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Introduction

The BC Teachers’ Federation is pleased to welcome a new Minister of Education and appreciates the commitment of government having “a completely different and fresh attitude towards public education.”

This provides an opportunity for us to review and make recommendations on many of the issues and policies important to the public education system and the students and teachers who make up that system.

A fresh orientation to working with teachers and their BCTF opens the door for resolving many issues, some that have been awaiting action for a considerable time. We appreciate that the new Minister has substantial background in the issues facing public education and will be able to act quickly. To facilitate this, we offer this brief to bring together in one place many of the BCTF concerns and proposals that require some action.

We look forward to these issues on the agenda of meetings with the Minister and other Ministry education officials.
Aboriginal Education and Infusing Aboriginal Ways of Knowing

The issue

The BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) is actively working with our members, students, families, and communities throughout the province to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action, in particular those pertaining to education. The BCTF also supports implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. We applaud the Ministry of Education’s efforts to ensure the infusion of Aboriginal content and perspectives throughout the K–12 curriculum. The continued success of this work relies upon a collaboratively developed provincial action plan, with clear end goals, to ensure that in-service and learning resources reflective of all 198 First Nations in BC are developed and readily accessible for all grade levels and all subject areas in BC schools. The BCTF supports the new standard being contemplated by the BC Teachers’ Council, which has a focus on the needs of Aboriginal learners.

Background

The BCTF has been deeply involved in educating our members about the history and intergenerational legacy of residential schools. We have also developed many workshops for teachers, such as Infusing Aboriginal Content, Deconstructing Myths, and Indigenous Perspectives. The Federation has developed a strong network of Aboriginal contacts throughout BC, and these teachers are working hard to keep up with the high demand for these professional development experiences to enrich their teaching. The BCTF, along with the First Nations Education Steering Committee and others, is a member of the K–12 Aboriginal Education Partners table. Many shared goals (including employment equity for Aboriginal teachers, improving Aboriginal graduation rates and transition rates of Aboriginal students into post-secondary, and plans to address systemic racism) are discussed and worked on together at that table.
Key recommendation

Recommendation 1

Work with all partners to develop a provincial action plan, with clear end goals, for the infusion of Aboriginal ways of knowing across all aspects of BC’s education system. This plan must:

1. adopt an approach to infusing Aboriginal ways of knowing that is relevant to the local community and nations involved. First Nations have long supported having an increased role in their children’s education. This action is essential to ensure that all students in BC schools, our future leaders, receive an education that gives them not only a comprehensive understanding of our collective history, but of the nation(s) on whose traditional and ancestral territories they learn, play, and live.

2. fund and make readily accessible locally developed resources that honour and respect the many First Nations in the province.

3. provide time for in-service that supports teachers, regardless of where they work in the province, to act on our responsibility to promote an education for decolonization and reconciliation.

4. adopt the recommendation made by the BCTF, First Nations Education Steering Committee, BC School Trustees Association, and others to make an Aboriginal-themed course a graduation requirement for all students.

5. develop an antiracism plan to address the experiences of Aboriginal students, parents, and staff.

Further reading

Beyond Words, Creating Racism-Free Schools for Aboriginal Learners:
bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/AboriginalEducation/BeyondWords(1).pdf

Gladys We Never Knew: The life of a child in a BC Indian Residential School:
bctf.ca/GladysWeNeverKnew/

Project of Heart: Illuminating the hidden history of Indian Residential Schools in BC:
bctf.ca/HiddenHistory/
Adult Education Access

The issue
Adult education is denied to many who need access. Adults have multiple motivations for seeking to access adult education. Many need to upgrade their qualifications to apply to post-secondary programs, others would like to complete their Grade 12 graduation credentials, or new immigrants may wish to learn one of the official languages.

Background
Prior to 2014–15 with the imposition of tuition fees by government, individuals were able to access tuition-free courses in adult education. Since this period, enrolment has decreased from 25,000 in 2012–13 to 16,000 in 2015–16, and some districts have closed programs. Tuition fees for adult learners are prohibitive and have clearly had serious impacts on enrolment.

Many students must overcome multiple barriers to participate in education, even when courses are tuition-free. For these students, adult education offers the potential of higher employment rates and wages, critical factors in escaping poverty. Tuition fees create prohibitive barriers for these students.

According to Statistics Canada data, knowledge of languages and educational attainment significantly affects income and employment among Canadian immigrants. In 2013, an immigrant with knowledge of English had an average annual income of $30,000, compared to $12,600 for an immigrant who knew neither English nor French.

Adult education offers the additional chances for individuals to improve their education and contribute more fully to all aspects of society—a win for both the individual and the social good.

In August 2017, the new BC NDP government reversed the previous government’s cuts. There are still some more courses (e.g., Social Studies 11, First Peoples courses) that should be added to the list of funded courses, and there should be an examination of how the funding is allocated to school districts.

Key recommendation

Recommendation 1
Restore adult education to the education guarantee in the School Act, as per its pre-2012 scope, and immediate provision of the necessary funding to reverse adult education cuts and program closures made during the spring of 2017.

Recommendation 2
Ensure schools receive funding for adult students on par with 5–12 students.
BC Overseas Schools

The issue
BC overseas schools have grown in the past decade to include some 46 schools in several countries, although five of those schools in South Korea are at risk.

When the first overseas schools were created, there was a connection with school districts. In the early years of the BC Liberal government, legislation was passed that created School District Business Companies. Operating overseas schools was one of the expectations, with the business companies expected to earn funds that would be applied to supporting education in BC schools.

School District Business Companies failed to take off. School boards and administrators, with a few exceptions, are not entrepreneurial. They are elected or hired to offer education to BC students. For some that did try their hand at education as a business, they turned out to be money losers. In addition, recruiting international students to study in BC schools was a money-maker and districts could incorporate these students into the existing system without needing businesses. Tuition paid by international students increased to some $212 million in the 2015–16 school year.

Background
However, the province did not abandon the idea of overseas schools. Overseas schools became part of a provincial jobs strategy to “export” education through franchising overseas K–12 schools and international students at both the K–12 level and post-secondary. The BC overseas schools became private schools in other countries run by private owners, primarily from the countries where they operate. The gain for BC is estimated at about $15–20 million for use of the BC curriculum and having the right to issue BC diplomas. The gain for students is education in English and easier entry to BC and other North American post-secondary institutions.

The quality of the diplomas is supposed to be based on classes using the BC curriculum offered by teachers with BC teaching certificates, along with a system of inspections and reports by BC evaluators on behalf of government, primarily drawn from BC private schools. The Ministry of Education created a department to supervise the overseas schools. Not surprisingly, not all has gone swimmingly. Recruiting staff has sometimes been difficult. It has helped that in BC the number of teachers being produced has been larger than the number of positions open in BC schools. They have also attracted some teachers from other provinces or the US who have gotten BC certification to be eligible for the overseas jobs. However, with the number of teaching positions being added in BC schools as a result of a Supreme Court of Canada decision, finding BC-certified teachers may be more of a problem in the future.
Over the years, some teachers from several of the schools have contacted the BCTF to ask for assistance in employment issues and conflicts with administrators or school owners. The BCTF is not in a position to represent these teachers because they are not members, but it has sometimes been possible to make some suggestions.

The largest problem since the creation of the overseas schools has been with schools in South Korea. BC overseas schools, it appears, are in conflict with Korean government aims of protecting their students from foreign institutions operating outside of Korean education.

In order to run a school based on the BC curriculum, it appears that the owner of the Canada BC International School (CBIS) arranged for visas for the BC-certified teachers that only allowed them to teach in cram schools, not schools offering secondary education. The Korean government decided to crack down on this illegal status and ordered the teachers deported. Other schools have faced the same action.

The CBIS teachers believe that the BC Ministry of Education was aware that the Korean schools were being operated outside of the legal framework, without the teachers knowing the precarious situation they were in. The situation of these teachers is explained clearly in a story and video that can be published by the Vancouver Observer.

**Key recommendations**

**Recommendation 1**
That the Ministry of Education carry out a review of the purpose of running overseas schools.

**Recommendation 2**
If BC overseas schools are to continue, ensure that the schools meet the regulations of the country in which they are based and that BC certified teachers of those schools are appropriately protected.

**Further reading**
Child Poverty’s Impact on Education

The issue
While about one in five children live in poverty in BC, according to the formal definition, the expense of housing and other necessities actually means many more live in precarious situations. Obviously, to make improvements requires a poverty reduction plan because children never move out of poverty until their families do. In the meantime, however, a number of actions can be taken to make full participation in school a reality to more of these students.

Background
The BCTF asked its members in a survey about the realities in their classrooms in relationship to students living in poverty. Not surprisingly, the extent of problems varies according to the socio-economic status of the community from which the school draws. These are some of the key points made by teachers who identified poverty as a problem in their classrooms:

- Too many students come to school hungry and the school breakfast and lunch programs, where they exist, are not adequate. Forty percent of survey respondents said they personally bring food for students, spending an average of $30 a month.
- School fees limit participation in school-related activities. Although schools are supposed to have procedures in place to ensure that students whose families cannot afford activities are able to participate, barriers still exist. One of the most important is “parent or student is not comfortable asking,” according to the teachers.
- As technology becomes ubiquitous in society and schools, exclusion because of poverty becomes an additional source of inequality. Access to technology has become so central to participation in society that families are opting to have smartphone access over other necessities.
- The most significant factor in poverty-related barriers to school attendance is “student doesn’t have a stable living or housing situation.” Middle school and secondary students living in poverty are most likely to miss class or not complete assignments because they have to take care of younger siblings or have to work to help support their family.

In response to the needs of students in poverty, teachers called for specialist teachers to address learning gaps, counselling services for students and families, school library and literacy programs, and school nurses to address health needs of students. These, of course, are the types of services that have been most negatively affected by the austerity budgets over the past 16 years.
Key recommendations

Recommendation 1
Act immediately to increase the financial and service supports aimed at meeting the needs of students in poverty. Students should not have to depend on charity for food or resources to fully take part in the learning process.

Recommendation 2
Make poverty reduction an educational priority as well as a social priority.

Further reading
The full report on the BCTF research on teacher experiences with poverty and education is at bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx.

A report on teacher views on poverty and technology can be found at bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/SocialJustice/Issues/Poverty/Research/BCTF%20Poverty%20and%20Education%20survey--Chapter%207%20Supplement.pdf.
Communication and Advice from Teachers through the BCTF

The issue
Teachers have a direct interest in the many decisions made about the public education system and want to participate in providing advice to the Ministry of Education. The BCTF commits to being open to engaging with the aim of producing the best possible policies that support quality education.

Background
An important element of positive participation is access to information that allows for informed consideration, suggestions, and proposals.

The experience in the past has been positive in some areas. For example, during the current process of curriculum development, the BCTF identified teachers to serve on curriculum committees across all subject areas. The Federation advertised for teachers to apply for committees and it made appointments, with advice from the provincial specialist associations that are curriculum based. Because of the Federation’s ability to reach teachers directly in all school districts in the province, appointments were made from all regions of the province, and inclusive of teachers who identify as Aboriginal or from an equity-seeking group. This is important so that the discussions in the curriculum teams and at other Ministry committees are reflective of the diversity of the province.

However, the practice of consultation with the BCTF early-on in policy discussions has not been the case in all areas of the Ministry. In some instances, consultation takes place only after framework decisions have been made, with consultation only being about how a decision already made is to be carried out. In other cases, the BCTF has had to use Freedom of Information requests, and even then, not all information has been provided.

Better decisions that are good for children’s education are made when those who will carry out the policies are engaged in the creation of those policies.

Key recommendations
Recommendation 1
That the Minister of Education inform Ministry staff that an open information practice, with staff initiating consultation with the BCTF, being proactive in providing information on policy and other issues, and being responsive to requests for information from the BCTF is expected.
Recommendation 2
That the Ministry of Education agrees to maintain the protocol of BCTF appointing teachers who participate in policy committees dealing with the full range of education policies, including curriculum- and assessment-related committees.

Recommendation 3
That the Minister of Education and the Ministry schedule regular meetings with BCTF table officers and staff to discuss the broad range of education issues.
Conflict of Interest Legislation and Regulations

The issue
A proliferation of businesses wish to profit from public schools in BC and a number of organizations wish to influence content, pedagogy, and delivery of education. This is particularly the case because of the increases of education technology being purchased by schools and because we are in the process of a substantial revision of curriculum.

The BCTF brought to the attention of the previous Minister of Education two types of specific concerns. One was that of consultants leading Ministry curriculum revision teams, influencing the development of the curricula and sample material while employed by private corporations in the business of writing materials linked to the BC curricula.

Another concern brought to government was that of senior school district administrators who have formal or informal affiliations with outside interests that may be inappropriately influencing district administrators. Some, for example, have leant their names and photos in support of particular technologies being promoted.

Key recommendations

Recommendation 1
That the provincial government enact legislation to establish conflict of interest regulations for school districts and would require school secretary-treasurers, superintendents, and deputy superintendents, on an annual basis in a public report made to school boards, to make disclosures on the following:
1. affiliations with other education-related organizations
2. affiliations with any corporations or businesses that do business with or intend to do business with a BC school district
3. any and all income, honorariums, or payment for service
4. any in-kind services or gifts from other organizations or corporations
5. participation in or attendance at activities organized by corporations.

Recommendation 2
That Ministry staff and consultants working on curriculum development sign an agreement indicating that they will not enter into contracts with business or corporations developing resources in related curriculum areas to sell to BC education at any level.
Curriculum Change: Assessment

The issue
It is widely recognized that teachers are the most reputable source of information on individual students’ progress. In line with the approaches guiding the revised BC K–12 curriculum, assessment practices in BC must shift from high-stakes summative assessment to a more balanced approach of classroom-based formative assessment. The highest quality and most reputable public assurances around individual student performance are, and remain, with the classroom teacher through a wide variety of methods teachers use.

However, to date, the Ministry of Education has continued to rely on high-stakes summative assessment as a measure of educational success. By contrast, the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) is opposed to the use of the provincial Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA), as well as other national and international assessment tools, for several reasons:

- The use of standardized assessment tools is diametrically opposed to the philosophy of personalized learning because it measures all students in the same manner.
- No new resources or funding flow to schools identified by these tests as needing additional support.
- Results of standardized tests have for many years been misused by third parties in BC (e.g., the Fraser Institute) to rank schools and undermine public confidence in our public system.

It is disappointing that the provincial government has not agreed to the recommendation from the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment that school and student data must be protected from misuse by third parties.

Background
Assessment currently occurs at the district, provincial, national, and international levels. This is the current reality as of June 2017:

District assessment
There is growing concern among BCTF members that the elimination of many provincial assessments is being used as a rationale by districts to increase the number of district-mandated assessments, adding to the over-abundance of prescribed tools.

Provincial assessment
From 2013 to 2015, the BCTF actively participated with partners on the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment (AGPA). All parties agreed that the purpose of a provincial tool was a system-wide check, not an individual measure of achievement. However, the government did
not agree to the recommendations of AGPA to protect individual and school data from misuse by third parties.

For that reason, the BCTF is no longer participating in the development or piloting of other provincial assessment tools, such as the Grad Numeracy Assessment (proposed for January 2018) or the Grad Literacy Assessment (proposed for January 2019).

The BCTF did participate in the development of the new FSA, but not the piloting. The FSA is scheduled to be administered to Grade 4 and 7 students in October/November 2017.

**National and international assessments**

BC participates in national and international assessments that propt to measure reading, math, and science skills of our students from various age ranges and then compare their results with students in other provinces or countries. This includes the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), next scheduled for 2019; the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), next scheduled for 2018; and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), next scheduled for 2021.

The BCTF is opposed to our ongoing participation in these outside measures. Even though our jurisdiction consistently ranks highly on these assessments, research shows the tests are not an accurate measure of student achievement across national and linguistic cultures. Furthermore, the results are frequently used and misused by third parties who seek to rank national educational systems, associate the test results with economic outcomes for nations, and impose instructional techniques on vastly different cultures.

### Key recommendations

#### Recommendation 1
Reduce the number and scope of summative assessments. There is an over abundance of testing of students at the international, national, provincial, and district levels. These measures do not provide new funding or resources to target any perceived shortcomings.

#### Recommendation 2
Review the current Provincial Student Assessment Program, discontinue the FSAs, and ensure responsible and appropriate use of provincial assessment data. It is critical that provincial assessments are used for the purpose they were designed for, which is as a snapshot of how the system is performing. A key issue for the BCTF is the protection of individual and school data. The future of any provincial assessment tool hinges on this very important aspect of data-sharing and protection. The province should also withdraw from participation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s PISA, review all aspects of the Provincial Student Assessment Program, and discontinue the FSA.
Recommendation 3
Support classroom-based formative assessment that aligns with the new curriculum. Providing collaboration and in-service time for teachers to shift their classroom-based assessment practices to align with the revised curriculum is the key to moving the curriculum forward. Classroom-based assessment requires funding, not spending millions of dollars on assessment tools that are far removed from the reality of everyday classroom practice.

Recommendation 4
Provide resources. The results of any provincial standardized assessment tool must be linked to the allocation of additional resources. Ethical use of assessment tools includes attaching new resources and funding to support identified areas of need. If this does not occur, then the ongoing administration of the assessment tool is based on unethical practice.

Further reading
Reports of the Advisory Group on Provincial Assessment:

BCTF Education Change Bulletin (informs teachers about education change):
bctf.ca/EdChangeBulletin/

International assessments
Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP):
www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/assessment/national-and-international/picap

PIRLS 2011 - British Columbia's Performance:
www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/assessment/pirls_2011_bc_sum.pdf

Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA):
www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/assessment/national-and-international/pisa
Curriculum Change: Process, Content, and Timing

The issue
Since 2012, the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) has been advocating for a curriculum implementation plan from the Ministry of Education. Key issues that have been raised, and are ongoing, include the following:

- responsible implementation timelines that will ensure successful and sustainable implementation
- funding, development, and distribution of accurate, up-to-date, and inclusive teaching and learning resources in French and English to all communities around the province
- facilitation of ongoing teacher collaboration and planning at both district and school levels through time for in-service, as well as a clear commitment to funding and support for curriculum development and implementation
- dedicated time for teachers to explore and collaborate on the transition from a content-focused curriculum to one that is more student and competency focused, maximizing the potential of a less prescriptive curriculum, opportunities for local decision-making, and depth of study
- ongoing teacher engagement in new facets of the curriculum, including the integration of Aboriginal ways of knowing, the finalization of the core competencies, sexual health components of the new physical and health education curriculum, addressing potential inequities in access to the new applied design, skills, and technologies curriculum, and the heightened focus on careers
- clear and ongoing communication to districts, teachers, and the public regarding curriculum change.

Background
Curriculum change in BC is taking place on an unprecedented scale. Teachers have been actively involved in writing the revised curricula, and have enjoyed a good working relationship with the Ministry in developing an innovative, revised curriculum for the province. As development moves into implementation, we need to reaffirm the commitment made by the BCTF, the Ministry of Education, the BC School Superintendents’ Association, and the BC Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association that “curriculum implementation is an ongoing process built around cumulative, reflective practice supported by all learning partners” (Curriculum Framework Document, Stage One). We have a mutual interest in ensuring that implementation is successful and sustainable. System-wide change done well requires time, support, resources, and strong working relationships. It also needs teacher expertise that is shared collaboratively in districts and schools.
Key recommendations

Recommendation 1
Ensure ongoing and representative teacher participation in the process of curriculum change. The Ministry has publicly recognized the crucial role that BCTF members have played in the process of curriculum change to date. The BCTF has well-established and successful participation protocols to ensure the active and equitable representation of teachers at all levels of curriculum change. The BCTF is committed to communicating these protocols to all divisions of the Ministry.

Recommendation 2
Establish a clear, realistic, and multi-year curriculum implementation plan. The BCTF calls upon the Ministry to institute an immediate pause on all curriculum change initiatives until a clear and realistic curriculum implementation plan is in place for the next five to ten years. This plan should be developed in collaboration with all partners and be clearly communicated to districts, teachers, and the public.

Recommendation 3
Sustainably fund curriculum change. To date, the Ministry has only committed $25.6 million for curriculum implementation (2015–18), $4 million of which is specifically for coding. This number is grossly inadequate for the curricular materials, technology, and sustained teacher collaboration and planning required at both school and district levels to make curriculum change a success. The multi-year curriculum implementation plan must make clear commitments to funding and support for curriculum change, including the following:

- additional non-instructional days during the 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 school years
- extending and supporting the successful collaborative model developed in 2015 for joint district and local planning for the additional non-instructional days, in which local teacher associations took the leadership role within districts
- sustained consultation with local communities and nations on approaches to integrating Aboriginal ways of knowing into the curriculum
- development and distribution of accurate, up-to-date, and inclusive teaching and learning resources to all schools around the province, including culturally appropriate materials to support the integration of Aboriginal ways of knowing into the curriculum at all grade levels
- equitable access to technological networks, supports, and tools that meet curricular demands
- ensuring access to a wide variety of professional development and in-service opportunities in all regions of the province to support implementation of the revised curriculum and other ongoing needs
- working with the BCTF and other organizations to develop and make available accurate, up-to-date, and inclusive materials and in-service for the sexual health curriculum.
Overall, teachers who are actively engaged and well supported in the change process will have the time, resources, and conditions necessary to meet the needs of all students in their care and make curriculum change a success in BC.

Further reading
Curriculum framework documents (produced by the BCTF, the Ministry of Education, the BC School Superintendents’ Association, and the BC Principals’ and Vice-Principals’ Association): bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=38416

Education Change Bulletin (informs teachers about education change):
   bctf.ca/EdChangeBulletin/

Letters sent by the BCTF to the Ministry advocating for the successful implementation of curriculum change, 2012 to present: bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=44605
Curriculum Change: Reporting

The issue
In line with changes to BC’s revised curriculum, reporting practices must shift to enable greater emphasis on students’ demonstrating their knowledge. Districts and teachers need a clear reporting order that addresses key features of the curriculum. There is also the need for clear guidance on student self-assessment of the Core Competencies and the responsible and equitable use of digital reporting tools.

Background
The Interim Reporting Order was released in August 2016, leaving many teachers and districts scrambling to meet the requirements as outlined in the order. Although two options were provided, a traditional model or a locally established model, both options required districts and teachers to engage with new features of the curriculum, including a student-self assessment of Core Competencies and new curricular areas such as career education and applied design, skills, and technologies.

There are significant challenges with the student self-assessment of Core Competencies (currently in draft form). While developing this promising new facet of the curriculum, the Ministry of Education did not adhere to established protocols for collaboration with the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF). As such, it has been very difficult and time-intensive to try to communicate the purpose and process of the Core Competencies to members. Furthermore, many districts have directed teachers to evaluate and report on student proficiency in this area, a directive that goes against the very principles of the Core Competencies.

Another key concern is related to digital reporting tools. Within the Interim Reporting Order, and especially in the Alternative Student Progress Order, boards are encouraged to pursue non-traditional methods of “communicating student learning,” including a variety of digital tools and platforms. According to a recent survey conducted by the BCTF, teachers have concerns about many aspects of these tools, including the flexibility of the tool, assessment, workload and time, effective communication with parents, appropriateness for the revised curriculum, provision of technology, in-service training, parental access, privacy, and data retention. Furthermore, parents have directly contacted the Federation after being told by districts that they would only have digital access to reports. This is an exclusionary practice that fails to account for the inequities facing parents and students in many communities.
Key recommendations

Recommendation 1
Revise and finalize the Core Competencies. The revision process should follow established collaborative protocols between the Ministry and the BCTF.

Recommendation 2
Finalize a reporting order. The K–9 reporting order is under revision. The Ministry is assembling a K–9 Student Reporting Policy Committee to make recommendations for the Final Reporting Order expected in the spring of 2018. Clarity is needed regarding adequate time for the field to prepare and to address the wide-ranging feedback concerns raised by members and parents. The Final Reporting Order should be based on the principle that information on student achievement is best obtained through the teacher and classroom based formative assessment practices.

Recommendation 3
Eliminate provincial assessment scores from the final student transcript. The Ministry has proposed that the graduation literacy and numeracy assessment scores appear on the students’ final transcripts. The BCTF is opposed to this as it makes the assessment high stakes. Provincial assessment is a snapshot of the system, not an individual measure of achievement.

Recommendation 4
Address workload. The growing pressure to use digital reporting tools has serious consequences for teachers’ workload. It is also to the detriment of all students when digital tools require significant time to record and report out on student learning. The Interim Reporting Policy Committee needs to make recommendations based on issues related to time and tools. Transferring data from one platform to a new mandated tool is one of the many issues associated with new methods, as well as the loss of data. The Ministry of Education will need to take these recommendations seriously to minimize what has been a traditionally onerous task of reporting.

Recommendation 5
Address privacy. There are significant privacy concerns that must be addressed regarding the Ministry’s storage of data to the concerns with using a variety of tools and platforms. Digital reporting tools must comply with BC privacy legislation and undergo a Privacy Impact Assessment clearly stating who owns the data. Teacher autonomy and professional rights regarding reporting must also be respected in this process. How much data should we collect, store, link, search, and mine electronically in education are significant questions that need to be addressed.
Further reading


Student Progress Report Order (2016):
www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/legislation-policy/legislation/schoollaw/e/m191_94.pdf

Student Reporting (2016): www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/administration/legislation-policy/public-schools/student-reporting
Curriculum Change and TeachBC: Learning Resources for the Revised Curriculum

The issue
Significant changes in curriculum and pedagogical practice are under way. One of the key elements for success of proposed changes is teachers having teaching resources that are linked to the curriculum and to formative assessments.

Background
TeachBC was created by the BCTF as a tool for teachers to share teaching resources that support the revised BC curriculum. Teachers need access to resources that fit with these changes, and not enough teaching resources currently exist.

Every day teachers develop resources as an ongoing part of their work, but sharing those resources is not easy. With the pressures of the classroom, little time can be invested in doing the editing and polishing of a resource so that it is ready for sharing online with colleagues.

In particular, teachers in content areas that are new or restructured require access to new resources. Who better to create the required resources than the BC teachers who are daily producing material for their classes? In the absence of sharing resources, the system is open for publishers like Pearson to define our content. TeachBC offers a Creative Commons approach to sharing of resources on a non-commercial basis. The Ministry of Education website on curriculum refers teachers to TeachBC as a source of the resources to support the curriculum and teachers should find the resources they need when they go to TeachBC.

It is ironic that ministries other than education often have substantial budgets for the development of curriculum resources, yet the Ministry of Education spends very little for the development of curriculum resources. What the Ministry does offer in grants goes generally to non-educators who bring a “special” project and get funded—often far from the types of resources needed.

The BCTF provides support now with staff who carry out the technical support for adding resources to the database, as well as some limited release time to polish and improve resources.
Key recommendation
Recommendation 1
Provide Ministry funding for an expanded TeachBC program of identifying resource needs, finding the teachers who have developed resources and are willing to share them, and providing assistance in producing quality, graphic-designed teaching resources specific to the new curriculum.
Distributed Learning: Future Directions

The issue

Distributed Learning (DL) is defined in the School Act as “a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between students and teachers, including internet or other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing or correspondence.”

The DL system in BC has been described by Michael Barbour as the “most regulated” system of online learning in any of the provinces. Each school district or independent school that wants to offer an online program must enter into a contract with the Ministry of Education that outlines requirements.

The regulation is primarily related to eligibility for funding. DL programs are audited according to extensive criteria that define which students can be funded in a district as well as whether the DL program is consistent with the Ministry DL agreement. Significant attention by the educators in the DL programs is devoted to meeting these audit criteria, in preparation for an audit, even though only some schools are audited each year. The audit is the focus, rather than discussion about appropriate pedagogy for online teaching or other significant issues such as completion rates on courses.

In contrast to the funding requirements, the teaching conditions in DL are little regulated. DL teachers are explicitly excluded in the School Act from the class-size provisions, and the conditions of work are not covered by the BCTF collective agreement. A few districts have reached a de facto set of principles on staffing, but those are limited in applicability.

Background

The provincial system of DL was created by the BC Liberal government to be a competitive market. The deputy minister of the day rejected having provincial policies on quality issues on the basis that “the market will decide” on the quality of programs. In the context of limited provincial funding for education, nearly every district created a DL program, afraid that they would lose the funding that a student would take with them to a DL program in another district. One impact has been to limit the kind of collaboration across public school districts that would allow for the production of high-quality resources developed and shared cooperatively.

Ontario, as an example, operates on a co-operative model. The provincial Ministry contracts for the development of online course resources that are then available for teachers to use in online or blended learning programs. Districts primarily offer online courses to students
within their district, accepting students from other districts if there is a need, but primarily keeping the link between their students in face-to-face programs and their online courses.

BC Ministry policies promoted competition with independent school DL programs, not just those in other public school districts. Since 2004–05, enrollment in public school DL programs has been on a plateau at a little less than 8,000 full-time equivalent students. During that same time, the full-time equivalent numbers in independent DL programs have gone from a few hundred in 2004–05 to over 8,000 in 2016–17.

The full-time equivalent (FTE) descriptor reflects that students in Grades 10–12 are not primarily full-time students, but students who are taking one or more courses in DL while they are enrolled in a face-to-face school. The FTE is determined by identifying eight separate courses being taken as one FTE. Elementary students are only allowed to be in a DL programs based on them taking all their courses in DL, so each elementary student counts as one FTE. The number of students taking at least one DL course adds up to about 70,000 head count, versus 8,000 FTE.

Students are allowed to cross-enroll with any DL program, so a Grade 10–12 student in a public school can take a DL course from an independent school. The DL enrolments in independent schools make up about 10% of the total enrolment in independent schools, while only 1.2% in public schools.

The growth in independent DL enrolment is a partial explanation for the percentage growth in government funding for independent schools being much higher than for public schools provincially. The government encouraged the independent schools by giving them 63% of the amount for DL students, rather than the 50% provided for independent school students in non-DL programs.
The government also provides supplementary funding at the full public school amount for students with special needs in independent schools. This funding follows the student and independent schools have attracted parents by giving them significant control on how that is spent. When public schools have not had the resources for adequate support, parents have pulled out their child and moved to a private school to take advantage of what is essentially a voucher.

Two schools enrol about half of the total enrollment in independent DL programs—Self-Design Learning Community and Christian Heritage Online School. Christian Heritage has purchased the URL bconlineschool.ca so a student or parent doing a Google search for a “BC online school” will find Christian Heritage school at the top of the search.

### Key recommendation

**Recommendation 1**

Review policies and funding for Distributed Learning programs to create a system that is built on a co-operative, provincial basis, provides funding for provincial course development consistent with the curriculum changes, and has the resources to provide teaching conditions that are comparable to teachers in face-to-face programs.
The issue

The education finance system is broken, partially because of government-imposed austerity, but also because of a disconnect between the mandate(s) of the education system and how it is funded.

A stable system over the long term is needed to allow for forward thinking and planning that is based on school boards focused on what is good and what can be improved in the district, rather than on where are the least harmful places to cut services.

A commitment to adequately funding the full mandate is one of the keys to a sound system, rather than piecemeal funding for specific items as one-off expenditure, as has been happening in the past.

Adequacy is not enough though—equity must also be a value on which funding is based. Equity must take into account the very different realities in different communities and areas of the province. Resources must be distributed in a way that a child anywhere in the province has equitable access to opportunities.
Education Funding for Successful Implementation and Strong Public Education in BC

The issue
BC’s public education system requires adequate, stable, and predictable funding. The addition of Classroom Enhancement Funds (CEFs) following the BCTF’s win at the Supreme Court of Canada are critical, yet not sufficient, to restoring 16 years of declining operational funding for public education. Successful implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement as well as broad strengthening of working and learning conditions in BC’s public schools requires significant additional operating funding and resources.

Background
Public education funding in BC has been declining over the past 16 years as both a proportion of total public spending (Figure 1) and gross domestic product (GDP) (Figure 2). The impacts on working and learning conditions in BC have been significant and include, inter alia, declining numbers of classroom and specialist teachers, growing class sizes and complex class compositions, cuts to programs and services, and declining capital and infrastructure.

Following the BCTF’s Supreme Court of Canada win in November 2016, the Memorandum of Agreement set the path for restoration of funding vis-à-vis the CEFs for up to 3,300 classroom and specialist teachers. These funds are intended to ensure that public school districts come into compliance with restored collective agreement language on class size, composition, and non-enrolling specialist teaching ratios.

Figure 1

Ministry of Education Spending as a Percentage of Government Spending

Figure 2

Ministry of Education spending as percentage of GDP

Sources: See further reading.
**Key recommendations**

**Recommendation 1**
Fully fund the costs of full implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement: Classroom Enhancement Funds (CEFs) were announced as notional allocations based on projected district needs. Government should conduct a review to ensure that districts have been able to sufficiently avail CEFs for both teaching positions and overhead costs to ensure full implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement.

**Recommendation 2**
Establish predictable, stable, and adequate funding for public education in BC that addresses unfunded cost pressures. There are multiple cost pressures that are not addressed by the addition of the Classroom Enhancement Funds. The BCTF and Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) analyses and projections for “relief of operating school district pressures” far exceed the previous government’s $94 million allocation over three years. For example, the BCTF Brief to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services listed the equivalent figure of $94 million in unfunded cost pressures—but this figure was an annual figure (not over three years). The CCPA analysis projected $192 million over three years in cost pressures. These cost pressures include MSP premiums, inflation, supplies, funding for the Next Generation Network, and provincially negotiated agreements. Government must review and fully fund these unfunded cost pressures.

**Recommendation 3**
Government must provide additional funding for school, classroom, and related teaching supplies, materials, and resources. Successful implementation of restored language is also contingent on teachers having access to adequate teaching materials and resources. Sixteen years of chronic underfunding of public education has led to declining school and classroom resources. The Student Learning Grant proposed by the previous government allocated a one-time grant of $29.4 million that simply restores cuts of the exact equivalent size made in 2015. Schools and districts continue to report serious budgetary shortfalls in providing classroom and learning materials.

**Recommendation 4**
Government must address and fully fund school district budget shortfalls. As a result of constraints described above and the slow and delayed timeline for implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement with the government, many school districts are in positions of uncertainty as they proceed with their obligations to submit their budgets. School districts including Vancouver and Richmond, for example, have already announced needs for cuts to programming and staffing. Government must review existing shortfalls and commit to full funding and restoration.
British Columbia spends $1,000 less per student than the Canadian national average (Figure 3). BC’s relative position and our own provincial working and learning conditions can be significantly improved with fully funded implementation of the Memorandum of Agreement and specific commitments by government to address unfunded cost pressures outlined above.

Figure 3: Difference ($) in per-student funding in BC compared to Canadian national average

Further Reading
Appendix 1: BCTF Education Funding Brief to the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services (2016): bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/Briefs/EducationFundingBrief2016.pdf


Education Funding: Professional Development and In-Service

The issue
During the past 15 years of austerity budgets in education, one of the areas especially affected has been funding for profession learning by teachers. Too often when the many priorities were examined, this was one area excluded. Some districts had funding for profession development in the collective agreement, although many did not. Even those with provisions were stuck with amounts from the last local negotiations—almost 25 years ago—with costs increased even though funding did not.

Background
Many elements of teaching have changed and teachers need support for keeping up with these changes. This is particularly the case with the revised curriculum, changes in the structure of courses, increases in technological change, and the need for teachers to infuse Aboriginal ways of knowing throughout the curriculum.

Support to better meet the needs of students with special needs is also high on the priorities for professional learning.

Access to professional learning in all areas of the province must be planned for, given the geographic dispersion that produces barriers to equity.

Professional learning here is being used to encompass two types of activity. In-service is the training needed to carry out specific areas that governing authorities have identified—such as a new student information service, privacy requirements, or new areas of curriculum. Professional development is the teacher having the autonomy to determine what they need to learn to effectively provide high-quality educational service. Both of these require funding.

Key recommendations
Recommendation 1
That the Ministry of Education provide grants to school districts based on a minimum of $1,500 per teacher per year ($60 million) for each of three years to support time and learning resources needed for the implementation of the redesign of the entire curriculum from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
Recommendation 2
That the Ministry of Education work with the BCTF to develop a plan to support the availability of a wide variety of in-service opportunities in all regions of the province to support the implementation of the new curriculum and the enhanced Aboriginal content.

Recommendation 3
That the Ministry of Education provide additional non-instructional days during the 2017–18, 2018–19, and 2019–20 school years to support the implementation of the revised curriculum and enhanced Aboriginal content.

Recommendation 4
Abandon the changes made to the *School Act* and other statutes made by Bill 11 (2015), and instead work with the BCTF and other provincial education partner organizations to develop a plan to support a wide-range of mentorship opportunities for certificate holders in all school districts around BC.
Education Funding:
Public Funding of Private Schools

The issue
The BCTF is opposed to public funding of private schools. The opposition is not to parents having the right to send their children to private schools, but to the public funding of these schools. The opposition is particularly strong in opposing public funding for elite private schools.

The BCTF is also opposed to the tax credits that are provided for private schools, based on claims of supervision of students outside of class time being childcare for tax purposes.

Background
Over the past decade, public funding for independent schools has grown at a much faster rate than funding of public schools.

While some of that increase has reflected additional students, much of it was based on government policy decisions:

A significant increase in numbers of students in independent schools is in Distributed Learning (DL) programs. Two schools have particularly increased enrolments—Self Design and Heritage Christian.

Together they have DL enrolment that is two-thirds of the enrollment in the more than fifty public school district DL schools.

Ministry funding for these Distributed Learning private schools was quietly raised from 50% of that of public schools to 63%, further contributing to the rapid increase in funding for independent schools.

The BC Liberal government also changed rules to allow for students with special needs in funded categories to be fully funded in independent schools. These private schools have more flexibility to provide portions of the funding for parents to purchase services for their children. Public schools have more students with special needs in non-funded categories, so have less capacity to offer the services that should be present for all students with special needs.
Inclusion BC has called for adequate funding for public schools to provide support required for students with special needs so that parents do not feel they have to put their children in private DL schools to get service.

Key recommendations

Recommendation 1
That public funding for private schools be eliminated.

Recommendation 2
That the provincial government eliminate tax credits for private/independent fees.

Recommendation 3
That the provincial government end the practice of exempting private/independent school facilities and auxiliary lands from property tax.
Inclusive Education

The issue

BC’s inclusive public education system is based on the principle that all students, including those with diverse physical, cognitive, cultural, and linguistic needs, are “fully participating members of a community of learners.”¹ As such, all BC children and youth are fully entitled to “equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their educational programs.”²

The pursuit of an equitable, inclusive public education system has been thwarted, however, by a myriad of provincial policy, funding and staffing challenges since 2002, when the then newly elected BC Liberal government removed class-size and composition language from the collective bargaining process. While ultimately rectified by the restorative Supreme Court of Canada ruling in November 2016, that policy decision—along with chronic systemic underfunding—has resulted in a generation of students with significant and diverse needs going without timely assessment and identification; sufficient integrated classroom, school, and clinical supports; and equitable access to quality public education opportunities.

Background

The following table shows the difference in Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) learning specialist teachers between the years 2001–02, and 2015–16:³

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FTE specialist teachers</th>
<th>2001–02</th>
<th>2015–16</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>FTE</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Library services</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>-922</td>
<td>-357</td>
<td>-39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselling</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>-122</td>
<td>-12%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education</td>
<td>4052</td>
<td>3064</td>
<td>-988</td>
<td>-24%</td>
<td>-24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language learning</td>
<td>1016</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>-219</td>
<td>-22%</td>
<td>-22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal education</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>-9</td>
<td>-4%</td>
<td>-4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td>7186</td>
<td>5492</td>
<td>1695</td>
<td>-24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Ibid.
³ BCTF Research table: totals calculated with figures from BC Ministry of Education, Staff by Year and Program Code (unpublished Form 1530 data, various years).
Compared to 2001–02 there were:

- almost 1,000 fewer special education teachers in 2015–16.
- 357 fewer teacher-librarians to support students to develop language, literacy, and research skills in the 21st century.
- 121.5 fewer counsellors to support students with emotional, social and mental health issues.
- 218.6 fewer English Language Learning teachers for students newly arrived in Canada.
- 8.7 fewer Aboriginal Education teachers at a time when there are new educational initiatives to raise awareness of Aboriginal culture within BC schools and to provide a more culturally meaningful education for Aboriginal students.

While the Supreme Court ruling, and subsequent memorandum of agreement between the BC Public School Employers’ Association, Ministry of Education, and British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, promises the restoration of a significant number of specialist teaching positions, ongoing systemic underfunding means that, realistically, the return to full-service needs-based assessments, and a sustainable supply of staffing and resources is still a precarious outcome.

In addition, significant research into the theories, practice and policies of inclusion since 2002 compel educational stakeholders to re-envision BC’s systemic intentions and definitions of what inclusive classrooms, pedagogy, and services might look like, and how this vision will be reflected in provincial policy and collective bargaining language that supports teachers’ working environments, and their ability to effectively meet the needs of all their students.

The restoration of a robust, inclusive public education system will require:

1. the articulation and implementation of progressive education policies
2. the adoption and funding of evidence-based inclusive education practices
3. the intentional recruitment and retention of inclusive education teachers and clinical practitioners
4. Ministry-BCTF collaboration to enhance system-wide professional learning opportunities and manageable classroom conditions as part of a “wrap around” approach for meeting the needs of all students, and the particular specialized needs of those students with additional challenges.

**Key recommendations**

**Recommendation 1**

Provide stable, predictable, and adequate funding to enable school districts to fulfill their responsibility to provide:

1. early and timely identification and designation of students with special needs.
2. adequate wrap around services and supports, including full team complement staffing, services, and technology (e.g., learning support teachers, occupational therapists, Special Education Technology BC).
Recommendation 2
Review BC Ministry of Education funding formulas and caps for programs and services for families of students with special needs, to bring them into alignment with other Canadian jurisdictions.

Recommendation 3
Increase availability of and access to professional development, in-service, and specialist training for both general and specialist teachers on inclusive education theory and practice. These opportunities should be more widely available in all areas of the province, regardless of where a certificate holder is working.

Recommendation 4
Work in collaboration with the BCTF and other educational stakeholders to develop a sustainable and evidence-based model of inclusive education policy and curriculum, and collective bargaining and staffing language and approaches.

Further reading

Inclusive Education: Resources

The issue
The BCTF has spent 15 years working through the courts, all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada, to restore resources and supports to classrooms. These resources are essential to supporting meaningful inclusion for children with special needs and the entire community of learners and teachers.

Background
The BCTF has a long history of strong commitment to inclusion and advocating for the conditions that allow students with special needs, and all students, to receive the quality education they deserve.

Our continued focus on class composition is an important component in identifying resources and classroom supports needed to provide meaningful inclusion for children with special needs. The teachers’ collective agreement, as it applies in some districts, has language that requires that additional classroom resources be provided when students with special needs are included. In some districts, when more than a specified number of students with special needs are included in a class, the size of the class must be reduced to help the teacher meet the needs of all the students. In other districts, contract provisions state that if the number of students with individualized education plans (IEPs) is over a specified number, then actions must be taken to meet the needs in that classroom. The principle applies in all districts that special needs must be taken into account in assigning resources to classrooms.

The 2012 Moore decision at the Supreme Court of Canada determined that school districts have the obligation to provide a program that addresses the educational needs of students with special needs. The BCTF provided support for this case because we believe it is the obligation of school districts to provide programs and resources that meaningfully and substantially meet the educational needs of children with special needs. We also strongly believe that the province has the obligation to provide stable and adequate funding to districts to enable them to meet their obligations to all students.

Key recommendations

Recommendation 1
Policies and funding to adequately support inclusion should be among the top priorities to be addressed.
**Recommendation 2**
Developing (with the BCTF, the Association of the BC Deans of Education, and others) a plan of action to ensure that sufficient numbers of speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, learning assistance teachers, special education teachers, and other teachers are available in all school districts.

**Recommendation 3**
Taking concrete steps to significantly shorten waitlists for psychometric assessments so that students that qualify for a special education designation receive early intervention and the necessary supports, regardless of where in the province the student is going to school.
Inclusive Education: Special Needs Designations and Categories in BC

The Issue
The Ministry of Education has established a funding model and designation system for identifying and channelling supplemental funding to districts with identified special needs. In BC, the Ministry of Education *Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines* delineates the diagnostic and identification criteria for children with special needs across twelve (12) designations (Figure 1) and the annual *operating grant manual* establishes the supplemental funding amounts for students with Level 1, 2, or 3 designations (Figure 1). Designations A–H are considered “low incidence” designations and designations K–R are considered “high incidence.” Low incidence designations are generally (although not universally) special needs that require higher levels of supports and services.

![Figure 1: Special Needs Designations and Supplemental Ministry of Education Funding](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Incidence</th>
<th>Level 1: $38,140</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Physically Dependent – Multiple Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Deaf-Blind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 2: $19,070</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>Visual Impairment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Deaf or Hard of Hearing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level 3: $9,610</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Students Requiring Intensive Behaviour Intervention or Students with Serious Mental Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Incidence</td>
<td>No supplemental funding; basic per-student allocation only</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Mild Intellectual Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>P</td>
<td>Gifted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Learning Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Students Requiring Behaviour Support or Students with Mental Illness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Background
Over the past 16 years, the percentage of students with special needs in the BC public school system has remained relatively constant at just over 10% (Figure 2). The designations and needs levels, however, have grown significantly over this same period. There has been an over
58% increase in the number of students with low incidence (high needs) designations in BC over the past 16 years, and an over 35% decrease in the number of students with high incidence designations over this same period (Figure 3). These changes in the numbers of students with low and high incidence designations have, to a certain extent, been driven by changes in diagnostic criteria in the special education manuals. For example, there has been significant growth in the number and percentage of students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) designations in BC; 455% growth in the number of students with ASD from 2001–16 (Figure 3). This designation, however, is now (based on DSM IV diagnostic criteria) capturing students that would have otherwise been designated in other low incidence categories, including C and H, and high incidence categories K, Q, and R. Streamlined diagnostics coupled with improved public awareness of autism spectrum disorders has also led to increased designations of students with autism spectrum disorders.

Figure 2

![Figure 2](image1)

Students with Special Needs as a Percent of Total Student Population

![Figure 3](image2)

Changes in Numbers of Students with Special Needs in BC by High and Low Incidence Category

**Key recommendations**

**Recommendation 1**
Special education designations are crucial in allowing governments and school districts to identify student exceptionalities and special needs and to accordingly drive funding and supports into the public school system and classrooms to support students and their teachers.

**Recommendation 2**
Special needs designations are evolving and must reflect existing scientific community standards (i.e., DSM V).

**Recommendation 3**
The government must provide additional funding and supports to improve assessment and diagnostic services across BC. This includes funding for hiring teacher psychologists to reduce lengthy psycho-educational assessment wait times, and funding and supports for health and social services to reduce wait times and improve access to assessment, diagnostic, and treatment services for physical disabilities, mental health, neurodevelopmental disorders, and behavioural disorders.
**Recommendation 4**
The government should review the supplemental funding model with the view to enhancing and improving the alignment between student educational needs and funding. The current formula-based (vs. need-based) model provides no supplemental funding for high incidence categories while also failing to account for students with multiple and co-morbid special needs.

**Further Reading**
International Students’ Future in BC’s Public Education System

Background

International students are a big business in BC schools—at both at the K–12 level, and even more so for post-secondary education.

In the 2015–16 school year, more than $216 million was collected by BC public school districts in tuition and an equivalent amount was spent by the families of international students for homestays and other expenditures. The number of international students and the tuition they have paid to K–12 school districts has dramatically increased, growing from $55 million in 2001–02. Tuition charges are about twice the amount per student of the Ministry of Education grants for Canadian students.

The claim by government has been that education is the third largest international export from BC. Post-secondary students—including universities and English language schools—are the biggest share of these, but the K–12 contribution is significant.

The rationale for recruiting international students has included at least three elements: they contribute to a rich diversity in our schools, they represent an investment in the future by building links that will pay off with future business and cultural connections, and their tuition provides a top-up for education budgets that have been consistently underfunded.

While lip service has sometimes been paid to diversity and future business connections, the most significant factor has been budgetary—the tuition of international students has been the only avenue for school districts to gain significant funding additional to government grants. Some districts have elaborate recruiting programs, including using agents in target countries who sign up the students, often at recruiting fairs, as well as sending administrators to target countries as part of the recruitment of students.

The revenue collected by districts has created inequalities in BC’s public education system because nearly all the international students attend schools in the Metro Vancouver and Vancouver Island districts. One district, at the high end, has supplemented its provincial grants by about 15%. Many other districts in the province have had no international students and no extra revenue from this source.

A number of current changes require an examination of the future of international students in the K–12 system. For more than a decade, the province had more qualified teachers than teacher jobs and estimates from districts identified more than 300 teacher positions funded
through international students. The reinstatement of the provisions of the BCTF collective agreement have reduced dramatically any "surplus" of teachers.

Similarly, class-size limits increase the need for classrooms and some schools may find they no longer have room for as many international students (most international students are in secondary schools).

The issue of equity needs to be addressed as well. Districts without international students in the past are often those with declining enrolments, extra classrooms, and less diverse student populations. Building an infrastructure to recruit and support international students is often beyond the capabilities of the smaller school districts. If the province wants to continue incorporating significant numbers of international students as well as increase equity and diversity, the Ministry of Education will need to take on more responsibility for the infrastructure to support this direction.

**Key recommendation**

**Recommendation 1**

That the Ministry of Education hold a policy summit on the future of international students in the public K–12 system to make recommendations on policy directions.

**Further reading**

Appendix 2: Charts showing numbers of students and tuition income since 2001–02.
Recruitment, Retention, and Mentorship of Teachers

The issue

BC’s public education system is experiencing a major demographic shift, creating an increasing demand for teachers—and critical personnel shortages. According to provincial labour market projections, BC schools will require 24,900 new teaching positions by 2022,\(^4\) because of a combination of projected student population increases and teacher retirements, and the recent restoration of collective agreement language for class-size and composition levels. Numerous BC school districts are already reporting significant, chronic shortages for teachers teaching on call (TTOCs), as well as general and specialist teachers across the province’s K–12 schools.

Consequently, the systemic recruitment, retention, and mentorship of teachers at all career stages will be of critical importance to BC’s public school system for the coming decade. BC’s school districts need sustainably funded recruitment and induction plans to support the anticipated influx of new professionals entering BC’s public school system, as well as retention strategies for mid- and later-career teachers.

Background

Attrition rates among early career teachers are estimated at 25–30% in Canada. Not only does attrition have negative fiscal impacts, but staffing instability negatively affects student achievement and cohesion within school communities.\(^1\)

Prior to the provincial election, the BC Teachers’ Federation (BCTF) and the province discussed a number of recruitment and retention ideas that would address the severe TTOC shortages in many school districts and the need to both attract and retain qualified teachers to specialist teacher roles in rural and remote areas of the province. This need pre-dates the Supreme Court of Canada decision, but the need is now more acute given the level of hiring under way. There are proactive steps that the province can take to address the situation—some through the BC Public School Employers’ Association, and others directly with the BCTF.

In addition, a growing body of research indicates that purposeful induction and mentorship is an effective means of decreasing new teacher attrition rates,\(^5\) as it contributes to “reduced feelings of isolation, increased confidence and self-esteem, professional growth, and improved

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\(^4\) British Columbia 2022 Labour Market Outlook, 2015, p. 9.

\(^5\) Kutsyuruba, Godden & Tregunna, 2014; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011.
self-reflection and problem-solving capacities.” The provision of sustained, job-embedded mentorship also improves professional practice and supports student achievement.7

Mentorship support also promotes increased retention and staffing stability, as “teachers who are mentored have been found to be less likely to leave teaching and less likely to move schools within the profession.”8

Despite such evidence-based benefits, BC’s public school system remains without a provincial mentorship strategy, although a recent pilot project has produced promising movement in that direction. The creation of the New Teacher Mentorship Project (NTMP), a three-way partnership between the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, the University of British Columbia, and the British Columbia School Superintendents Association, funded by the Ministry of Education from 2012 to 2017, has established a framework and resources for high-quality mentorship in 40 school districts to date.

NTMP evaluation results indicate that 90% of new teacher participants indicated their classroom practice improved, with 95% indicating an improvement in student learning outcomes.

Key Recommendations

**Recommendation 1**
As soon as possible, work with the BCTF to initiate a series of recruitment and retention initiatives to address the immediate needs in school districts around the province in filling both contract positions and in ensuring sufficient numbers of TTOCs are available. Such initiatives could include shortening of the salary grid (by removing the lowest three or four steps on the grid) to bring starting wages are more in line with other provinces. Other initiatives could include student loan forgiveness programs, assisting new hires with moving expenses, making available more unpaid mid-year leaves, assisting with housing, reducing rents on teacherages, and greater access to in-service.

**Recommendation 2**

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6 Hobson et al., 2009, p. 216.
7 Schmidt et al., 2017.
**Recommendation 3**
Commit long-term, sustainable funding toward a permanent provincial mentorship program for early career teachers that acknowledges the diversity of BC’s geographic regions and school district needs, and principles of teacher-directed professional development.

**Recommendation 4**
Provide a significant funding increase and policy guidelines dedicated toward expanding teacher recruitment strategies and incentives for all BC public school districts.

**Recommendation 5**
Work collaboratively with the BCTF through the collective bargaining process to secure system-wide improvements to classroom conditions, work load, professional development, and wellness provisions as a means of retaining teachers at all career stages.

**Further reading**


Technology

The issue
As in society as a whole, digital technology is becoming ubiquitous in our schools. This has significant implications, too few of which are being addressed with research, resources, or comprehensive policies.

Background
Areas that need policy and action include:
1. How do we produce equity in access to digital technology, regardless of family income, language, or other cultural and social realities? What financial support is required to ensure equity?
2. How can we incorporate critical digital literacy and digital citizenship throughout the curriculum?
3. How important is privacy and how are teachers provided with training on protecting privacy of students?
4. What are the basics of hardware, software, bandwidth, and technical support that should be available in each school? Should there be provincial guidelines?
5. What should be the policies on “Bring Your Own Device,” both for students and teachers?
6. How much and what kind of data on students should be collected, what are the privacy parameters and how should it be stored, accessed, as well as destroyed when not appropriately saved?
7. What tools for collecting data should be available to teachers? How much should student data be centralized through MyEducation BC? What should be the parameters of using technology to report to parents?
8. How much focus should be put on computational thinking and coding and at what levels?
9. What supports through in-service should be provided to teachers to deal with the wide-range of pedagogical, social, and technical issues related to information and communications technology?
10. What are the issues around use of the education platforms of Google, Microsoft, FreshGrade, Scholantis, Aspen/Fujitsu, and other technology corporations?

Key Recommendation

Recommendation 1
Create a digital technology policy committee to develop advice on issues around information and communications technology, particularly education technology.
Technology: Privacy Concerns

The issue
The use of digital technology is exploding, bringing with it increasing concerns about privacy issues. At the classroom and teacher level, several types of tools raise privacy issues:

- student information systems (particularly MyEducation BC)
- learning management systems (like Moodle)
- apps for specific purposes (eportfolios like FreshGrade; many other apps for specific, sometimes educational purposes)
- communication and productivity tools (like email, Word, Google Docs).

Background
In BC we have a specific law that requires that personal information on individuals be stored on servers in Canada. The law requiring this was passed because of the Patriot Act in the US, which provided government access to data on individuals held on servers in the US. It is possible for individuals in BC to waive this requirement, but with informed consent.

The tool used by the largest number of teachers is MyEducation BC. The Ministry has promoted its use to provide a standard way of carrying out the reporting on student assessments and attendance. It has been adopted for this use by most school districts. It has a number of features beyond reporting, including holding individual education plans for students with special needs and, in some cases, access to student information by the parents of the student.

One might expect that privacy would be an essential element of a widely used tool that contains information on almost every student in the province. However, a survey of members by the BCTF indicated that only 28% had privacy training, and only half of those found the training adequate. This means about 85% of users are not adequately prepared for this responsibility.

Another major area of concern relates to apps. Hundreds of these are being created annually. Some have wide user-bases in BC schools, such as the eportfolio app, FreshGrade. Others are used by teachers because they fit a particular educational purpose. The programs collect data on individuals—data is actually the way that many “free” apps are financed.

Two of the major IT corporations are attempting to make their services the platform for education use. Google has been in the lead, with Microsoft entering this competition as well. They combine several of the types of tools into one platform, hoping they will be the “go-to” base for classroom use. Google’s Suite, for example, includes productivity tools with apps and
with a learning management system—students must have a gmail address to use it. It operates on an open resources approach, so that the development work by teachers and students can be easily shared. What is shared then becomes another reason to use that platform. Microsoft is following the same map, and offering lots of apps and tools as part of their education package.

All of these digital tools collect personal data on students. They require privacy assessments and training of teachers and students in privacy issues. It is unreasonable to expect that individual teachers will have the time to research all the potential tools that might be educationally useful.

**Key recommendations**

**Recommendation 1**
Privacy should be a focus of Ministry of Education and school districts in ensuring that teachers are adequately trained to use MyEducation BC.

**Recommendation 2**
The Ministry of Education and the Information and Privacy Commissioner should develop a guidebook for parents, teachers, and administrators on privacy policies and practices related to digital technology.

**Recommendation 3**
The Ministry of Education should finance a database of privacy information related to specific digital tools so that a teacher considering using a tool or app has information about the related privacy issues and appropriate information in plain language for parents and students to choose if they will provide waivers to use the tool.
Youth Mental Health

The issue
As BC teachers occupy a critical front line role in preventative mental health education, initial identification, and ongoing school-based support, they require considerable knowledge and resources to effectively teach and care for children and adolescents with mental health challenges.

A recent survey of 30,000 BC youth indicates that after peers (73%) and family (69%), students are most likely to approach a teacher (41%), school counsellor (27%), or other school staff member (16%) for help with a mental health concern.\(^9\)

According to Kutcher, schools are “an ideal place to begin the work of addressing mental health” because they can:
1. pro-actively promote mental wellness
2. be sites for early identification
3. have educated personnel who recognize and intervene on behalf of students
4. serve as sites for mental health care delivery if working in an integrated way between classroom teachers and mental health specialists.\(^10\)

Background
As many as 12.6% of Canadian children and youth aged 4–17 years—or nearly 84,000 in BC—are likely experiencing clinically significant mental disorders at any given time.\(^11\)

Young people from additionally marginalized groups (e.g., Aboriginal and LGBTQ youth), unstable home situations, physically or sexually abusive environments, and those with chronic illness or disability, face higher than average rates of mental illness.\(^12\)

In addition, there is a strong correlation between poverty and youth mental illness\(^13\), and BC’s child poverty rate (19.8%) is the fifth highest of Canada’s 10 provinces.\(^14\)

Only one-third of BC youth with identified mental health concerns are estimated to be receiving specialized services because of systemic underfunding and service shortfalls, as well

\(^9\) McCreary Centre Society, 2016, p. 66.
\(^10\) Canadian Teachers’ Federation, 2012, p. 6.
\(^12\) Tourand \textit{et al.}, 2016; Smith \textit{et al.}, 2011.
\(^13\) Lipman & Boyle, 2008.
\(^14\) Statistics Canada, 2015.
as cultural stigma, geographic constraints, and economic barriers.\textsuperscript{15} Socio-economic inequities and long-term fiscal austerity in mental health funding and school resources has produced seriously detrimental consequences for BC’s youth population.

Within this context of chronic underfunding of public health and education systems, BC’s teachers, counsellors, and specialist educators have been left to manage the impacts of students’ mental health concerns with inadequate information and staffing, and delayed specialist/clinical intervention and referral processes.

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**Key recommendations**

The following six recommendations are more fully detailed in *Addressing youth mental health issues in BC’s K–12 public schools: A BCTF submission. A brief to the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth* (BCTF, 2015).

**Recommendation 1**
Support efforts to build positive and pre-emptive approaches to the mental health of children and youth.

**Recommendation 2**
Address the serious children/youth mental health issues by ensuring mental health services are accessible in schools.

**Recommendation 3**
Establish a commission to initiate and co-ordinate province-wide mental health approaches and resource development in K–12 public schools.

**Recommendation 4**
Provide a grant to the BC Teachers’ Federation to support its Teaching to Diversity online resource.

**Recommendation 5**
Increase the number of school counsellors and other specialist support teachers to address students’ mental health issues.

**Recommendation 6**
Address the mental health needs of youth who are often additionally marginalized.

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\textsuperscript{15} Waddell et al., 2014, p. 2.
Further reading


