

Dear Participants,

My name is May Raymond and I am completing my thesis research as a part of the requirements for my Master's in Education at Nipissing University. Under Dr. Julie Corkett's supervision, I am studying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Education Assistants (EAs) in British Columbia (BC). My study is titled, *The Impact of Covid-19 on British Columbia's Education Assistants' Burnout Rates*. My study requires EAs to share their work experiences pre, during, and post Covid during a private interview session. My research has been approved by the Nipissing Research Ethics Board, a committee that aims to protect research participants from any harm.

Please read the information below to consider taking part in my research regarding Education Assistants (EAs) in British Columbia (BC).

What is the study about?

Over the years, it has been apparent that research surrounding EAs in BC has been scarce. With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all of us one way or another, the provision of education for elementary and high school students was reliant on teachers and EAs. Although studies on the effects of teaching online during COVID-19 were conducted nationally and provincially on teachers, EAs were not included in the demographic. My study will allow EAs an opportunity to voice their experiences during COVID-19 and how it affected their role and feelings of burnout. It is hoped that the study will shed light on the demands placed on EA roles, and how their role has changed during and after COVID-19.

Who is being asked to participate?

If, in the province of British Columbia, you are currently a full-time EA at either the elementary or secondary school level **and** were a full-time EA at either the elementary or secondary school level during the pandemic, regardless of the age group of the student(s) you were supporting, then you are eligible to participate in this study.

Do I have to take part?

Participating in this study is strictly voluntary. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason for your withdrawal. If you decide to decline to take part in this study or withdraw from the study, it will have no bearing on your employment or any work-related evaluations or reports.

If I decide to partake in the study, what will be asked of me?

If you decide to partake in the study, you will first be asked to sign a consent form found below. Once the consent form is signed, you will be sent an email containing a series of 10 demographic questions and a set of 16 interview questions. This will give you an opportunity to review and reflect upon the questions that are going to be asked during the interview. The email will also

contain a link to a Google poll enabling you to select potential dates for the interview, which will be conducted online through Google Meets. Once a date has been selected, a follow up email confirming the interview date will be sent to you. During the interview, you will be asked the demographic questions first, and then I will ask you the interview questions, which will enable you to talk about your work experiences as an EA pre-COVID, during COVID-19 and post-COVID. . The interview will take approximately one hour.

It is important to note that the interview will be video and audio recorded using RecForth and Voice Recorder app. This will only be used by the researchers to gather data and to ensure the accuracy of your responses. The recordings will not be presented to the public. As well, the information gathered (interview recording, personal information, etc.) will be kept in a password protected file on my laptop. Backup data will be kept in a memory stick, also kept in a safe at my residence in BC. Once my thesis has been published, the data will be transferred to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Corkett who will keep the data for five years on an encrypted memory stick stored in a safe. Five years after the publication of my study, Dr. Corkett will destroy the data and the encrypted memory stick.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in the study include talking about a traumatic event that may have occurred in your position as an EA. If this discussion causes you distress, you will be given information on resources for the appropriate type of help that is available to BC residents. This may include information to Anxiety BC, Fraser Health, or Vancouver Coastal Health.

Also, you may be concerned about repercussions to your employment if you take part in the study. Please be assured that all your personal identifying information will be kept private and not published in the study or in any reports. If you have any concerns about work-related repercussions, you can contact the Crisis Support Line at Work Safe BC at 1-800-624-2928; Government of BC- Employment Standards at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/employment-business/employment-standards-advice/employment-standards>; EASBC at info@educationassistantsbc.org or CUPE K-12 at 604-291-9119

Please note that if you encounter any distress, concerns, or difficulties, I will address them the moment they arise.

What are the possible direct benefits of taking part?

While you will not be provided with any incentive for taking part in the research, by participating in this study, you will experience the benefit of having a chance to voice your opinion about EAs' roles in BC schools, which may help give EAs a much-needed voice to the public and to policymakers. You may also find it emotionally beneficial to talk about your experiences with someone who understands and has experienced the demands placed on EAs. Lastly, if you wish, you have the benefit of reviewing the study results before publication.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any concerns or questions about any aspect of the study, you can ask me or my supervisor Dr. Corkett and we will do our best to answer your questions. You can find our contact information at the bottom of this letter.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

According to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018), ethics regarding confidentiality refers to “the obligation of an individual or organization to safeguard entrusted information” (Chapter 5, Section A). Following the ethical guidelines of the Research Ethics Board (REB), non-identifying codes and safe places will be used to satisfy these requirements. Non-identifying codes will include replacing your name with an alias and the safe places will include using password protected files. The data will be kept for 5 years and will then be destroyed by deletion and pulverization.

Your responses will not be shared with your employer, and your employer will not receive a report of the study’s findings. As previously stated, any identifying information will be kept strictly confidential. By signing the consent form below, you will acknowledge that secondary uses of data (e.g., comparing the results in this study to the results in a new study on burn out rates) may be plausible once the study is published and only for 5 years after publication. However, any identifying information will not be shared without your written consent.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please contact May Raymond at mraymond236@my.nipissingu.ca or Dr. Julie Corkett at juliec@nipissingu.ca.

*Any information that is obtained from you in connection with this study is confidential. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. However, you may not be able to withdraw your data due to the anonymous nature of the participation. If you would like to withdraw from the study, please email mraymond236@my.nipissingu.ca to inform us of your decision to do so. As well, withdrawing from the study will only be plausible up to 4 weeks after the interview has been completed. You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s) to which you object or that make you feel uncomfortable. Completion of this survey signifies your informed consent. Please keep a copy of this information letter for your records.

*The data gathered from the interviews will be used to represent the burnout rates of EAs through quotes that are gathered and from finding common themes among the participants. Every piece of data gathered will be kept in a password locked folder in my computer and in a memory stick that will be put in a safe at my residence in BC until the results are published in a peer reviewed journal. Please note that identifiable information, such your actual name, will be kept only until 4 weeks after the interview has been completed. After this, you will be given aliases, which will be used in any further communication.

Once the findings have been published, the data will be emailed to my supervisor, Dr. Corkett, who will directly download the data to an encrypted memory stick and store the memory stick in a safe in her locked office. After a period of 5 years, Dr. Corkett will delete the files from the memory disk and pulverize the memory stick.



*This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through Nipissing University's Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Coordinator, Nipissing University, 100 College Drive, North Bay, ON P1B 8L7 or ethics@nipissingu.ca.

Thank you,
May Raymond

Certificate of Consent

I have been asked to participate in the research, *The Impact of Covid-19 on British Columbia's Education Assistants' Burnout Rates*, to study the effects of COVID-19 on EAs in BC.

I have read the information letter, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the data collection process.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent

Date _____

Day/month/year