Presentation to the "Beyond the Status Quo" Conference

Harrison, BC
March 29, 2008

John Malcolmson,
CUPE Research

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING CRISIS?
A VIEW "FROM BELOW"

The role of the funding system?

- The ideal?
  - to support special education service delivery and to promote best practice
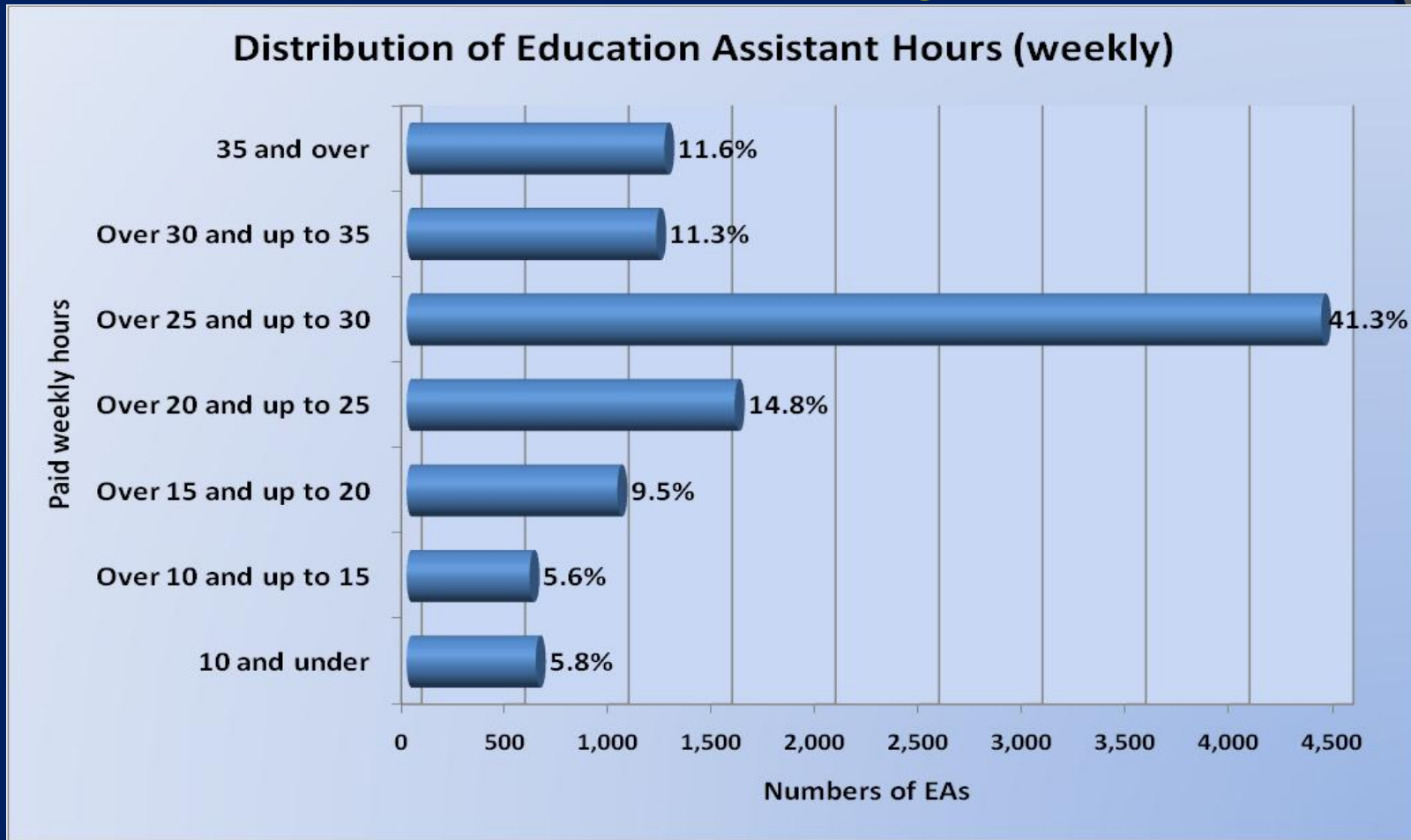
- The reality?
  - funding support (or the lack thereof) increasingly drives service delivery

A crisis in special education?

- Results from the Langley Inquiry
  - - lack of resources
  - - systemic disorganization = lack of systemic accountability
  - - for CUPE:
    - Continuous pressure on available work time means a lack of adequate time for our members working in the special education system
    - Unpaid or voluntary work time: a systemic problem

How much paid time do education assistants get?

Distribution of Education Assistant Hours (weekly)

Paid weekly hours	Number of EAs
35 and over	11.6%
Over 30 and up to 35	11.3%
Over 25 and up to 30	41.3%
Over 20 and up to 25	14.8%
Over 15 and up to 20	9.5%
Over 10 and up to 15	5.6%
10 and under	5.8%

…part-time employment + bell-to-bell allocation of time…

How much unpaid time do education assistants provide?

- Surrey – 1.8 hours above paid allocation / week
- Delta – 2.0 hours above paid allocation / week
- New Westminster – 2.3 hours above paid allocation / week
- On average 10 to 14 days of full-time unpaid work per person per year.
- At all times: before, during (at break time, lunch, etc.) after, and on weekends
- Why?: professional reasons are given: protect kids, make our jobs "do-able", have time to meet.

Where do we need to go?

- Move to a "real cost" system of funding:
  - Levels 1, 2 and 3 special education have $8,000, $16,000 and $32,000 per student attached without any "evidence" that this is what it costs to pay for special education services
- Re-target special education funding:
  - Prior to 2002 it helped raise the profile of special education services and obliged districts to report on allocations
- Connect funding to "real accountability":
  - How are special education $ being used to implement student IEPs?
  - What are the real costs (wages, services, materials…) associated with educating students?
  - Develop measures that are understandable! Report these measures!