 2017/18. This increase in the workforce was in part attributable to the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the Ministry of Education, the Public Sector Employers' Council Secretariat, the British Columbia Public School Employers' Association, and the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. While the MoA pertained to teachers only, it provided school districts with the ability to convert remedy minutes into a cash equivalent so they could hire additional education assistants (this was to be negotiated at the local level). The hiring of over 600 EAs kept pace and the ratio of EAs to special needs students remains similar to previous years.

Attrition

Figure 8: Education Assistant Attrition Rate by Reason for Departure



Note: Attrition is calculated by how many EAs have not been employed by any school district for 1.5 years since the last school year in which they were employed (the maximum length of parental leave that is available to educators in BC). At this point, 2018/19 is the most recent data available.

- The attrition rate for EAs has remained relatively stable, around 12 -14% on average between 2013/14 and 2018/2019.

- However, it should be noted that this is significantly higher than the attrition rate for teacher certificate holders (around 6.3% as of 2018/2019).

Rural districts tend to have higher attrition rates than urban districts. They also have larger retirement rates as well as a higher proportion of attrition for reasons other than retirement. This may be due in part to pressures caused by long term recruitment and retention challenges. In consultation with districts, they mention that difficulties in hiring a qualified workforce tend to put more of a burden on existing qualified employees, which results in more sickness and leaves of absences.

Districts' Experience with EA Recruitment and Retention

In a consultation with select districts on recruitment and retention in early 2021, most districts – regardless of whether they were in a rural or urban area—mentioned challenges recruiting and retaining qualified EAs. Districts that fared better were those near certifying institutions. Many were able to fill positions but struggled with having enough EAs on their casual list.

Many districts also mentioned difficulty finding certified EAs. Rural districts far from any post-secondary institution find it especially hard to fill positions. The demographic of the people in these positions mean that it would be very hard for them to travel for school. It was also mentioned that the positions are not paid enough or secure enough to warrant the effort of official certification. One district in the Lower Mainland mentioned they require certification for all their EA positions but that the newer programs don't meet their criteria.

A few districts mentioned that the EA shortage was exacerbated by the pandemic due to sick leaves and mental health struggles. Districts in areas with higher COVID numbers report an increase of EA absences and leaves. Districts mention that EAs are usually the secondary income and thus are the ones more likely to stay at home with the children when that is needed.ⁱⁱ

Supply

In the 2020/2021 year, newly hired EAs made up 13.5% of the active EA workforce. In 2020/21 590 EA credentials were awarded from public post-secondary institutions in B.C., an increase of 31% from 2018/19 (Data on the number of EA graduates from private institutions is not yet available for the years 2019/2020 and 2020/21). Qualified candidates from other Canadian jurisdictions and other countries who move to B.C. also contribute to the supply of EAs in the Province.

EA Training Programs Offered in B.C.ⁱⁱⁱ

Public diploma programs: Both are two-year programs, cost between \$9,000 to \$22,000 and are worth between 51 and 69 credits. The program offered by Douglas College builds on the EA certificate with another year of training. The Northern Lights College program also builds on the EA certificate but requires 2 additional electives to graduate with a diploma. There does not seem to be any consistent criteria to determine whether a program is a certificate or a diploma. These diploma programs have not been included in the graphs below as they represent a different level of education than those at the certificate level.

16 private programs offer training exclusively for EAs and three programs offer EA/CSW combined training.

Not every region in the province has access to all types of programs. For instance, Vancouver Island has no EA exclusive training programs offered by public post-secondary institutions while the mainland, predictably, has the most options for all EA programs. Private programs are mostly concentrated in cities in the mainland and on Vancouver Island. As well, all exclusively online programs are also private.

Some districts suggested that a provincial online course for EAs would help mitigate their EA recruitment and retention challenges.

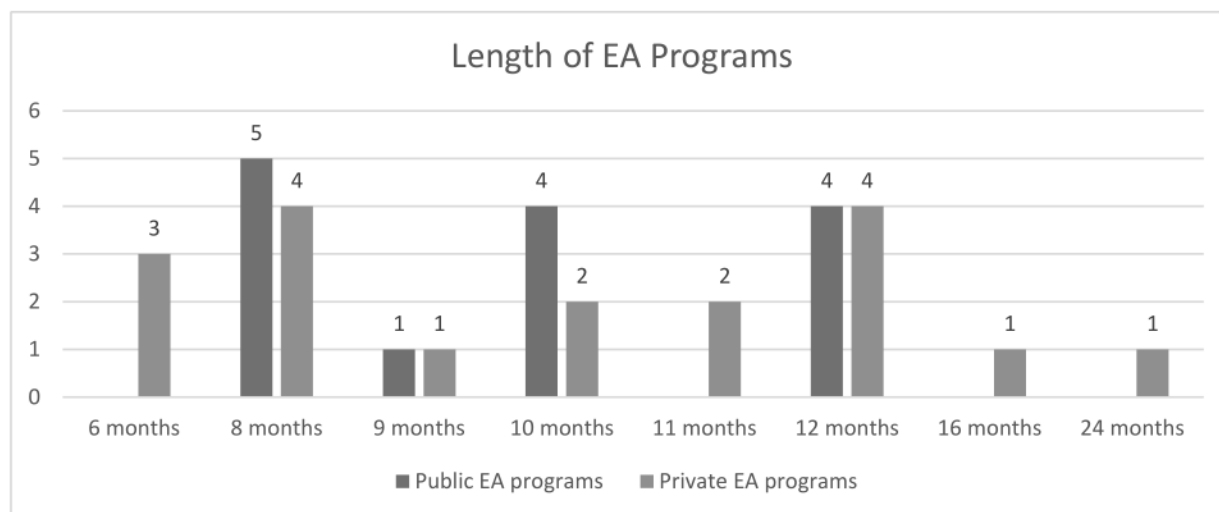
Note: Information for private programs was taken from what was available on the program websites. This proved challenging for several reasons: not all information was listed and the information that was available was described in different ways. For example, private programs sometimes describe the length of their programs in months, some in weeks and some in hours. Though effort was made to render this data consistent, this information gives a broad overview and may not be exact. As well, though there seemed to be a clear delineation between a “certificate” and a “diploma” in public institutions, where the term certificate is used for a basic training program and diploma used for a more in depth, specialized skill set, it was difficult to determine the difference between the terms in the private institutions’ programs.

Programs Offered by School Districts

The EA working group is aware of five school districts (SD 36 Surrey, SD 37 Delta, SD 38 Richmond, SD 41 Burnaby, and SD 61 Greater Victoria) that offer in-house EA programs as a way to fill EA positions in their district. However, there may be more who offer some sort of in-house training to EAs, such as SD 64 Gulf Islands, who invite people who are interested in becoming an EA to apply for a sub casual Education assistant position and work towards required qualifications.^{iv} SD 61 Greater Victoria’s Education Assistant Training program is a free two-week program that requires participants to already have an EA certification.^v

The other four districts offer more robust training that do not require previous certification. These usually last from 5 to 6 months to a year, depending on whether they are offered online or not and cost between \$4,000-\$5,500. The Delta program guarantees certification in CPI Nonviolent Crisis Intervention, POPARD Autism Spectrum Disorders, and Red Cross first Aid.^{vi} We have not included programs offered by school districts in the graphs below as there is not enough information to give a full picture.

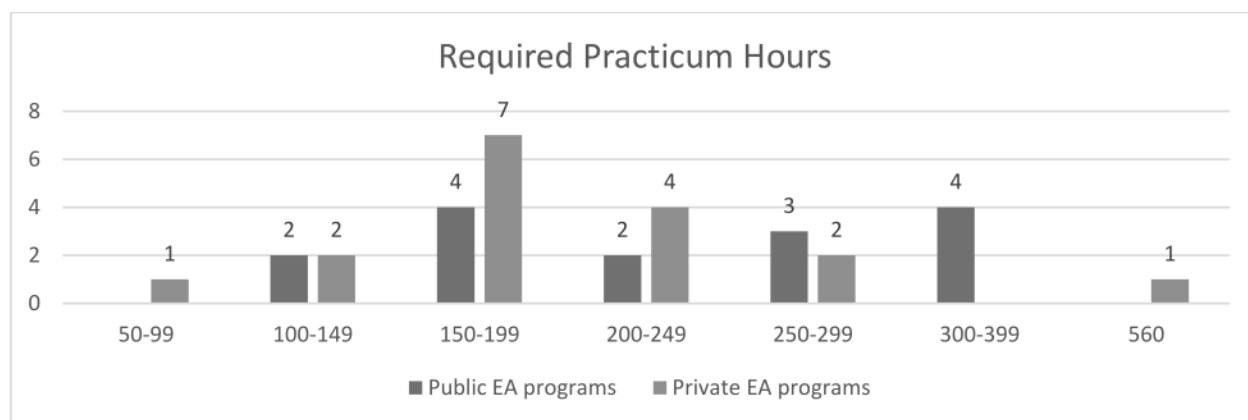
Figure 9: Number of EA Programs by Full-Time Length



Note: one public EA and one private EA program were only available part-time

- Private EA programs have the most fluctuation in length, ranging from 6 to 24 months.
- Most public EA programs take 8 to 12 months to complete.
- EA/CSW programs tend to be shorter than EA exclusive programs with most of them taking between 8 or ten months.

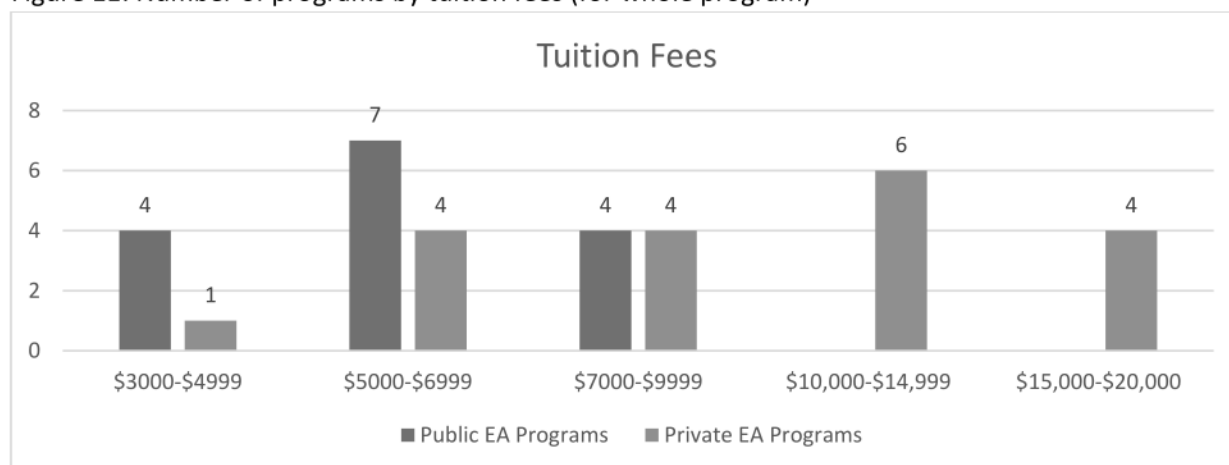
Figure 10: Number of Programs by required practicum hours



Note: EAWG was unable to determine the required practicum hours for two private EA exclusive programs.

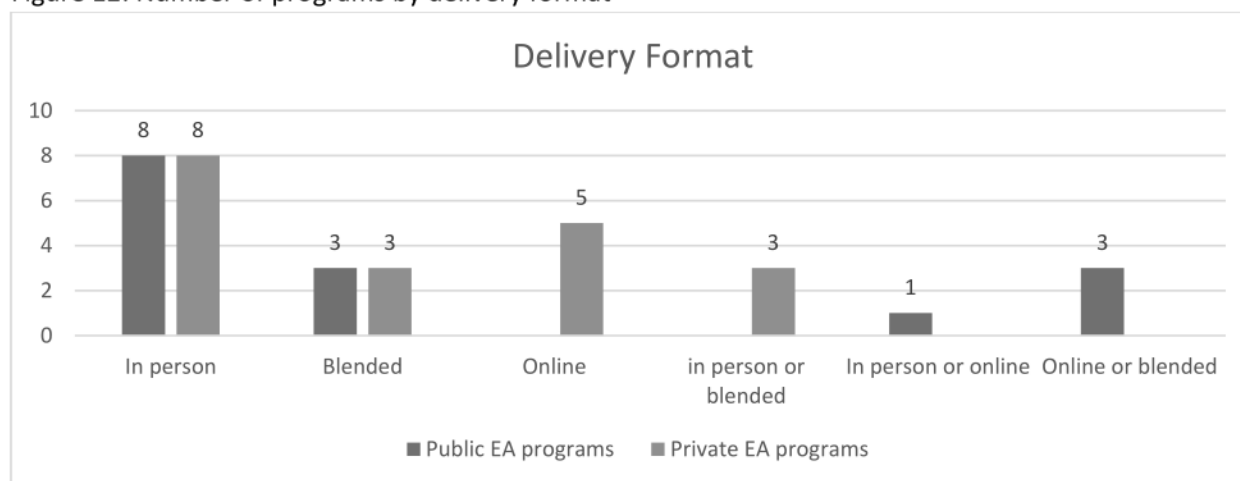
- The number of practicum hours required by programs span a wide range, from 50 to 560 hours.
- Once again, private EA programs have the widest range of practicum hours, requiring between 100 and 300 practicum hours to graduate.
- EA/CSW programs divide their practicums between school and community settings; graduates from these programs may have less hands on experience in schools in these types of programs compared to EA exclusive programs.

Figure 11: Number of programs by tuition fees (for whole program)



- Tuition fees vary greatly for all types of EA programs but especially for private EA programs, which can cost between \$5000 to up to \$20,000 (only one program costs around \$20,000; it is a two-year program offered by Portage college in New Westminster).
- However, even tuition for public EA programs span a wide range, from the College of New Caledonia's EA program (12 months) that costs just over \$3000 to that of Langara college's EA program (8 months) in Vancouver which costs just under \$9500.

Figure 12: Number of programs by delivery format



- The most common mode of delivery for both public and private EA programs is still in person.
- However, some public EA programs offer blended with two programs offering fully online options.
- There does not seem to be any explicit correlation between tuition fees and mode of delivery.

Public EA Program Content

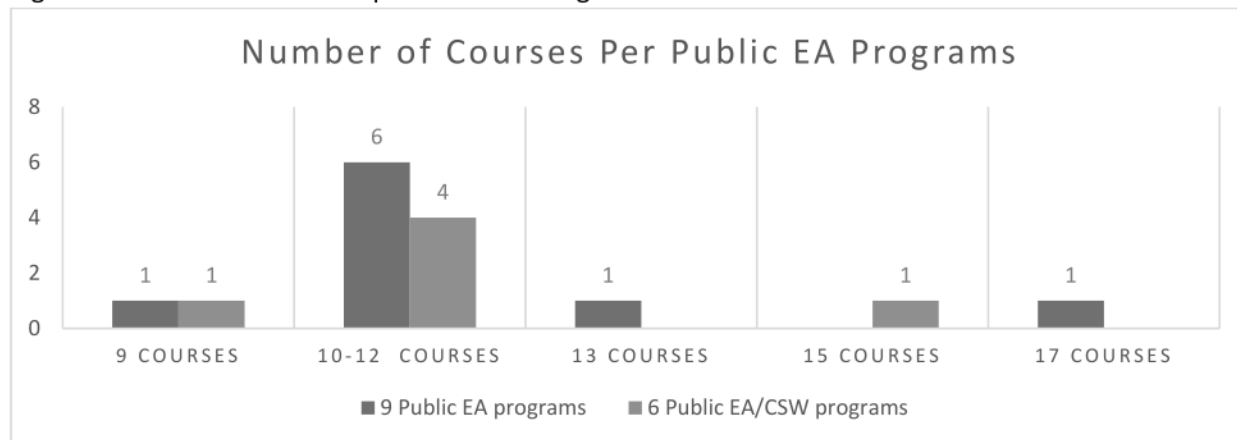
Note: The EAWG was only able to analyse the content of public EA programs as it proved challenging to consistently find information on course content for private and district-run EA programs.

Methodology

The analysis of public EA programs relied on course titles and job descriptions and may not accurately portray the depth of each course. Courses were grouped by categories that emerged from a review of

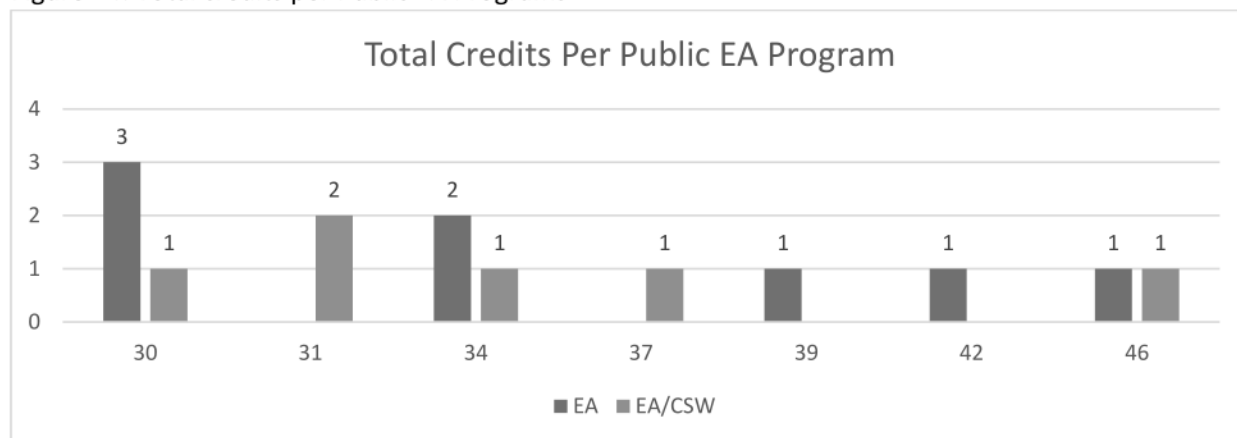
each course description and then grouped again among three umbrella categories: (1) academic courses (ethics, theory, writing, etc.); (2) courses to do with education and inclusive learning, and; (3) courses around personal care, behaviour supports and adaptive technology. Programs were divided between programs exclusively for EAs (9 programs) and programs for EAs and community support workers (6 programs) to better understand whether combined programs cover everything EAs need in an education setting or not. Figures 15 to 17 below use percentage numbers to better compare course offerings between EA and EA/CSW programs. All programs required at least one practicum while several required two.

Figure 13: Number of Courses per Public EA Programs



- Most public EA and EA/CSW programs consist of ten to twelve courses, with a few outliers.
- However, there does not seem to be any correlation between number of courses and length of program. A 12-month program could mean between 10 to 17 courses while an 8 month program could be divided between 9 to 13 courses.
- For the most part, a program with more courses will mean more credits.

Figure 14: Total credits per Public EA Programs

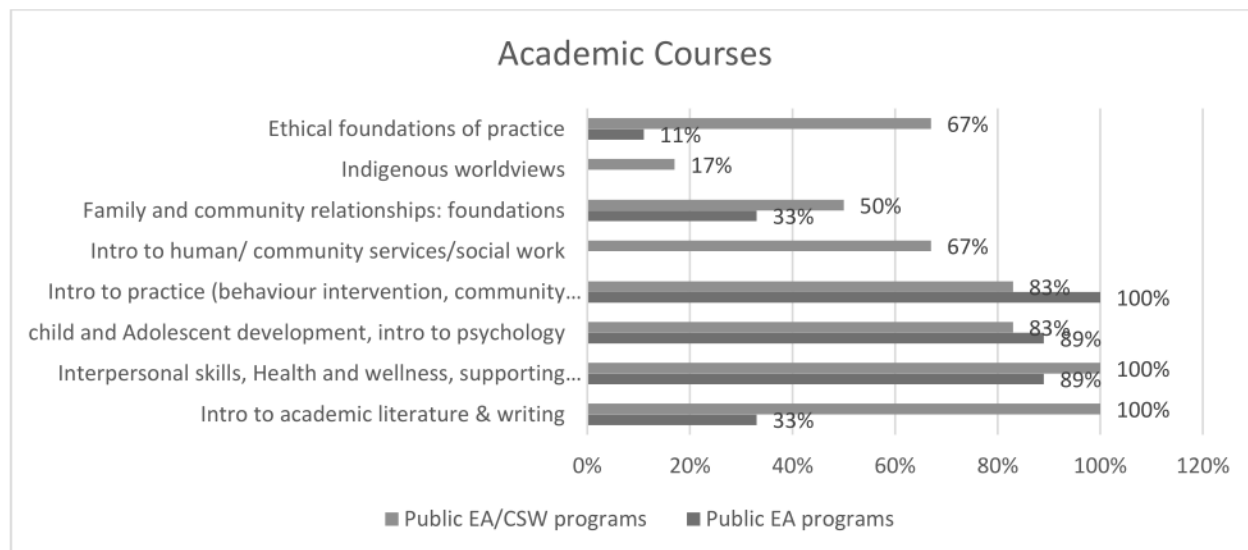


- Programs were worth between 30 to 46 credits depending on the program.
- For the most part, a program with more courses will earn more credits.

- These number of credits did not seem to correlate with the length of program, however the higher credit programs tended to require more practicum hours. Still, there was no discernable pattern between length, practicum, and tuition fees and number of credits earned.

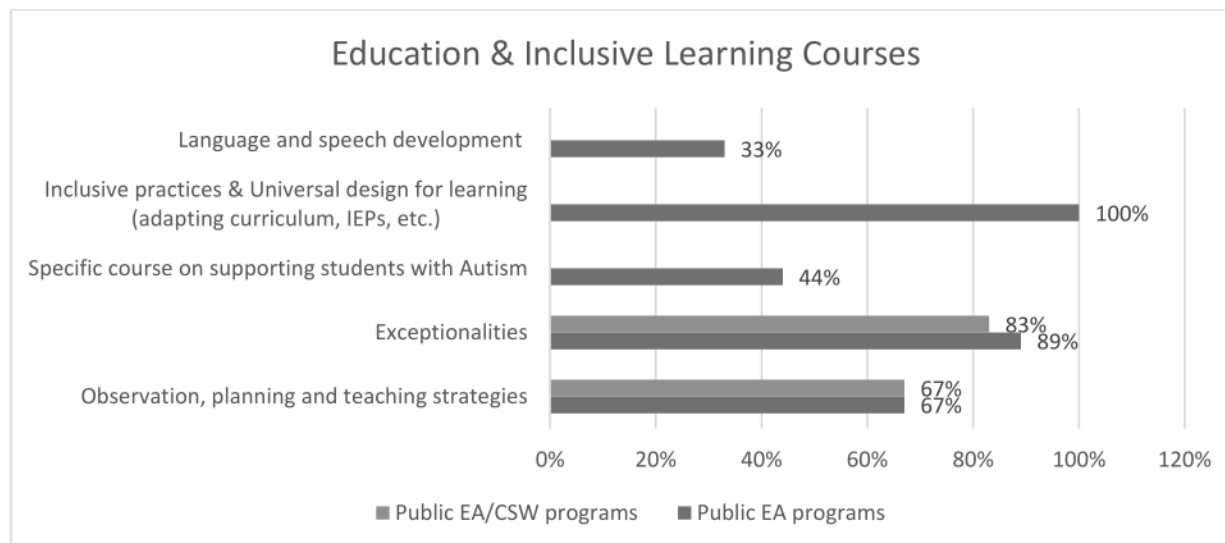
Content of Public EA Programs

Figure 15: Percentage of academic courses offered in EA and EA/CSW programs



- Most programs include some sort of introduction to practice course as well as a course on interpersonal skills.
- EA/CSW programs were more likely to include courses on ethics of practice as well as an introduction to academic writing course. Camosun college was the only program (EA exclusive or EA/CSW) to include a course on Indigenous worldviews.

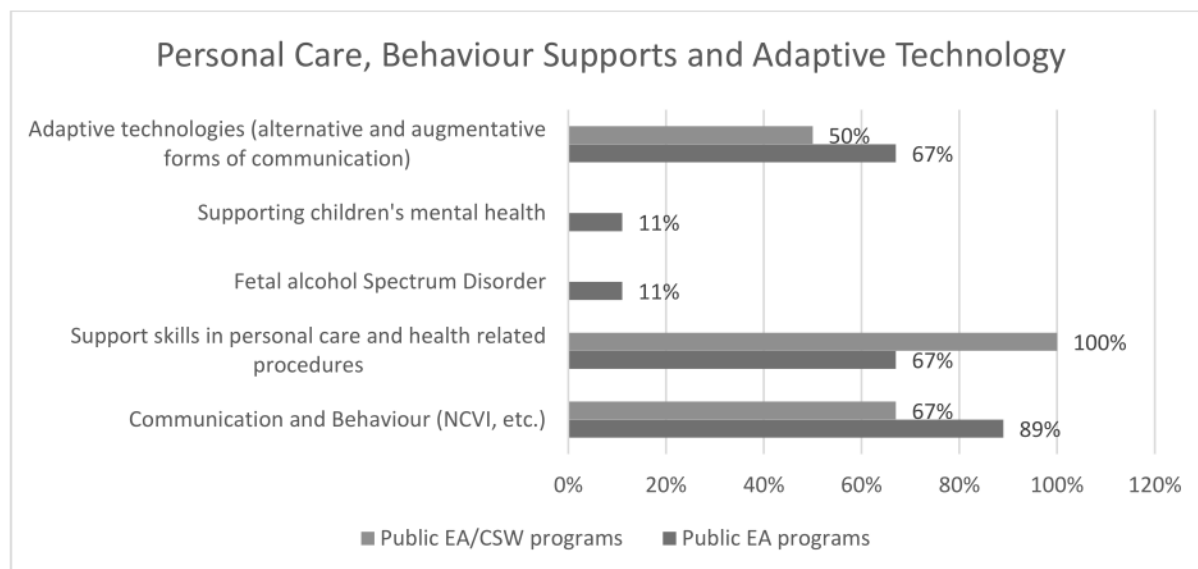
Figure 16: Percentage of education courses offered in EA and EA/CSW programs



Note: "exceptionality" is an umbrella term used to describe the wide range of factors that may affect a student's ability to learn, including all medical conditions.

- Predictably, EA/CSW programs focused less on courses grouped in the education category and tended to have more courses in the theory and personal care, etc. categories. This is significant as graduates from combined programs may not be fully equipped to support learners in the K-12 sector.
- All EA exclusive programs included courses on inclusive practices (with many programs teaching practical skills to do with individual education plans and ways to adapt the curriculum).

Figure 17: Percentage of personal care, behaviour supports, and adaptive technology courses offered in EA and EA/CSW programs



- Interestingly, not all EA exclusive programs include courses on basic personal care, while all EA/CSW courses do.
- EA exclusive programs were more likely to offer courses in adaptive technologies.
- Only one EA exclusive program offered electives in supporting children's mental health and fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Given the fact that mental health has emerged as a priority for schools, this speaks to a gap in training for education assistants.

Insights from Survey Results

Perceptions from EAs on Job Readiness

For the most part, EAs felt they were adequately prepared for their roles in the K-12 system. However, both those who did feel prepared and those who did not stressed how important the practicums were as well as hands-on experience. Many people mentioned that it would be impossible to prepare for everything they experience on the job as the environment is ever changing. As one respondent stated, "learning from a textbook does not prepare one for the behavioural and diverse abilities which exist in the school system. Schooling provides an idealistic view of what this job actual involves." For those who did not feel adequately prepared, reasons included:

- Lack of onboarding in the school district
- Not enough practicum time
- Lack of mentors

- Lack of training in behavioural and personal care supports

However, even those who felt prepared noted a gap between the program and the role:

"I felt fairly prepared for my position but some things can only be learned on the job. There are discrepancies about what the SEA role and responsibilities are depending on what program you're in and the philosophy of the teacher that you're working with."

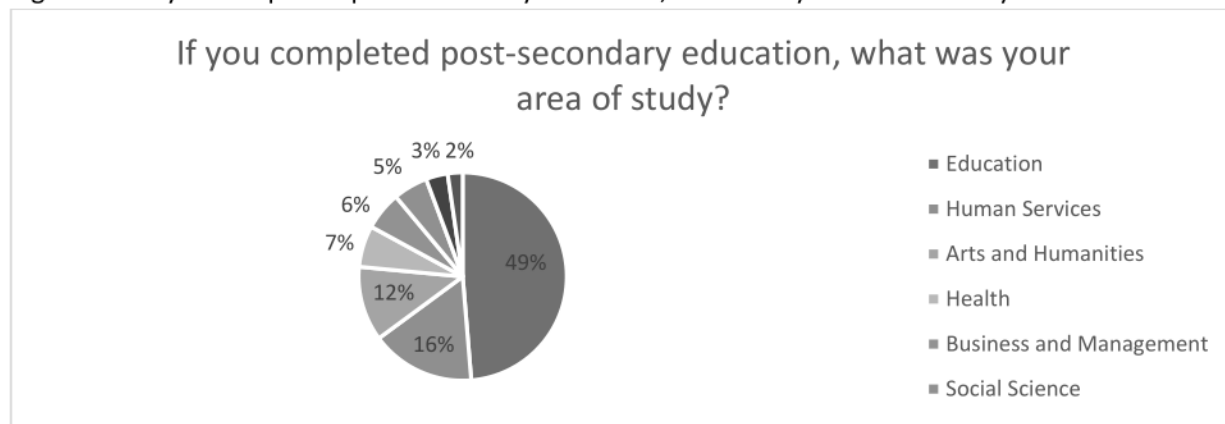
Many of the EAs who have been in the system for decades noted that when they began in the school system the role of education assistant didn't exist. They have learned by being on the job and through district-offered training.

Around 70% of EAs feel they have adequate access to professional development and other learning opportunities to be effective in their role. Of those that did not, they cited the following obstacles: not enough programming or the same programming year after year, programming only accessible and targeted to teachers and the need to pay out of their own pocket for additional training.

Transfers from Other Occupations

Because of the current flexibility with qualifications, the supply source is not limited to graduates from institutions offering EA training programs. When asked about their area of study, only about half of respondents had an area of study related to education (see Figure 18 below). The other half was a mixed bag, with 16% having training in human services and another 12% in Arts and Humanities.

Figure 18: If you completed post-secondary education, what was your area of study?



Note: the percentages are out of 4274 respondents.

Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)

13% of survey respondents also mentioned they had an ECE certificate. This is an interesting characteristic to note as childcare is about to transition to the broader learning environment. With this change, the sector will need to consider how ECEs fit into the broader education system and how their education, skill set, and general scope of practice compare to other occupations, such as EAs.

There are, however, some key fundamental differences between ECEs and EAs related to their roles, scope of practice, and to the education and training they bring to their respective role.

Currently, EAs may meet the regulatory requirements to qualify as a Responsible Adult² or a Provincially Certified ECE Assistant³, based on a review of post-secondary Educational Assistant courses. This would meet the staffing requirements to work in/lead a Group Child Care (School Age) program, or to work in an assistant role under the supervision of an ECE in a Group Child Care program for children under school age.

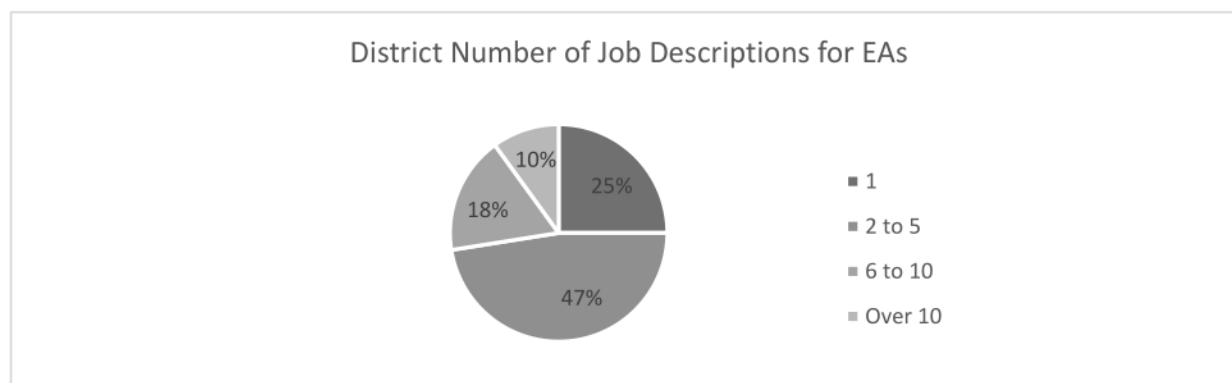
Scope of Practice

Educational Assistants (EAs) are support staff meant to work under the guidance of the classroom teacher to support a range of teaching and non-teaching tasks. The intended responsibilities of EAs are outlined in section 18 of the *School Act*:

Teachers' Assistants

- A board may employ persons other than teachers to assist teachers in carrying out their responsibilities and duties under this Act and the regulations.
- Persons employed under subsection (1) shall work under the direction of a teacher and the general supervision of a teacher or school principal.

Figure 19: Number of Job Descriptions for EAs by Number of District



Around half of districts who responded have between 2 to 5 job descriptions for EAs. At the high end, one district has up to 18 job descriptions under the umbrella of Education Assistant. This is indicative of how the term “education assistant” is a large bucket that contains a wide variety of job descriptions ranging from supervision, cafeteria or library worker and crosswalk attendant to jobs that require more education like special education assistant, visual language interpreter, and brailist.

A quarter of districts who responded only had one job description for education assistants. Though most of these districts are considered rural, this bracket also includes urban districts like SD 45 West Vancouver and SD 37 Delta.

In the governance model for the British Columbia education system, all hiring decisions and process lie with the specific district. The wide variety of ways in which districts approach the recruitment of education assistants (as evidenced by Figure 19 above) makes it challenging to come to any hard

² Responsible Adult (CCLR s. 29): completion of a course, or a combination of courses, of at least 20 hours duration in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition

³ ECE Assistant (CCLR s. 27): completion of one recognized post-secondary ECE course in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition

conclusions. Currently, there does not seem to be any consistent way to classify the different levels of expertise and specializations required under the large umbrella of education assistants. Examples of job titles include:

- Education Assistant
- Teacher assistant-crosswalk
- Education Assistant Personal Care 1 & 2
- Visual Language Interpreter
- School and Student Support A (Special needs)

Support Staff Joint Job Evaluation Project

The Support Staff Joint Job Evaluation Project (the “Project”) is a negotiated undertaking intended “to implement and maintain a standardized method of measuring and classifying support staff jobs... [with] the goal of equity among support staff jobs in BC K-12 public education.”^{vii} The Project is coordinated by the Provincial Joint Job Evaluation Steering Committee comprised of representatives from BCPSEA and CUPE.

By way of general overview, the Project involves developing benchmark job descriptions to capture the wide array of support staff jobs across the province, including EAs. School districts then review local support staff job descriptions and match them with the benchmark descriptions. The benchmark descriptions will then be placed into a hierarchy according to a provincial job evaluation plan. Finally, the resulting hierarchy will be implemented provincially.

Phase 2 of the Project, the testing phase, is complete and involved 17 school districts reviewing local support staff job descriptions and matching them with the benchmark descriptions, which in turn evolved and expanded as a result. The Project is currently in Phase 3, the job matching and data gathering phase, where the 43 remaining school districts will be reviewing local support staff job descriptions and matching them with the benchmark descriptions.^{viii}

It is important to note, however, the benchmark job descriptions for EA positions have not yet been finalized.

EA Deployment

The assignment of EAs’ responsibilities varies depending on school districts:

1. In most school districts, EAs are assigned to an individual student, depending on students’ needs. While this seems to be the most common practice, several of the school districts consulted by Ministry staff mentioned the negative consequences of such a practice; the main concern is that students who rely too much on their EA may not exercise their leadership and learn to become

independent. While this is the most common practice among school districts currently, academic research does not support the 1:1 model and this is not in alignment with the legislation.

2. Some school districts assign EAs to an entire classroom with the EA being expected to work with all students (while sometimes focusing on a student in particular) under the direction of teachers and principals; and
3. In some cases, EAs are assigned to an entire school to provide flexibility for the school community and act as a resource for the whole school population.

Both the second and third model aim to support student independence. During conversations with school districts, it was noted that even with these models, there are exceptional circumstances where an EA is assigned to an individual student (i.e., a student requiring tube feeding). However, in many districts, in the last five years, there has been a change to the way districts allocate funding for inclusive education services as well as their allocation of education Assistants. While 1701 data is considered, there is a greater emphasis on understanding students' needs when decisions for support and services are made.

As well, the relationship between teachers and education assistants is pivotal in supporting every student to reach their potential. As such, teacher education programs play an important role in training teacher candidates on how to best use education assistants in their classroom. Ensuring teachers are well-versed in the latest inclusion practices and know how to best take advantage of the skills and experience qualified education assistants bring to the classroom is an essential aspect of supporting student success.

Typical Duties & Responsibilities

Education and behavioural supports were the most common duties mentioned in EA job descriptions. Supporting the development of life and social skills, providing behaviour supports and assisting with student supervision were the most common, with 88% of job description mentioning them.

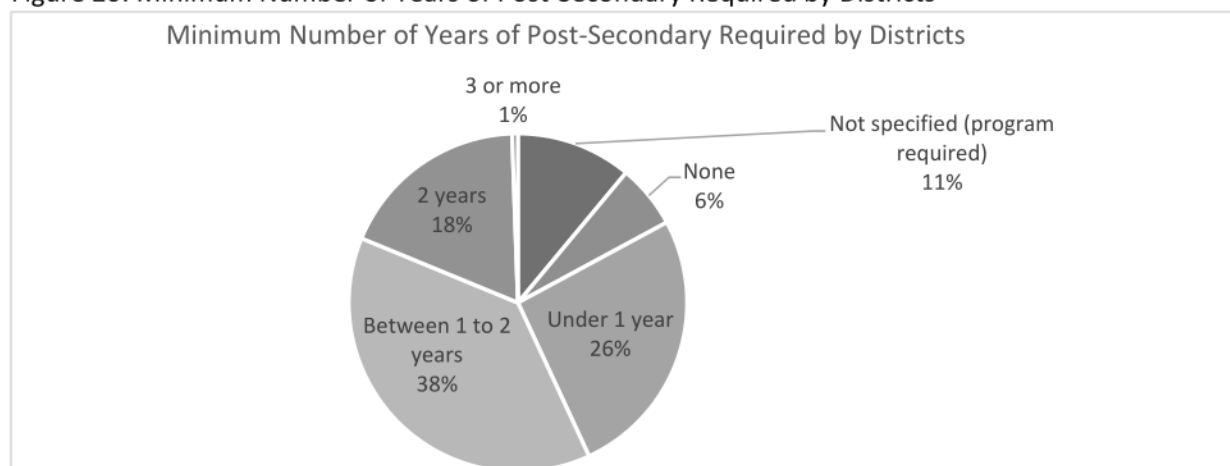
Supports around personal care were also frequent, represented in 59% of positions while duties around implementing education support programs showed up in 58% of job descriptions. Duties around implementing health care plans were a little less common, with only 44% of job descriptions specifying these duties.

Supports for the visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing were among the least frequent, which is aligned with the lower percentage of students who need these supports as well as the requirement for more specialized training to acquire these skills. In consultation with the sector, districts mentioned difficulty in finding qualified EAs for these positions.

Hiring Requirements

Post-Secondary Education and Certification

Figure 20: Minimum Number of Years of Post-Secondary Required by Districts



Most districts require a high school diploma as well as a certificate to be an Education Assistant. This is confirmed by the survey results which indicated that over three quarters of EAs have an EA certification and over 93% of EAs have a certificate/diploma or higher (bachelor's, master's, and even doctoral degrees).

When drilling down to the specific number of years of post-secondary education districts required, job descriptions ranged from none to three years or more which speaks to the wide variety in training programs as well as the different roles and responsibilities demanded by each job. For example, job descriptions that did not require any post-secondary were usually (but not always) categorized at level 1 and included titles such as education assistant, education assistant 1, education assistant: supervision. However, there was no consistency between the job title designation and the years of post-secondary required for the position. For example, required years of post-secondary education for the positions mentioned above could be none, 6 months, 10 months, 1 or 2 years. Those that required at least 2 years of post-secondary were mostly for specialized positions such as education assistant – significant needs, and to support the hearing and/or visually impaired, and those with complex behaviours.

There are a small number of districts who only accept applicants with EA certificates. Most are urban. Several districts noted that they are being selective in terms of the EA programs they recognize and do not accept applicants from all EA programs. Typically, concerns were about the length and quality of the program, the existence of a practicum, and the focus on EA training as opposed to more broad human services and community support.^{ix}

Equivalencies

Many positions that require an Education Assistant certificate will also accept other types of education and training, such as:

- one year of post-secondary studies
- Early Childhood Education certificate
- practical nursing training

- a teaching license
- EA specific courses as offered through the district

Survey results reflect these practices: 13% of respondents reported having an ECE certification. It is important to note that StrongStart facilitators as well as child and youth support workers also responded to the survey which would account for some of these respondents. However, it is likely that there are also respondents with ECE certificates working as EAs in the system.

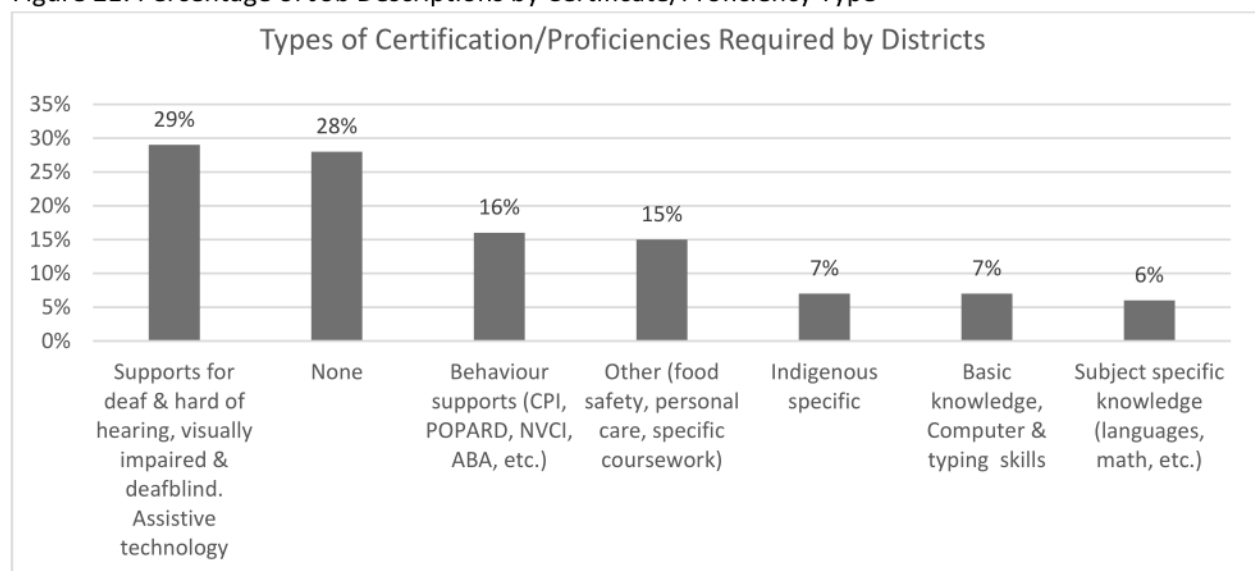
In practice, these equivalencies are often decided on a case-by-case basis, making it difficult to determine the qualifications required of the provincial workforce. In conversation with the school districts, there were often no clear rules about accepting equivalencies. There was some clarification about what was accepted district to district during interviews, but administrators may be prone to changing their position on equivalency depending on who is available to fill the position.^x As such, school districts may adjust their approach to equivalencies depending on the local context.

The vagueness of terms such as “equivalent” and the inconsistent definitions of this term both across districts, and within districts depends on the qualifications of the hiring pool. According to the consultation work conducted by SSIRRE, districts have various practices around hiring unqualified EAs.^{xi} They mention that three urban districts have added positions which only require secondary school graduation, to increase the numbers of EAs working in their school system and to address recruitment pressures, but the majority of their EAs would have certificates.

SSIRRE also found that many districts who hire unqualified EAs reported HR practices such as not awarding them permanent positions, requiring them to reapply year after year. Some ask EAs to commit to completing a certificate within a period of time, and several offer financial support for tuition. Few have a significant pay incentive between unqualified and qualified EAs. Note that districts who accept equivalent education and training, e.g., an ECE certificate, would consider those EAs qualified. Districts who have added new job descriptions for unqualified EAs are more likely to have a pay differential.

Certification or demonstrated proficiency in specific skills

Figure 21: Percentage of Job Descriptions by Certificate/Proficiency Type



- Supports for the deafblind, deaf and hard of hearing and visually impaired made up the largest category of required certification or demonstrated proficiency in specific skills with almost a third of positions requiring some sort of certification in this area.
- Almost as many positions required no specific training while 16% of positions mention needing certificate and skills on behavioural supports.

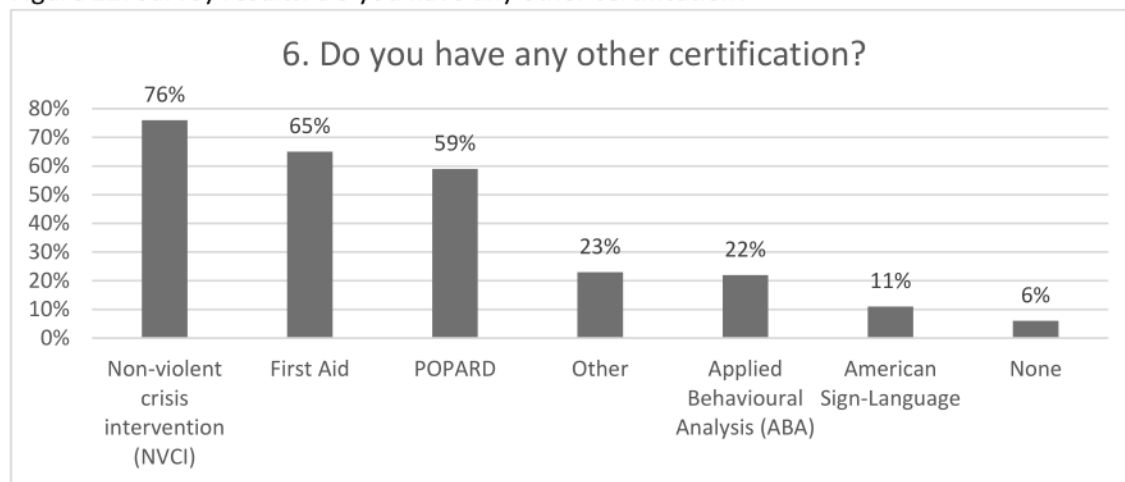
Additional Training

45% of submitted job descriptions did not require any additional training. However, in conversation with school districts, several noted that they do not list this training because it is provided by the school district, though it is not always available prior to the EA beginning work.^{xiii} Most of the additional training was for autism & related disorders (65 positions), with the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism & Related Disorders (POPARD) being the most popular (30 positions). Crisis prevention and intervention were also frequently cited as well as training for the visually impaired and deaf and hard of hearing.

Examples of additional training listed:

- POPARD (includes many different types of courses and workshops)
- Non-violent crisis intervention (NCVI)
- Crisis Prevention Institute (CPI) certification
- Applied behaviour analysis (ABA)
- American Sign Language
- Braille related training (Nemeth, CNIB, etc.)

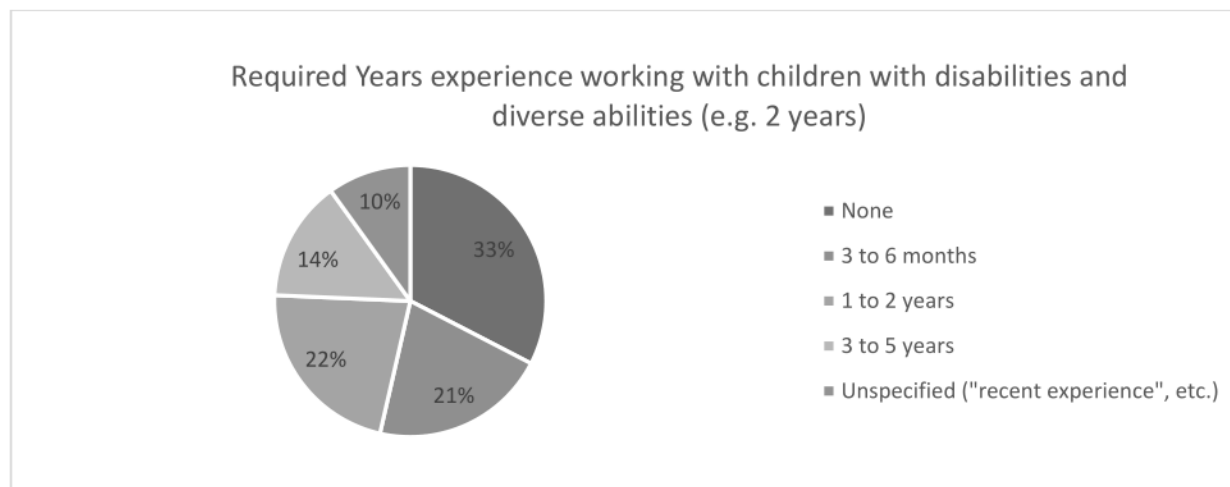
Figure 22: Survey results: Do you have any other certification?



- Most respondents have obtained additional certification, many of whom have acquired several additional certifications.
- Non-violent crisis intervention is the most frequent additional certification with 76% of respondents certified, followed by First Aid (65%) and the Provincial Outreach Program for Autism & Related Disorders (POPARD) (59%).
- Other certifications include other college certificates like child and youth care diplomas and training programs like the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) certificate program and Food Safe. The sheer number and variation of additional certifications EAs have obtained reflect the vast range of roles and responsibilities they perform in the school system.

Work Experience

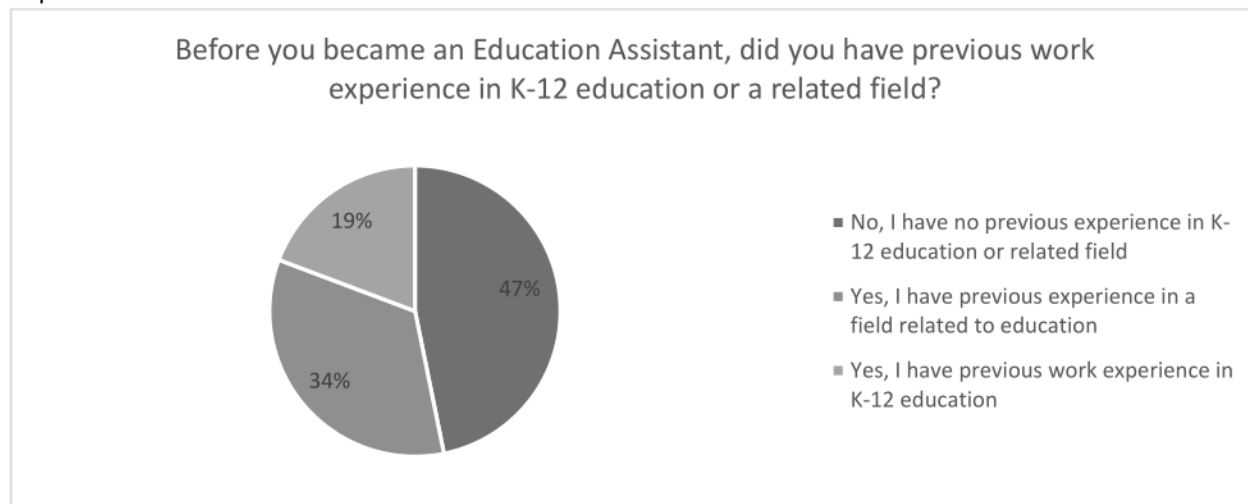
Figure 23: Job descriptions: Required Years of Experience working with children with disabilities and diverse abilities



There is no consistency in how many years of experience districts require from their candidates nor is there any clear, discernable correlation between job title and required years of experience. For instance, SD 39 Vancouver requires 3 years related experience for the position of SSA-ECE behaviour support, while SD 52 Prince Rupert requires 3 years experience for most of its 18 EA positions, from the basic education assistant 1 to Indigenous resource mentor. An exception to this would be the positions that require 5 years experience; they are for peer support/mentorship positions and visual language interpreter, respectively.

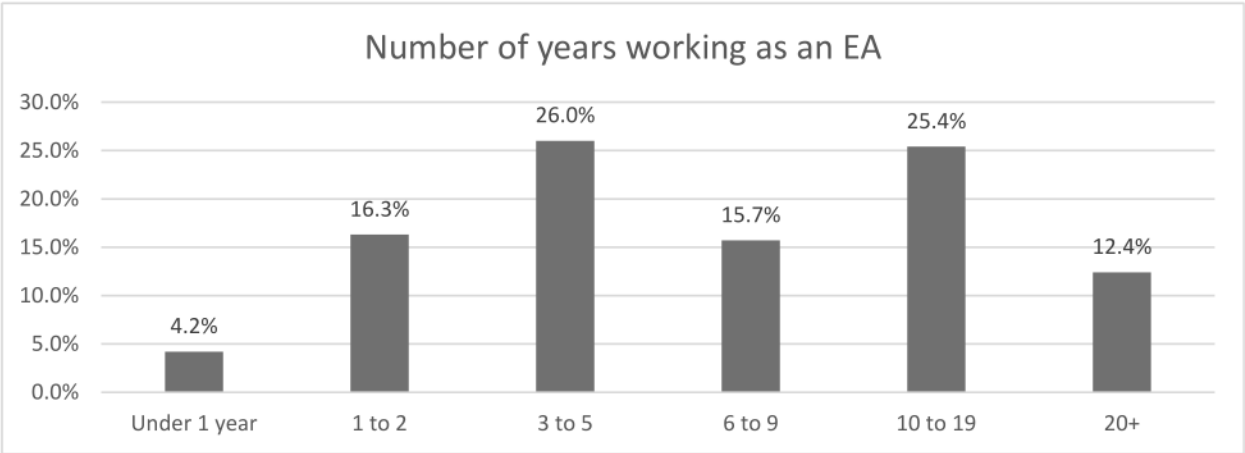
The variety of approaches to requirements for previous years of experience is confirmed by the survey results which indicated that just under half of EAs had no previous work experience in the K-12 sector (see figure 24 below). This means that for many EAs, their certification program is their first introduction to the sector.

Figure 24: Survey results: Before you became an Education Assistant, did you have previous work experience in K-12 education or a related field?



Regardless of requirements for work experience when they first begin working as an EA, many EAs currently working in the system have several years of experience under their belt (see Figure 25 below).

Figure 25: Survey results: How many years have you worked as an EA?



Note: 784 respondents left this question blank and there were 13 errors which means the percentages are out of 4409 answers, not 5206.

Over a quarter of EAs have been on the job between 3 to 5 years, while over a third of EAs have ten plus years experience. This demonstrates that many EAs view the role of education assistant as a long-term career. When asked why they became education assistants, many education assistants mention entering the field because they love working with children and feel like they can make a difference in their lives. As well, the school hours work well for people with small children.

However, this love and appreciation was not always reflected in their responses when asked about their career aspirations for the next five years; the major themes that emerged were wanting to work full-time, becoming a teacher or going back to school for another career, and retirement. Those who felt positively about being an EA mentioned wanting to grow their career and to support students. Others mentioned wages were too low, they were experiencing burnout and lack of support, that there was no room for advancement, not enough full-time work, and that they felt undervalued and badly treated by the employer. Many respondents mentioned the need to work multiple jobs to make ends meet.

Jurisdiction scan on EA Regulation

National

Only three provinces in Canada have some type of regulations/registry of education assistants: Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. All three of them take a very different approach.

Table 1: Comparison of Ontario, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland’s Approach to EA Regulation

	Position	Regulation	Education
Ontario	Education Assistant	Yes- Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2268 hours of on-the-job work experience 432 hours of in-school training

Prince Edward Island	Substitute only educational assistant 1	No: collective bargaining defines roles and requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For those denied an EA 2, they can apply for this designation which will allow them to accept day to day assignments but no permanent position.
	Education Assistant 2	No: collective bargaining defines roles and requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one year education in human services
Newfoundland	Elementary and secondary School teacher Assistants	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High school completion May require a 10 month college program
	Teaching and learning Assistant	Yes- Under the teacher Certification Regulations under the Teacher Training Act ^{xiii}	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a minimum 2 year post-secondary (20 credited courses) or a completion of a full-time two year of post-secondary in an area relevant to K-12 education

Ontario

Educational Assistant is a trade regulated by the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009.^{xiv} Qualified individuals may obtain a Certificate of Qualification, which confirms its holder has the skills, knowledge and experience that meet industry standards of practice for the trade. An apprenticeship training program consists of on-the-job and in-school training. Generally, the time-frame to become competent in the “trade” of Educational Assistant is 2700 hours (approximately one and a half years): 2268 hours of on-the-job work experience and 432 hours of in-school training.

Prince Edward Island

EAs must hold a valid Educational Assistant Authorization to be hired by a school board to work as an educational assistant (EA2) or as a substitute only educational assistant (EA1) in a PEI school.^{xv} Authorizations are issued through the Certification and Standards Section of the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning. Once they have authorization, candidates must apply to the school board(s) where they wish to work.

Before 2009, school districts were responsible for authorizing EAs to work. However, this practice was inefficient and resulted in inconsistencies. In the spring of 2009, the PEI registrar took over this work as a shared service for the sector. They now register EAs and issue authorizations to work. When the department of education took over the authorization process, they initially required applicants to complete a two-year program in working with students with diverse needs. However, districts noticed their supply was decreasing each year, so they lowered the requirements for authorization to one year of post-secondary education in human services. A \$50 dollar application fee was also required initially but has since been removed at the request of CUPE.

Under the PEI Education Act^{xvi}, education assistants are defined as non-instructional personnel; it is the collective bargaining process that determines their role and qualifications. They are not regulated nor is

the authorization mandated by law. This means that authorization requirements can change with each new bargaining cycle, as is evidenced by the new, lower educational requirements.

Newfoundland

In 2017, Newfoundland piloted a new position called the Teaching and Learning Assistant. The goal was to bridge the need between the personal care of students and their pedagogical needs. While student assistants (who only need a high school diploma to be employed) tend to the personal care of students, the role of the teaching and learning assistant (TLA) is to support the classroom teacher in meeting the educational needs of students.^{xvii}

Before 2017, the role of student assistant was to assist with the personal care of students with high needs but not for pedagogical needs. Over time, however, the role experienced a fair degree of scope creep: student assistants were helping with pedagogical needs in the classroom despite having no formal training.

In 2017 a premier's task force in improving educational outcomes was initiated.^{xviii} One of the recommendations was to create a teaching and learning assistant position that would fill the gap between teachers and the personal care student assistant.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the teaching and learning assistant (TLA) is to support the classroom teacher. They are not teachers but work under the direction of teachers and/or school administrators. As the taskforce emphasized the importance of supporting early learning, TLAs are only in K-6 classroom for the present. However, there are plans to expand the scope of TLAs to middle grades.

To date, there are about 200 TLA positions in the system that have been phased in over three years. Of the 200, 70% were ECEs (with a diploma for school-aged children) or childcare youth workers, but there are also people with Bachelor of Arts and other degrees.

Holders of the Teaching and Learning Assistant Certificate are restricted to working as a Teaching and Learning Assistant only. The TLA position is mandated through legislation and TLAs belong to the teacher's union.

Education

To be eligible, candidates require a minimum two-year post-secondary program (20 credited courses) or a completion of a full-time two year of post-secondary studies in an area relevant to K-12 education. Though the Ministry must approve the program, there are a lot of equivalencies.

Lessons Learned

In the beginning, the pilot program drew their candidates from the pool of ECEs in the province. Most of these ECEs were employed in the early childhood sector. This caused some concern in that sector as ECEs in the school system were unionized and higher paid than their counterparts in daycares. The pilot also pulled a lot from their existing student assistant pool, many of whom were already qualified. The thinking behind this strategy was that it is easier to fill a position that only requires a high school certificate than one that requires two years of post-secondary.

This has also unintentionally created a career pathway from student assistant to TLA. Student assistants are seeing that if they complete the two-year program, they are eligible for a position that pays a lot

more. The Ministry is hoping that Memorial University will implement a stackable credential model to their teacher education program where they will have a two-year TLA program that would count towards a teacher certificate. This has not yet occurred.

Monitoring

This program is very new and is currently being monitored for impact including the following areas:

- How TLAs are deployed in schools: This aspect of the program was deemed important because if a TLA was spread too thin (e.g., being deployed in several classes at a time) they would be less efficient. The Ministry created a document outlining best practices for TLA deployment.
- TLA job satisfaction: overall, the feedback from TLAs has been positive. However, it is important to keep in mind that the program is new, and the pool of respondents was quite limited.
- TLA turnover rate: this is where they are concentrating their efforts this year. For the first year or two of the program, many TLAs were actually certified teachers which meant that they experienced a shortage of substitute teachers.

International

United Kingdom

Newfoundland's model for teaching and learning assistants was inspired by innovations from the U.K. Like BC and the rest of Canada, teacher assistants in the U.K. support certified teachers and work under their supervision and guidance. They are not considered teachers.

History and Context

In the early 2000s, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) found that teaching assistants were being given more responsibility within schools despite having little to no training. To address this situation, the National Workforce Agreement was signed in 2003 to reform the school system, raise standards and address increasing staff workloads.^{xix}

The Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) position, also known as Senior Learning Support Assistants (SLSAs), and the Cover Supervisor position were created as part of the 2003 Workload Agreement between the Government and Teacher and support staff unions to address the excessive workload of teachers. HLTAs' main purpose is to support the teacher in meeting the pedagogical needs of students. In addition to the regular duties of a teaching assistant, HLTAs can teach classes on their own, cover planned absences and allow teachers the time to plan and mark.^{xx}

Education & regulation

To become a recognised HLTA requires a preparation course, in-school assessment, and a fee of 450 pounds (around \$776 CAD dollars) to the HLTA National Assessment Partnership.^{xxi} However, it does not appear to be mandated. Schools can choose to hire TAs and HLTAs without qualifications. A cover supervisor, on the other hand, "occurs when no active teaching is taking place and involves the supervision of pre-set learning activities in the absence of a teacher."^{xxii} (See Appendix 5 for comparison of TAs, HLTAs and Cover supervision)

Current State & Lessons learned

A research report commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills published in June 2019 found that there was a total of 922 TAs employed across the 60 schools that participated in the research. Of those 922 TAs, 80 (just under 9%) were HLTAs and employed in 30 of the schools.^{xxiii} In

those 30 schools, HLTAs were most often used to replace the teacher in the classroom to cover teacher's planning and marking time or to replace them during their absence.^{xxiv}

The flexibility around who may supervise a class has led to schools abusing the spirit of the roles and opting for budget reasons to have classes covered by TAs, HLTAs and Cover supervisors instead of hiring qualified supply teachers. In a survey of its support staff members, the National Education Union found that 76% of members who worked as cover supervisors reported no difference between what they were asked to do and the job description of a supply teacher.^{xxv}

Comparison of Occupations Similar to Education Assistants in BC

Table 2: Comparison of Education Assistants, Early Childhood Educators, Responsible Adults, Health Care Aides & Community Support Workers in B.C.

	Education Assistants	Early Childhood Educators	Responsible Adults	Health Care Aides	Community support workers
Work under the supervisions of designated professionals?	Yes – a teacher, school or district leader	No	No (but only in the context of school-aged care)	Yes – a nurse or other healthcare professional	Yes-social worker or health care professional
Professional Standards	No	Yes	No	No	No
Regulation Body	No	Yes	No	No	No
Registry	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Education required by regulation body, registry, or legislation?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Scope of practice defined in legislation?	Yes (School Act)	Yes (Child Care BC Act)	Yes (Child Care Licensing Regulation-Community Care and Assisted Living Act)	No	No
Registration/certification required to practice?	No	Yes	No	Yes-for public sector employees Optional-for private sector employees	No

Out of the five comparable occupations of education assistants (EAs), Early Childhood Educators (ECEs), Responsible Adults, Health Care Aides (HCAs), and Community support workers, the only occupation whose members may work independently are ECEs and responsible adults—though the latter only under very strict circumstances. ECEs are also the profession that are the most regulated through legislation (See Appendix 6 for descriptions of cross-sector occupations).

Education Assistants and Community Support Workers are the least regulated support occupations. EAs also have the largest scope in definition; the term “Education Assistant” encompasses a range of positions that require varying levels of education and responsibility. In contrast, the definition scopes for ECEs and HCAs are a lot narrower.

Conclusion

Though Education Assistants make up a significant part of the K-12 education workforce and play a pivotal role in supporting students in the classroom, there is no consistency in the way EAs are trained, in the requirements they need to get hired, in EAs’ scope of practice or even in how much they are paid. While the survey showed that EAs are dedicated to their work and are an important part of the workforce to support student success, many of them report that feeling undervalued as well as low wages due to lack of full-time work as reasons they do not feel their current job is a sustainable option for the future.

Though EAs are dedicated to their work in supporting students, the wide variety of approaches at the local level, the lack of consistency across EA jobs and between EAs and other similar occupations, as well as the fact that EAs feel undervalued as educators, make the current situation for EAs quite challenging. While standardized credentials would bring more consistency, equity and supports to the EA occupation, they could also have a significant impact on the supply of EAs at a time where most districts are flagging recruitment challenges. However, this may also be the perfect time to explore strategies to bring more consistency to the roles, responsibilities and training for Education Assistants given the current work being done to integrate ECEs into the broader learning environment.

Appendix 1: EAWG Terms of Reference

Working Group on the Current State of the Education Assistant (EA) Workforce in B.C. Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of this working group is to gather information and data to better understand the current state of the EA workforce and potential implications of standardized certification. Topics of interest include, but are not limited to, the current education and work experience of EAs, the current and potential intersections between EAs and Early Childhood Educators, as well as insights from other jurisdictions' and/or other sectors' current policies and practices on certification standards.

Deliverable

The working group will submit a report to the Ministry of Education by December 31, 2021 outlining the following information:

- Data on the current EA workforce (e.g., demographic information, workforce count, geographic distribution across the province).
- Information on EAs' scope of practice and hiring requirements in school districts.
- Information on EAs' profile (e.g., level of education, certification, work experience, professional aspirations) – this information might be collected through a survey/an engagement tool with the EA workforce.
- An overview of current EA training program offerings in BC (e.g., length, breadth, scope, similarities/difference in curriculum and requirements, regions served by the program).
- Information concerning policies, practices and initiatives implemented in other sectors to introduce standards for paraprofessionals (e.g. healthcare aids).
- A jurisdiction scan of similar occupations in BC and for EAs across Canada.
- Academic research on best practices for regulation and certification of the EA workforce.
- A list of stakeholder groups who should be engaged in future consultations to provide additional insights on the EA workforce.

Membership

The Working Group will include representatives from the Ministry of Education (EDUC) and CUPE.

EDUC will be represented by:

- Linda Beddouche, Director, Workforce Development
- Lina Branter, Policy Analyst/Project manager, Workforce Development
- Brett Wilmer, Director, Education Economics and Data Science Lab
- Veronica Horgan, Education officer, Inclusive Education

CUPE will be represented by:

- Kirsten Daub, CUPE National Representative
- Stephen Elliott-Buckley, CUPE National Researcher
- Nicole Edmondson, CUPE Local 3500
- Sarah Poberg, CUPE Local 9

Where both parties are in agreement, additional members may be added to the working group.

Communications, Meetings and Timeline

Working group meetings will be called and facilitated by the Director of Workforce Development or designate, or a duly authorized representative of the Ministry of Education and take place virtually.

It is anticipated that the Working Group will meet monthly between May and December 2021. Where both parties are in agreement, additional meetings may be added if required.

Working group communications between meetings will be initiated and facilitated by the director of Workforce Development or her designate, or a duly authorized representative of the Ministry of Education.

Appendix 2: Job Description Matrix Respondents

Group	R/U	Category	School District	Response?
1	R	Extra Small Rural	10 (Arrow Lakes)	Y
1	R	Extra Small Rural	19 (Revelstoke)	Y
1	R	Extra Small Rural	49 (Central Coast)	
1	R	Extra Small Rural	50 (Haida Gwaii)	Y
1	R	Extra Small Rural	81 (Fort Nelson)	
1	R	Extra Small Rural	84 (Vancouver Island West)	Y
1	R	Extra Small Rural	87 (Stikine)	Y
1	R	Extra Small Rural	92 (Nisga'a)	Y
2	R	Small Rural	47 (Powell River)	
2	R	Small Rural	51 (Boundary)	
2	R	Small Rural	52 (Prince Rupert)	Y
2	R	Small Rural	53 (Okanagan-Similkameen)	Y
2	R	Small Rural	54 (Bulkley Valley)	Y
2	R	Small Rural	58 (Nicola-Similkameen)	
2	R	Small Rural	64 (Gulf Islands)	
2	R	Small Rural	74 (Gold Trail)	
2	R	Small Rural	78 (Fraser-Cascade)	Y
2	R	Small Rural	85 (Vancouver Island North)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	05 (Southeast Kootenay)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	06 (Rocky Mountain)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	08 (Kootenay Lake)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	27 (Cariboo-Chilcotin)	
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	46 (Sunshine Coast)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	59 (Peace River South)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	60 (Peace River North)	
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	82 (Coast Mountain)	
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	91 (Nechako Lakes)	Y
3	R	Medium Rural Climate	93 (Conseil Scolaire Francophone)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	20 (Kootenay-Columbia)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	22 (Vernon)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	28 (Quesnel)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	48 (Sea To Sky)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	67 (Okanagan Skaha)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	69 (Qualicum)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	70 (Alberni)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	71 (Comox Valley)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	72 (Campbell River)	
4	R	Medium Rural	75 (Mission)	Y
4	R	Medium Rural	79 (Cowichan Valley)	
5	U	Medium Urban	33 (Chilliwack)	
5	U	Medium Urban	37 (Delta)	Y
5	U	Medium Urban	40 (New Westminster)	
5	U	Medium Urban	42 (Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows)	
5	U	Medium Urban	44 (North Vancouver)	

5	U	Medium Urban	45 (West Vancouver)	Y
5	U	Medium Urban	57 (Prince George)	Y
5	U	Medium Urban	62 (Sooke)	
5	U	Medium Urban	63 (Saanich)	Y
5	U	Medium Urban	68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith)	Y
5	U	Medium Urban	73 (Kamloops/Thompson)	Y
6	U	Large Urban	23 (Central Okanagan)	
6	U	Large Urban	34 (Abbotsford)	Y
6	U	Large Urban	35 (Langley)	Y
6	U	Large Urban	36 (Surrey)	Y
6	U	Large Urban	38 (Richmond)	
6	U	Large Urban	39 (Vancouver)	Y
6	U	Large Urban	41 (Burnaby)	
6	U	Large Urban	43 (Coquitlam)	Y
6	U	Large Urban	61 (Greater Victoria)	Y

Appendix 3: Education Assistant Survey

Education Assistant Survey

Collection Notice

The Ministry of Education's Education Policy Branch is collecting your information to better understand the needs, issues, opportunities, and challenges of the Education Assistant workforce. This work is being undertaken as part of the Terms of Reference of the Education Assistant (EA) working group between the Ministry of Education and CUPE and will be used to inform their final report to the Minister. Please do not include any personal information or third-party information (i.e., talk about others) in your responses. The Government of B.C. will not collect, use or disclose any of your personal information, as all responses will be aggregated and not associated with an individual. All data will be securely stored on government servers. This survey is voluntary, and while a response is encouraged, it is not required.

Context:

This survey is an initiative of the Education Assistant Working Group established between the Ministry of Education and CUPE BC. The purpose of this working group is to gather information and data to better understand the current state of the EA workforce and potential implications of standardized certification.

Survey Questions:

Are you currently an EA? [Yes/No]

If not, what is your role [text answer]

1. EDUCATION BACKGROUND

What is your highest level of education?

- ☐ High school
- ☐ Certificate/diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Other: [text answer]

If you completed post-secondary education, what was your area(s) of study? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Arts and Humanities
- ☐ Business and Management
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Human Services
- ☐ Indigenous Studies

- ☐ Science and Engineering
- ☐ Social Science
- ☐ Trades and Technology
- ☐ Other: [text answer]

Do you have an Education Assistant certification? [Yes/No]

[If yes, then will be prompted to answer these questions]

How long was your Education Assistant program?

- ☐ Two months or less
- ☐ Three to six months
- ☐ Seven months to one year
- ☐ More than one year

What was the name of the organization that delivered the Education Assistant program you completed? [short text answer]

Did your Education Assistant program include a practicum? [Yes/No]

Why did you choose this specific Education Assistant program? (select all that apply)

- ☐ Affordability
- ☐ Instruction/curriculum
- ☐ Location
- ☐ Online learning options
- ☐ Part-time learning options
- ☐ Reputation of school or program
- ☐ Required by school district
- ☐ Other: [short text answer]

Do you have an Early Childhood Educator certification? [Yes/No]

[If yes, then will be prompted to answer this question]

How many years have you worked as an early childhood educator? [dropdown e.g., less than a year, 1, 2, 3 years etc.]

Do you have any other certification? (select all that apply)

- ☐ American Sign-Language
- ☐ Applied Behavioural Analysis Therapy
- ☐ First Aid
- ☐ Unified English Braille
- ☐ Non-violent crisis intervention
- ☐ POPARD -Provincial Outreach Program for Autism & Related Disorders
- ☐ Other: [text answer]

2. WORK EXPERIENCE AND CAREER GOALS

How many years have you worked as an Education Assistant? [dropdown e.g., less than a year, 1, 2, 3 years etc.]

When you first began working as an Education Assistant, did you feel adequately prepared for your role? Why or why not? [text answer – 500-character limit]

In which school district(s) do you currently work as an Education Assistant? (select all that apply)
[drop down]

Before you became an Education Assistant, did you have previous work experience in K-12 education or a related field (e.g., early childhood education, post-secondary education)?

- ☐ Yes, I have previous work experience in K-12 education
- ☐ Yes, I have previous experience in a field related to education
- ☐ No, I have no previous experience in K-12 education or related field

Do you feel you have access to professional development and other learning opportunities to be effective in your role as an Education Assistant? [Yes/No with option to add additional comments in a short text field]

Why did you decide to become an Education Assistant? [text answer – 500-character limit]

What are your career goals in the next 5 years? [text answer – 500-character limit]

Is there anything else you would like to say? [text answer – 500-character limit]

Appendix 4: EAWG Survey: Respondents by School District

9. In which school district(s) do you currently work as an Education Assistant? (select all that apply)	Respondents
36 Surrey	782
23 Central Okanagan	365
41 Burnaby	357
43 Coquitlam	266
44 North Vancouver	241
35 Langley	239
61 Greater Victoria	206
83 North Okanagan-Shuswap	157
34 Abbotsford	153
62 Sooke	150
71 Comox Valley	127
57 Prince George	123
05 Southeast Kootenay	116
37 Delta	112
68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith	112
67 Okanagan Skaha	105
60 Peace River North	98
91 Nechako Lakes	98
38 Richmond	83
40 New Westminster	80
93 Conseil scolaire francophone	79
73 Kamloops/Thompson	77
63 Saanich	76
08 Kootenay Lake	72
59 Peace River South	71
72 Campbell River	69
79 Cowichan Valley	69
42 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	58
22 Vernon	52
48 Sea to Sky	50
45 West Vancouver	49
33 Chilliwack	48
70 Alberni	43
69 Qualicum	41
06 Rocky Mountain	38
20 Kootenay-Columbia	38
53 Okanagan Similkameen	37
58 Nicola-Similkameen	35
51 Boundary	30
75 Mission	29

78 Fraser-Cascade	23
39 Vancouver	21
28 Quesnel	19
46 Sunshine Coast	19
52 Prince Rupert	18
47 Powell River	17
81 Fort Nelson	15
49 Central Coast	14
74 Gold Trail	14
50 Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte	12
82 Coast Mountains	10
85 Vancouver Island North	10
10 Arrow Lakes	s.22
84 Vancouver Island West	
92 Nisga'a	
64 Gulf Islands	
27 Cariboo-Chilcotin	
54 Bulkley Valley	
19 Revelstoke	

Appendix 5: TAs Compared to HLTAs in UK

	TAs (levels 1-3) ^{xxvi}	Cover Supervisors	HLTAs (levels 4-5) ^{xxvii}
<i>Skills & Experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ability to build good working relationships with both pupils and adults • Good organisational skills • Flexibility and creativity • Enjoy working with children • Good literacy and numeracy skills • Ability to manage groups of pupils and deal with challenging behaviour • Patience and a sense of humour • In some jobs it could be useful if you have IT skills or are fluent in local community languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good communications skills • to be highly flexible • to enjoy working with young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TA skills & experience • meet the 33 HLTA professional standards • have English and maths skills at Level 2 or equivalent • know how to use ICT to support your work • be trained in relevant learning strategies, e.g. literacy • have specialist skills/ training in a curriculum area, e.g. sign language
<i>Entry requirements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE -level literacy and numeracy • Previous experience working with you an asset • Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools OR Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools an asset but not required OR level 3 apprenticeship for teaching assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to schools to decide what qualifications and experience are required • Level 2 Award in Support Work in Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Already be working as a TA • Support from head teacher who will guide them to relevant training.
<i>Training & Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once hired, complete an induction programme Expand knowledge by taking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 3 Award/Certificate/Diploma in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools • Other training from First aid to specific interventions, etc. 	<p>Other possible qualifications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 Certificate in Supporting Teaching and Learning in Schools • Level 3 Certificate in Cover Supervision of Pupils in Schools (currently awarded by City & Guilds and OCR) 	<p>Optional: level 4 certificate for HLTAs (provides national recognition but not always required by schools).</p>
<i>Professional standards</i>	<p>21 standards^{xxviii} divided into 4 categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and Professional conduct • Knowledge and Understanding • Teaching and Learning • Working with Others 		<p>33 standards^{xxix} divided into 6 categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional values and practice • Professional knowledge and understanding • Professional skills • Planning and expectations • Monitoring and assessment • Teaching and learning activities

Appendix 6: Descriptions of Comparable Occupations to EAs

Early Childhood Educators

Early childhood educators (ECEs) work with young children from birth to age five. They create and run educational programs that support children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional growth. Early childhood educator assistants (ECEAs) work under the supervision of ECEs.^{xxx}

Early childhood educators (ECEs) and assistants (ECEAs) must be certified to work in most licensed child-care programs. There are five levels of certification:

- ECE – one year
- ECE – five year
- ECEA
- Infant Toddler Educator (ITE)
- Special Needs Educator (SNE)

ECEs must complete an early childhood education program at a recognized university or college. They can then be certified through the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development. ECEAs can earn a certificate after taking courses in child development, children's well-being, and curriculum planning. ITEs and SNEs must be certified as ECEs before taking their additional training and certification.

To stay certified, workers must continue to do professional development, get work experience, and meet character and skill requirements. They must renew their certification every five years.^{xxxi} ECEs are regulated by the Director of the Early Childhood Educator Registry.^{xxxii}

ECEs in BC have two sets of standards against which to measure their practice: The Code of Ethics is endorsed by the [Early Childhood Educators of British Columbia \(ECEBC\)](#) and help early childhood educators decide what conduct is right and correct. The B.C. childcare occupational competencies describe the level of skills, knowledge and abilities needed to be considered a capable early childhood educator.^{xxxiii}

Health Care Aides

In BC, the term Health Care Aide (HCA) describes a variety of workers who deliver basic nursing care, such as personal hygiene, dressing, feeding and medication assistance, and including, but are not limited to, the following job titles: community health workers, resident care attendants, care aides, home support workers, nurse aides, mental health workers, and personal support workers.^{xxxiv}

In January 2020 BC implemented the BC Care Aide and Community Health Worker Registry (the Registry) and was the first of its kind in Canada.^{xxxv} The Registry's purpose is to ensure that those who engage in serious misconduct are not able to continue working with vulnerable individuals in BC. They do this by:

- tracking and responding to cases of alleged abuse,
- ensuring minimum levels of training, and
- promoting professional development for HCAs.^{xxxvi}

Registration with the Registry is a requirement for employment with all publicly-funded employers, though some private employers have opted to participate voluntarily. To be accepted into the Registry, applicants must have completed a recognised HCA program.^{xxxvii}

The Registry does not have a legislative foundation. In a 2016 Policy Intentions Paper for Consultation on health care assistant oversight, the need for further oversight of HCAs was identified. Concerns about the Registry included:

- the investigation processes,
- the Registry's lack of a legislative or regulatory basis,
- its lack of requirement of private employer participation,
- its inability to compel reporting of abuse or participation in the investigatory process,
- poor mechanisms to inform employers when an HCA has been removed from the Registry,
- its transparency – for employers and public, and
- its funding base and sustainability over the longer term.

The nature of the work performed by HCAs is not in itself considered high risk, and therefore does not warrant self-regulation. However, the Ministry of Health believes the locations and circumstances in which HCAs provide care may pose a risk of harm to vulnerable seniors and other client groups, including risk of financial abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect, and as a result a form of regulation is required.

As such, the authors of the paper felt that an amendment to the Health Professions Act (HPA)^{xxxviii} would introduce a provision allowing the Minister of Health to create a regulatory mechanism that is proportionate to the risks involved in health occupations for which self-regulation is not an appropriate regulatory response. HCAs would be the first health occupation to be regulated within this new category. The Ministry recommended that HCAs be regulated under the British Columbia College of Nursing professionals and Midwives.

Since the 2016 paper was written, there has been a change in government and a shift in focus into merging the 25 regulatory colleges into 6 large ones. Until this work is completed, further regulation of the HCA profession has been put on hold. In the meantime, the Ministry of Health is focussing its efforts on strategies such as implementing a code of conduct that do not require any formal oversight.

Responsible Adults

A responsible adult in a community care facility context as defined by the Child Care Licensing Regulation must:

- be at least 19 years of age,
- be able to provide care and mature guidance to children,
- have completed a course, or a combination of courses, of at least 20 hours duration in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition, and
- have relevant work experience.^{xxxix}

Though they do not need to be supervised, they are only able to provide care for school-aged children in B.C.^{xl} A person can work as a responsible adult prior to completion of the 20 hours of training with approval from a licensing officer. In this case, a training schedule should be developed. Training can occur in a variety of ways and does not necessarily need to be through a college or university course. Examples of training: online, workshops, conferences, seminars, or classes offered through local recreation centres, courses such as Good Beginnings made available by the BC Family Child Care Association and offered through distance education, or through working with an experienced child care provider who can share knowledge and skills.

The survey results highlighted in this report indicate that most EAs would qualify as responsible adults.

Community support workers

Community support workers “assist clients with their physical, economic, vocational, recreational, social, emotional and daily life skills development. [They] assist clients to achieve the greatest degree of independence and quality of life possible.”^{xli} To be a community support worker a diploma in a related human/social service field and at least one year recent related experience is required.

A community support worker performs many of the same duties as education assistants and health care aides but in the client’s home or community. For instance, they participate in creating Personal service plans, and support clients with daily life and social skills. Community service workers can be employed by social service agencies, government agencies, group homes, correctional facilities, among others. They usually work under the supervision of a social worker or health care professional.

ⁱ Ministry consultation with Districts. (January 2021).

ⁱⁱ Ministry consultation with Districts. (January 2021).

ⁱⁱⁱ [Education Assistant & SEA Careers in BC | Make a Future](#)

^{iv} *Education assistant training program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://sd64.bc.ca/education-assistant-training-program/>

^v *Educational assistant training program*. (n.d.). Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://www.sd61.bc.ca/our-district/departments-services/human-resource-services/employment/opening/educational-assistant-training-program/>

^{vi} Delta Teacher Assistant Certification Program. [n.d.] Retrieved January 5, 2022, from <https://www.deltasd.bc.ca/programs/continuing-education/delta-teacher-assistant-certificate-dtac-program/>

^{vii} gssi. (n.d.). Job evaluation committee. *BC Public School Employers’ Association*. Retrieved January 28, 2022, from <https://bcpsea.bc.ca/support-staff/collective-agreement-administration/job-evaluation-committee/>

^{viii} gssi. (n.d.). Job evaluation committee. *BC Public School Employers’ Association*. <https://bcpsea.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Bulletin-8-Job-Evaluation-January-24-2022.pdf>

^{ix} SSIRRE.(2021, September 27). Interim findings: EA Job description review and school district interviews

^x SSIRRE.(2021, September 27). Interim findings: EA Job description review and school district interviews

^{xi} SSIRRE.(2021, September 27). Interim findings: EA Job description review and school district interviews

^{xii} SSIRRE.(2021, September 27). Interim findings: EA Job description review and school district interviews

^{xiii} Cnlr 1134/96—Teacher certification regulations under the teacher training act. (n.d.). Retrieved November 30, 2021, from https://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/regulations/rc961134.htm#14_2

^{xiv} [TFS Educatoinal Assistant Nov2015.pdf \(collegeoftrades.ca\)](#)

^{xv} [Educational Assistant Authorization | Government of Prince Edward Island](#)

^{xvi} <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/legislation/education-act>

^{xvii} [Teaching and Learning Assistant Certification - Education \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

^{xviii} [task force report.pdf \(gov.nl.ca\)](#)

^{xix} Wikipedia contributors. (2020, October 10). Teaching assistant (United Kingdom). In *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 23:36, October 21, 2021, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Teaching_assistant_\(United_Kingdom\)&oldid=982845772](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Teaching_assistant_(United_Kingdom)&oldid=982845772)

^{xx} *Skills for Schools-Higher Level Teaching Assistants*. (n.d.). UNISON. Retrieved October 21, 2021, from <http://www.skillsforschools.org.uk/roles-in-schools/higher-level-teaching-assistant/>

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- ^{xxiii} Skipp, A., & Hopwood, V. (2019). *Deployment of Teaching Assistants in schools*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/812507/Deployment_of_teaching_assistants_report.pdf
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- ^{xxviii} *Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants*. (n.d.). UNISON. Retrieved October 22, 2021, from <http://www.skillsforschools.org.uk/resources-research/professional-standards-for-school-roles/professional-standards-for-teaching-assistants/>
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- ^{xxx} <https://www.workbc.ca/careers/4214#about-this-job>
- ^{xxxi} [Child Care Licensing Regulation \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- ^{xxxii} [Child Care Licensing Regulation \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- ^{xxxiii} Ministry of Education. (n.d.). Renew & Maintain Early Childhood Educator Certification. BC Government. Retrieved November 16, 2021, from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/early-learning/teach/training-and-professional-development/become-an-early-childhood-educator/renew-maintain-ece-certification>
- ^{xxxiv} <https://www.cachwr.bc.ca/Home.aspx>
- ^{xxxv} [hca_new.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- ^{xxxvi} <https://www.cachwr.bc.ca/About-the-Registry/Role-Mandate.aspx>
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