



EAs across the Province share concerns and experiences

Hundreds of education assistants, SSWs, CEAs and similar classifications participated in four Zoom meetings held over the last two weeks to share their experiences and issues. Members identified and discussed their bargaining priorities as well as other important concerns.

Experiencing the pandemic

EAs dealt with and continue to face many challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic including:

- anxiety and stress due to lack of or late communication about exposures and confirmed cases
- additional pressures around transitioning between multiple cohorts
- the ongoing need to remind students about safety protocols while providing support to multiple students
- mask challenges including speaking loudly enough; understanding and being understood while speaking with a mask; students having difficulty keeping masks on; difficulties in reading student emotions behind their masks
- less collaboration and less connection with colleagues equals less support for this group
- fewer resources when working with students with challenging behaviours such as not having access to sensory rooms
- unable to maintain physical distancing in this work
- increased difficulty in having questions about safety plans addressed
- anxiety, fatigue and burnout

Workplace violence

Many raised the issue of workplace violence that continues unabated during COVID. Some EAs are not getting access to student safety plans. Members have the right to refuse unsafe work. The steering committee continues to work with BCPSEA, the Ministry, and other stakeholders in education on this serious issue.

Integrated early care and learning

A Q&A session followed a brief powerpoint on integrated before- and after-school care. The majority of EAs on the calls were interested in learning more about how school districts can expand these programs through in-house operation. Folks were encouraged to visit the [website](#), send a message to their local trustees, and share the page on social media.

Standardization and training

EAs were pleased that standardization of credentials is moving forward and were directed to the position paper, [Standard Credentials for Education Assistants](#), for more information and were asked to provide their feedback on its content and the direction CUPE will be taking on this important topic.

Participants were joined by K-12 Presidents Council executive, local presidents and staff. K-12 (and early learning) members are encouraged to take part in this ongoing series.

A call for Indigenous support workers, youth and family workers, library support staff and other direct support classifications will be held May 4 at 5:30 p.m.

REGISTER HERE:

- May 4** 5:30 – 7:30 pm [Indigenous Support Workers, Youth and Family Workers, Library Support Staff and other direct student support classifications](#)
- May 6** 5:30 – 7:30 pm [IT, Tech Support, Technicians, and similar classifications](#)
- May 11** 5:30 – 7:30 pm [Labourers, Grounds and Maintenance](#)
- May 13** 5:30 – 7:30 pm [Meal Program Staff & Supervisors, including noon hour, Crossing Guards & others](#)
- May 17** 5:30 – 7:30 pm [Strong Start, ECEs, and similar classifications](#)
- May 18** 5:30 – 7:30 pm [Trades](#)

Please follow us @cupek12bc on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram and view bulletins at <https://bcschools.cupe.ca>.