

## How You Know You've Made It As An Educational Assistant

You consider yourself quite the multitasker! Even though you are 1:1, you can TOTALLY handle these three, maybe more, extremely challenging behaviour kiddos at once. And let's be honest, you don't really have a choice as yet again, no one has come in to replace your coworker!

Your schedule has been changed for the third time this week. You may not have worked with this student before but you'll have to figure something out as you don't have time to read the IEP.

The guilt that you won't be replaced supersedes the fact that you need a day off for your own mental well being, because you don't want your students to go without support.

You hit the jackpot with the teacher you're teamed up with this year! I'm sure they appreciate the extra hours you've put in outside of your work day to create all of these visual schedules and other student supports-you're finally seeing some improvements!

You've unfortunately become extremely proficient at completing behaviour slips and violent incident forms (on your own time, may I add, because your support is needed every minute that you are on the clock.)

You love working with kids SO much that you've even found a second job at an out of school care once your day at the school is finished. Oh wait, you do love kids, but it's really so that you can attempt to pay your bills each month.

You make plans to get away (with your limited finances) for your much deserved time off, (Man we're so lucky to get two weeks of spring break off!) but you end up being sick for the entire first week because you've pushed yourself so fricken hard up until this point.

You have your admin and/or student's guardian's phone number a quick touch away in your phone, just in case...

You're spending the majority of your time managing extremely challenging behaviour as opposed to creating meaningful relationships and supporting learning.

You're always tired.

When a new sub ACTUALLY joins your school for the day, you spend a lot of your time training them, while somehow also attempting to manage your many other duties.

You are paid the same as someone who's brand new to the profession (even after twelve years of working, this makes sense right?)

Yes, I realize this is not the type of letter you're likely used to hearing. These are daily situations that inhibit us from being able to do our job of supporting vulnerable students in getting a meaningful education. What we more often find ourselves supporting is the behaviour of students who are not managing due to us not having the time to build necessary relationships which are integral to our work.

The reality is that in this profession, morale is tanking. People's emotional, mental and physical health are being compromised, and the lives of our future generation are NOT being made a priority.

Our district claims "students are at the center of everything we do in the Greater Victoria School District" but if this were true, shouldn't we do everything possible to make sure their learning and safety is being fully supported? Without sufficient support in classrooms, behaviour issues are becoming a constant interference in the learning of other students. Even with some of the amazing teaching relationships I've created over the years, a lack of Educational Assistants in schools and classrooms means we truly do not have the opportunity to support every child in need. (Which I may add is increasing at an alarming rate.) I see this happening on a DAILY BASIS. We are going on YEARS of being short staffed, and it's time to talk about why-because it's NOT a secret. **No one can make a living on 27, often less, hours a week.** Not a single mom. Not a husband whose wife is a teacher. Not me. To cut to the chase, after 12 years in this profession of which I love and will say I'm damn good at, if things don't change drastically, I will be leaving. Really I should say that I am being FORCED to find alternative employment. I simply cannot pay my bills, and ultimately my mental health, husband and one and a half year old son deserve better than me coming home at the end of the day beyond exhausted.

Our profession is in serious jeopardy. And I don't mean from a lack of need, but from being completely unsustainable. Change needs to happen NOW. Provide us with the deserved hours and wage necessary to earn a proper living, so we can continue to do the work we LOVE, and so our youth can be supported in earning the education that THEY deserve.

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