

St. Somewhere Times *The Assistants?*

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The 3 Musketeers

Editor's Note: I changed the format of the newsletter to be only one column so you (the reader) do not have to scroll down more than once to read the entire selection.

What is an EIS Assistant? (hope I don't get into trouble with this one-hee hee!)

One of the most distinct differences in our school and schools in the states is the role of the assistant. An assistant can be likened to...I'm not sure. An assistant is NOT a secretary, babysitter, gopher, substitute teacher, friend, interpreter, bulletin board maker, grader, organizer, helper, artist, typist, computer artist, hallway monitor, go-between, ride home, cultural attaché, or paper collator. An assistant is ALL of these or ANY one of these at any given time during the day.



The ladies sit down for a meal.

How an assistant is treated depends on their cooperating teacher or teachers. There is generally one assistant per classroom, with the exception of fourth and fifth grades. Each of those grade levels share two assistants between three teachers. That makes for a lot of assistants running around the school doing various jobs.



Keeping the kids organized!

How do you know if someone is an Assistant?

Just look for someone wearing an orange shirt. With over 500 students in the elementary school it is tough to keep track of who is who. This was the first year of the color code. Teachers wear Khaki pants/shorts and navy blue tops. Office personnel wear Khakis and white. Then there is a troop of Orange in the teachers lounge or surrounding the computer next to the office. (We joke around with them about this but they do get carried away. It is not uncommon to find 6 orange shirts together "working on something".)



Working hard? or Hardly working?

Before you Judge us, understand the culture!

We are in a completely different culture than elementary teachers in the states. Some teachers in the states find out we have assistants in most classrooms and they scoff at the thought.

At this school, even seasoned teachers rely on the assistants. Most of all, the assistants help the import teachers in their transition into the EIS culture and the Honduran culture.

There is a lot of daily homework that goes home. The amounts of work that kids are assigned seems to be quite a bit more than in the states, at least from my limited experience. The assistants can help with the burden of grading and recording, track down missing assignments, and help prepare the Monday folders, the weekly homework sent home for parental signatures.

The entire school is connected by outdoor passageways. there are two floors for each of the two elementary buildings and quite a hike out to the Phy Ed area. The assistants generally walk the kids to their specials to allow the teacher to meet with parents or simply take a breather. There are no hallway transition times so on days that my assistants are busy or absent my planning time is cut by at least ten minutes, and ten minutes means everything to an elementary teacher!

All in all, I just wanted to let everyone in on what it means to be an assistant. If any of the assistants want to add to or modify this little ditty then they are welcome to, by all means.