



CHAPTER 8:

Students in need of vision, hearing, and speech/language support, and poverty-related barriers to accessing these services

This report is one of a series documenting the findings of the Poverty and Education survey. For additional information, see: <http://www.bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx>



A BC Teachers' Federation study. This survey was conducted by BCTF Research in collaboration with the Anti-poverty action group of the Committee for Action on Social Justice.



Poverty and Education survey: A teacher's perspective

About the Poverty and Education survey

The *Poverty and Education survey: A teacher's perspective* was conducted by BCTF Research in collaboration with the BCTF Anti-Poverty Action Group of the Committee for Action on Social Justice, building on the findings of focus group research that explored poverty and education issues with teachers in four school districts¹. The purpose of the provincial survey was to assess whether and to what extent the focus group findings reflect teachers' experience across the province, to deepen our understanding of how poverty and education issues vary by regional, socio-economic, and school characteristics, and to identify what resources are most needed to address poverty within BC schools and the community.

Contributions and acknowledgments

BCTF Research Department

- Research design, data analysis, and reporting of survey results: Margaret White, Senior Research Analyst
- Assistance in all phases of the research project: Anne Field, Research Assistant
- Leadership and support for the project: Larry Kuehn, Director, Research and Technology Division

Committee for Action on Social Justice—Anti-Poverty Action Group

As staff and committee members have changed since the study began, we would like to acknowledge those who contributed, past and present, at various phases of the research project.

- Leadership, co-ordination, and input into final reports, Barb Ryeburn, Assistant Director, Professional and Social Issues Division
- Leadership, co-ordination, and survey promotion: Kathy Hartman, Assistant Director, Professional and Social Issues Division
- Leadership in the early phases of survey design: James Chamberlain, Assistant Director, Professional and Social Issues Division (up to August 2012)
- Pre-testing, survey promotion, and/or input into survey results: Amy Dash, Sue Spalding, Debbie Sabourin, Annie Ohana (current members as of May, 2013) and ongoing input from members of the CASJ Anti-Poverty Action Group
- Survey development and questionnaire design: Ilse Hill (former member of the CASJ Anti-Poverty Action Group)

We would like to acknowledge former members of the CASJ Anti-Poverty Action Group (Ilse Hill, Julia MacRae, Stacey Kemp), and Linda Young of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association Anti-poverty Committee, for their contribution to the focus-group research in phase one of the study. We also wish to acknowledge the contribution of all the teachers who took the time to complete the survey, assisted in the pre-testing, and the teachers who participated in the focus groups that led to the development of this survey.

We also wish to thank Adrienne Montani of First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition, for taking the time to review a draft of the survey, and First Call for providing us with opportunities to share the research results with community groups across BC.

We also wish to acknowledge the BC Teachers' Federation for supporting this project.

¹ White, M., Hill, I., Kemp, S., MacRae, J., and Young, L. (2012). *Poverty and education: A teacher's perspective—Summary of the findings of the focus group research*. Available at: www.bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx.

Table of contents

Introduction

- What we learned from the focus group research
- Survey objectives
- Survey questions

Unmet need for assessment and care for vision, hearing, and speech/language development

Students in need of speech, hearing, and vision services

- Socio-economic context of the school
- Regional zone

Challenges teachers encounter when assisting low-income families to obtain health and community services for their children

- Socio-economic context of the school
- Regional zone

Chapter 8: Summary and discussion

Information on study design and who responded to the survey: See *Chapter 1, Teachers who responded to the survey and the students that they teach*, at www.bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx.

Introduction

What we learned from the focus group research

Prior to the development of the survey, BC Teachers' Federation conducted focus groups with teachers in four BC school districts to explore poverty and education issues². In the focus groups, teachers expressed concern about the wide learning gaps between students, noting that many of the students with learning difficulties were also dealing with poverty issues. Teachers described the wide range of developmental skills, language fluency, and special needs of students in a single classroom and the challenge this can pose for teachers when there are not adequate resources to address diverse learning needs. Teachers reported having students in their class(es) with unmet needs for vision, hearing, and speech/language development services, and encountered many challenges when assisting low-income families to access health services for their children.

Survey objectives

One objective of the survey was to document whether and to what extent teachers have students in their class(es) who are in need of assessment and/or care for vision, hearing, and speech/language development. Another objective was to identify the challenges teachers encounter when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children, and determine which pose the most significant barriers to accessing health and community services.

Survey questions

The survey included a question that asked teachers to indicate: "Based on your experience as a teacher, how many students in your class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for vision, hearing, or speech and language development?" The survey also asked teachers, "Do you encounter any of the following challenges when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children?" The challenges listed included "Lack of information on resources available to assist low-income families", "Long wait-lists for diagnostic and treatment services", "Transportation barriers families encounter re: travelling to and from appointments", "Lack of translation services for parents", and "Difficulty co-ordinating efforts between the school and community agencies".

The survey results to each of the above questions are presented to show the overall results and how these results vary by the socioeconomic context in which the school is located and by regional zone.

² <http://www.bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/Publications/ResearchReports/2012-EI-01.pdf>

Unmet need for assessment and care for vision, hearing, and speech/language development

The survey asked teachers to indicate: “Based on your experience as a teacher, how many students in your class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for vision, hearing, or speech and language development?” Respondents were given the option of choosing “Does not apply” if the question did not apply to their teaching situation. The percentages reported in this section are based on the number of respondents after excluding the “Does not apply” responses.

Some teachers reported having no students in need of these services. One in five teachers (20.1%) indicated “None” of the students in their class(es) were in need of assessment and/or care for vision, one-third (33.1%) indicated “None” for hearing, and one in eight teachers (12.2%) indicated “None” for speech and language development.

Most teachers indicated having at least a few students in their class(es) in need of these services. Three-quarters (75.8%) of teachers indicated either “A few” or “Some” of the students in their class(es) were in need of assessment and/or care for vision while 63.9% indicated either “A few” or “Some” for hearing services, and 82.6% indicated either “A few” or “Some” students are in need of speech and language development services (combined percentages).

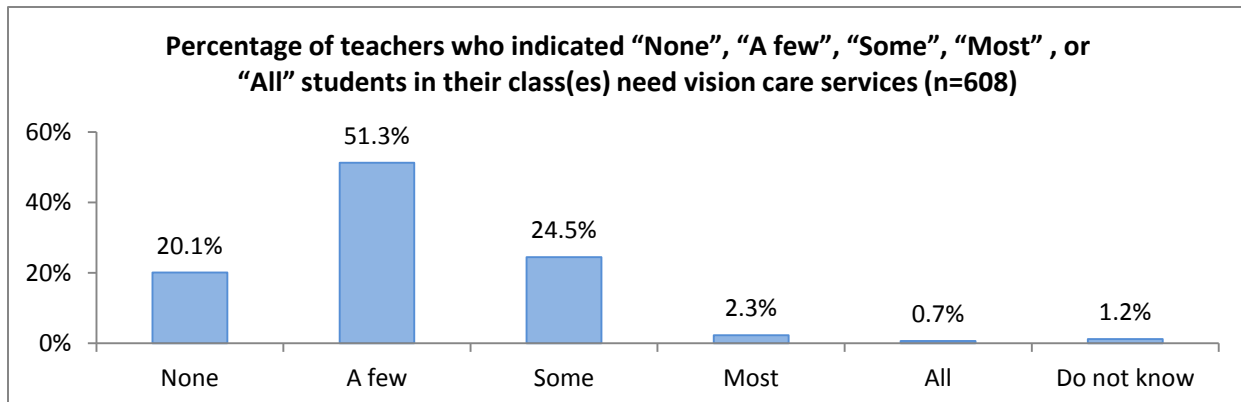
Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for vision, hearing or speech/language development

Students in need of the service	Percentage of sample*		
	Vision care (n=608)	Hearing care (n=595)	Speech and language development (n=638)
None	20.1%	33.1%	12.2%
A few	51.3%	45.4%	42.8%
Some	24.5%	18.5%	39.8%
Most	2.3%	0.8%	3.1%
All	0.7%	0.8%	0.9%
Do not know	1.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* Total responses exclude missing values and “Does not apply” responses.

Students in need of Vision care

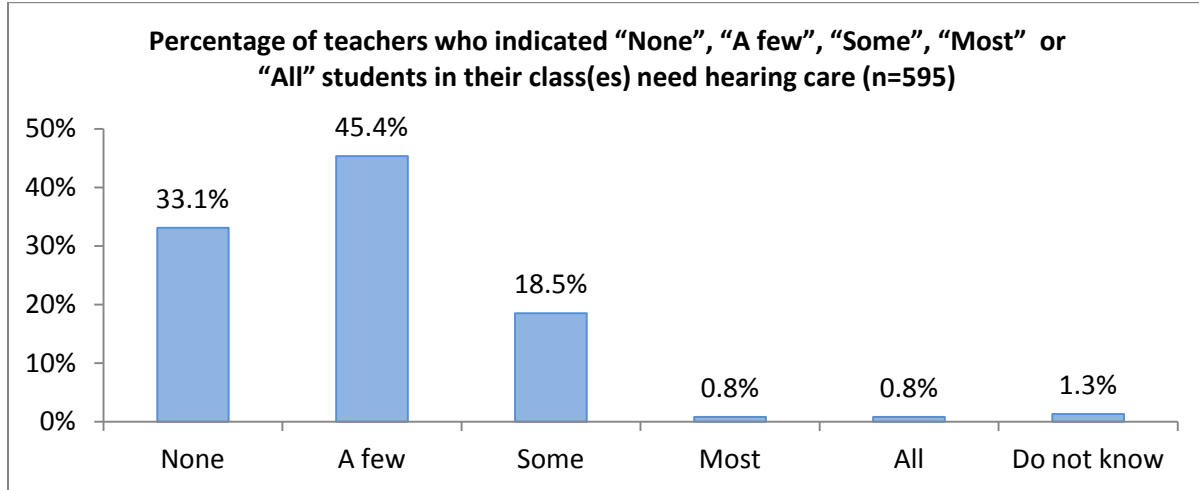
Of the 608 teachers for whom the question applied, one-half (51.3%) indicated “A few” and one-quarter (24.5%) indicated “Some” of students in their class(es) are in need of vision care.



Total responses exclude missing values and “Does not apply” responses

Students in need of Hearing care

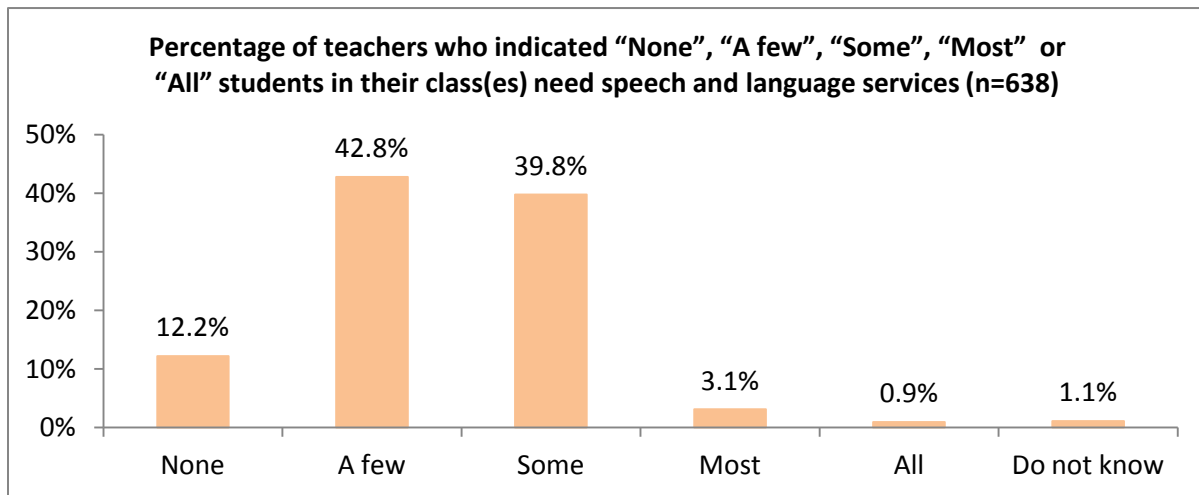
Of the 595 teachers for whom this question applied, almost one-half (45.4%) indicated “A few”, and about one in five (18.5%) indicated “Some”, of students in their class(es) are in need of hearing care.



Total responses exclude missing values and “Does not apply” responses

Students in need of Speech/language development services

Of the 638 teachers who indicated this question applied to their teaching situation, 42.8% indicated “A few” students, 39.8% indicated “Some” students, and 3.1% indicated “Most” students in their class(es) are in need of speech and language development services.



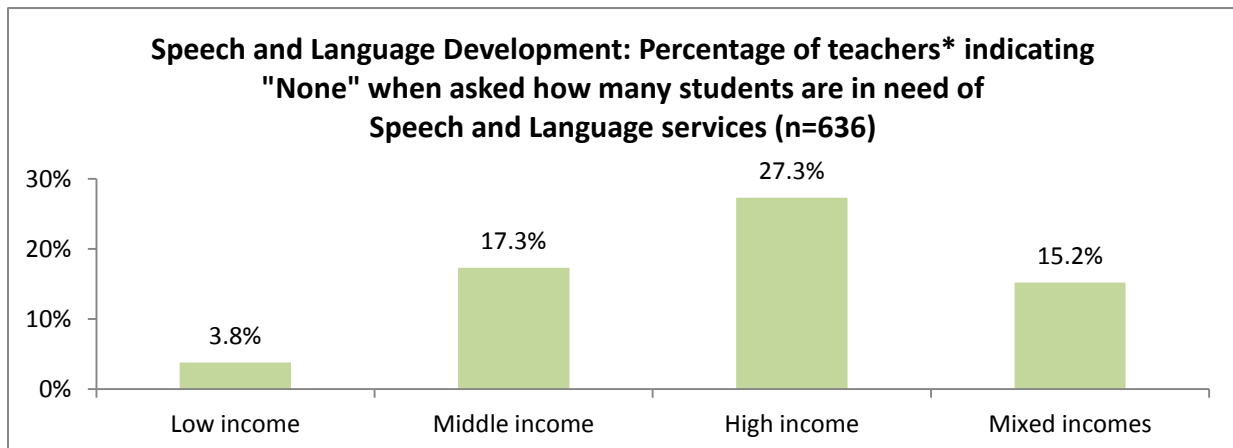
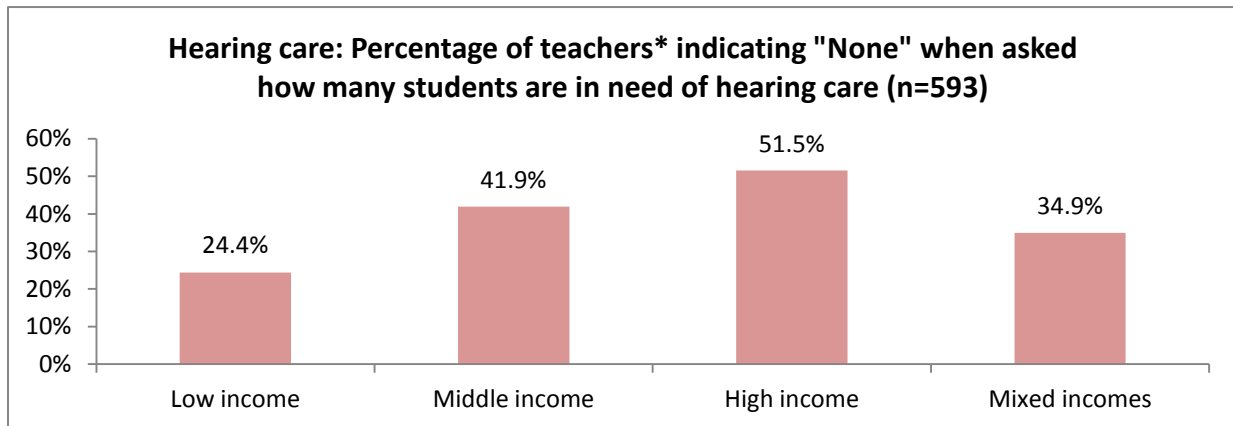
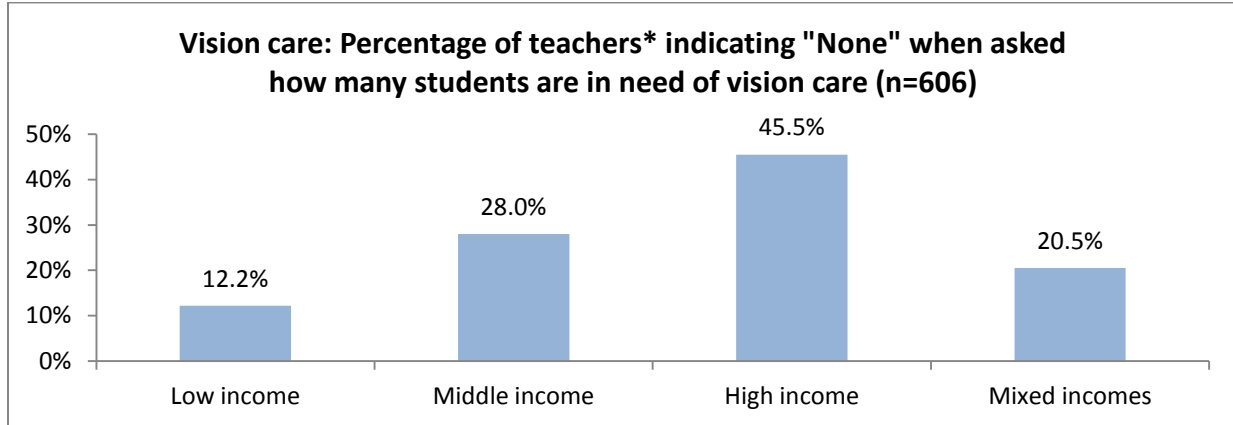
Total responses exclude missing values and “Does not apply” responses

These survey results suggest there is an unmet need for vision, hearing, and speech language/development services for students in BC classrooms. To assess where the need is the greatest, the data was analyzed to compare the percentage responses by socio-economic context of the school and by regional zone.

Students in need of speech, hearing, and vision services—Socio-economic context

“None” of the students in their class(es) are in need of vision, hearing, or speech/language services

Teachers in schools in high-income-areas were much more likely than teachers in schools in low-income areas to indicate that “None” of the students in their class(es) are in need of vision care (45.5% vs. 12.2% of low-income schools), hearing care (51.5% vs. 24.4% of low-income schools), and/or speech and language development (27.3% vs. 3.8% of low-income schools).



*Percentages are based on totals after excluding missing values and “Does not apply” responses

“Some” students are in need of vision, hearing or speech and language services—Socio-economic context

The survey findings suggest that schools in low-income areas have the greatest unmet need for assessment services and/or care for vision, hearing, and/or speech/language development. A higher proportion of teachers in schools located in low-income areas indicated “Some” of the students in their class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for vision (36.6% vs. 3.0% in high-income schools), hearing (27.4% vs. 6.1% in high-income schools), and/or speech and language development (48.8% vs. 12.1% in high-income schools). While somewhat less so than for low-income schools, the data also suggests there is a significant need in middle- and mixed-income schools, especially for vision and speech/language development services.

Vision care

About one in five teachers in middle-income (21.3%) and mixed-incomes (19.5%) schools indicated that “some” of the students in their class(es) are in need of vision care.

Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of vision care (n=606) – Differences by socio-economic context of the school

	None	A few	Some	Most	All	Do not know	Total
Low income	12.2%	44.9%	36.6%	2.9%	2.0%	1.5%	100.0%
Middle income	28.0%	49.3%	21.3%	1.3%			100.0%
High income	45.5%	51.5%	3.0%				100.0%
Mixed incomes	20.5%	56.3%	19.5%	2.4%		1.4%	100.0%
All income groups	20.0%	51.3%	24.6%	2.3%	0.7%	1.2%	100.0%

Total responses excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses.

Hearing care

Teachers in middle-income (17.6%) and mixed-incomes (14.2%) schools indicated “some” of the students in their class(es) are in need of hearing care.

Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of hearing care (n=593) – Differences by socio-economic context of the school

	None	A few	Some	Most	All	Do not know	Total
Low income	24.4%	43.1%	27.4%	1.0%	2.0%	2.0%	100.0%
Middle income	41.9%	40.5%	17.6%				100.0%
High income	51.5%	42.4%	6.1%				100.0%
Mixed incomes	34.9%	48.1%	14.2%	1.0%	0.3%	1.4%	100.0%
All income groups	33.2%	45.2%	18.5%	0.8%	0.8%	1.3%	100.0%

Total responses excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses.

Speech and language development services

At least one-third of teachers in middle- (33.3%) and mixed-incomes (38.5%) schools indicated “Some” of the students in their class are in need of speech and language development.

Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of speech and language services (n=636) – Differences by socio-economic context of the school

	None	A few	Some	Most	All	Do not know	Total
Low income	3.8%	39.9%	48.8%	5.2%	1.4%	0.9%	100.0%
Middle income	17.3%	44.4%	33.3%	1.2%	3.7%		100.0%
High income	27.3%	57.6%	12.1%	3.0%			100.0%
Mixed incomes	15.2%	42.4%	38.5%	2.3%		1.6%	100.0%
All income groups	12.3%	42.6%	39.9%	3.1%	0.9%	1.1%	100.0%

Total responses excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses.

Students in need of speech, hearing, and vision services—Regional zones

The survey results suggest that the need is greater in the North Coast (vision, hearing, and speech/language development), Vancouver Island North (vision and speech/language development), and Kootenay (vision). These zones are mostly in rural/remote areas of the province, likely with fewer health services available, and greater challenges for families having to travel longer distances to attend appointments for assessment and/or care.

The following tables provide detailed data on the percentage of teachers in each zone indicating how many students are in need of vision, hearing, and/or speech/language services.

Vision care

Teachers in North Coast (4.5%) were the least likely and teachers in Fraser Valley (23.4%) and Vancouver Island South (23.7%) were the most likely to indicate “None” of the students in their class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for vision. Teachers in North Coast (36.4%), Kootenay (30.8%), and Vancouver Island North (30%) were the most likely to indicate “Some” of the students in their class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for vision, while teachers in Okanagan (10%) were the least likely to do so.

Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of vision care (n=608) – Differences by zone in which school is located

	None	A few	Some	Most	All	Do not know	Total
Kootenay	19.2%	50.0%	30.8%				100.0%
Okanagan	22.9%	61.4%	10.0%	2.9%	1.4%	1.4%	100.0%
North Coast	4.5%	40.9%	36.4%	9.1%	9.1%		100.0%
North Central/ Peace River	18.8%	50.0%	25.0%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	100.0%
Fraser Valley	23.4%	52.4%	22.1%	1.4%		0.7%	100.0%
Metro Vancouver area & West	20.8%	48.2%	28.0%	1.8%		1.2%	100.0%
Vanc. Island North	11.4%	51.4%	30.0%	4.3%		2.9%	100.0%
Vanc. Island South	23.7%	50.8%	23.7%	1.7%			100.0%
All zones	20.1%	51.3%	24.5%	2.3%	0.7%	1.2%	100.0%

Total responses excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses

Hearing care

Teachers in Vancouver Island North (20%), Kootenay (20%), and North Coast (20.8%) were the least likely, and teachers in the Fraser Valley (41.7%) and Okanagan (40.6%) were the most likely, to indicate “None” of the students in their class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for hearing. Teachers in North Coast (37.5%) were the most likely to indicate “Some” students are in need of assessment and/or care for hearing, while teachers in Okanagan (8.7%) were the least likely to do so.

Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of hearing care (n=595) – Differences by zone in which school is located

	None	A few	Some	Most	All	Do not know	Total
Kootenay	20.0%	52.0%	24.0%		4.0%		100.0%
Okanagan	40.6%	43.5%	8.7%	2.9%	1.4%	2.9%	100.0%
North Coast	20.8%	33.3%	37.5%		8.3%		100.0%
North Central/ Peace River	31.3%	41.7%	20.8%	2.1%	2.1%	2.1%	100.0%
Fraser Valley	41.7%	43.8%	13.9%			0.7%	100.0%
Metro Vancouver area & West	32.3%	44.3%	21.5%	.6%		1.3%	100.0%
Vanc. Island North	20.0%	54.3%	22.9%			2.9%	100.0%
Vanc. Island South	33.3%	49.1%	15.8%	1.8%			100.0%
All zones	33.1%	45.4%	18.5%	.8%	.8%	1.3%	100.0%

Total responses excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses.

Speech and language-development services

Teachers in Okanagan (9.5%) and Fraser Valley (9.1%) were the least likely, and teachers in the North Central/Peace River (16.7%) and the Kootenay (16.7%) were the most likely, to indicate “None” of the students in their class(es) were in need of assessment and care for speech and language development. Teachers in Vancouver Island North (53.9%), North Coast (47.8%) and Vancouver Island South (47.5%) were most likely to indicate “Some” of the students in their class(es) are in need of assessment and/or care for speech and language development, while teachers in Kootenay (30%) are the least likely to do so.

Percentage of teachers indicating how many students in their class(es) are in need of speech and language services (n=638) – Differences by zone in which school is located

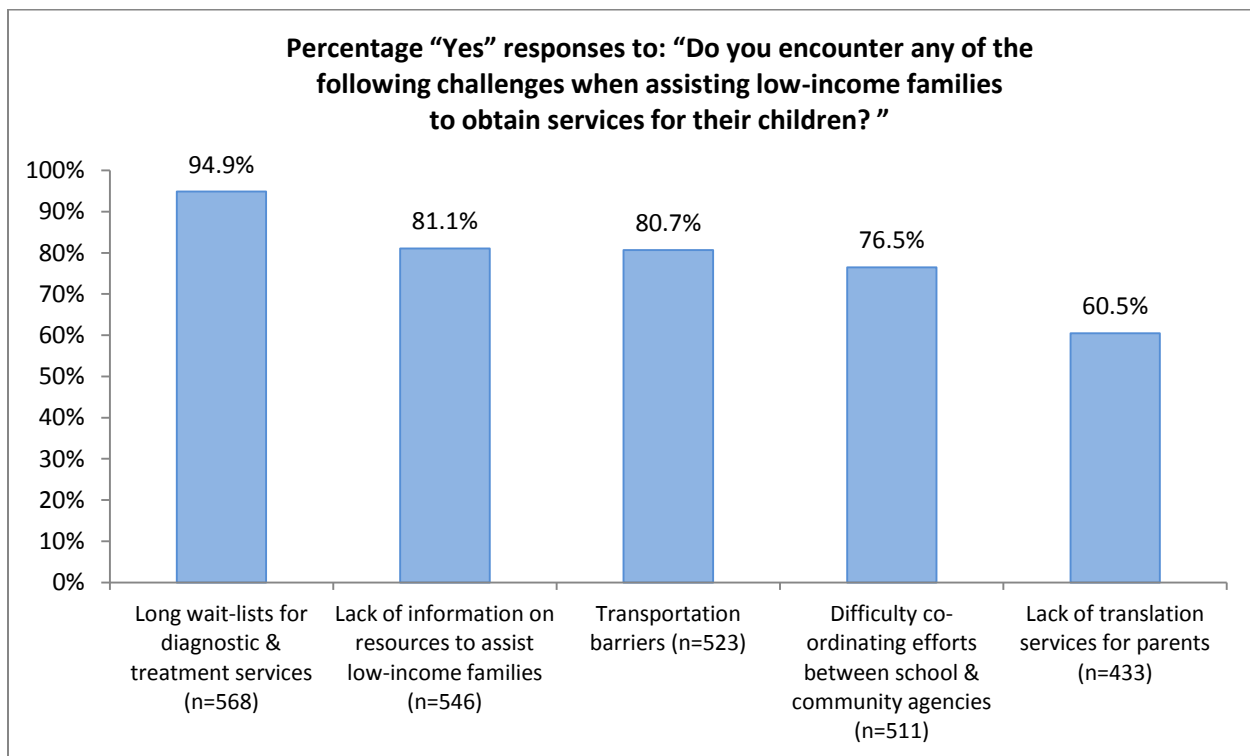
	None	A few	Some	Most	All	Do not know	Total
Kootenay	16.7%	46.7%	30.0%	3.3%		3.3%	100.0%
Okanagan	9.5%	48.6%	36.5%	1.4%	2.7%	1.4%	100.0%
North Coast	13.0%	30.4%	47.8%	8.7%			100.0%
North Central/ Peace River	16.7%	35.2%	40.7%	5.6%		1.9%	100.0%
Fraser Valley	9.1%	51.3%	35.1%	3.2%	0.6%	0.6%	100.0%
Metro Vancouver area & West	15.1%	43.4%	36.7%	3.0%	0.6%	1.2%	100.0%
Vancouver Island North	10.5%	30.3%	53.9%	1.3%	2.6%	1.3%	100.0%
Vancouver Island South	11.5%	37.7%	47.5%	3.3%			100.0%
All zones	12.2%	42.8%	39.8%	3.1%	0.9%	1.1%	100.0%

Total responses excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses

Challenges teachers encounter when assisting low-income families to obtain health and community services for their children

One objective of the survey was to assess whether there are barriers that make it difficult for low-income families to access health and community services. The survey asked teachers “Do you encounter any of the following challenges when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children?” The challenges listed included “Lack of information on resources available to assist low-income families”, “Long wait-lists for diagnostic and treatment services”, “Transportation barriers families encounter re: travelling to and from appointments”, “Lack of translation services for parents”, and “Difficulty co-ordinating efforts between the school and community agencies”. Respondents were given the option of choosing “Does not apply” if the question did not apply to their teaching situation. The percentages reported in the tables and charts in this section are based on the number of teachers for whom the situation applied.

The survey data indicate that most teachers encounter multiple challenges when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. Almost all of the teachers (for whom it applied to their teaching situation) selected “Long wait-lists for diagnostic and treatment services” (94.9%) as a challenge, and eight in ten respondents indicated that “Lack of information on resources available to assist low-income families” (81.1%), and “Transportation barriers families encounter re: travelling to and from appointments” (80.7%), are a challenge when assisting low-income parents to obtain services for their children. Other barriers included “Difficulty co-ordinating efforts between the school and community agencies” (76.5%), and “Lack of translation services for parents” (60.5%).



Total responses for each type of barrier excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses.

Challenges accessing health and community services—Socio-economic context

The following table shows, for each socio-economic context of the school, the proportion of teachers who indicated they encountered the barrier when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. Over 90% of teachers in each of the socio-economic categories indicated “Long wait-lists for diagnostic and treatment services” was a challenge when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. This suggests a systemic problem in the public education system with the delivery of diagnostic and treatment services for school-aged children.

For four of the five barriers listed, a higher proportion of teachers in low-income schools indicated they encountered this as a challenge than teachers in middle-, high- or mixed-income schools. This suggests that schools with the greatest need for services also face the greatest barriers to obtaining those services for low-income families. Teachers in middle-income schools were the most likely to indicate a “lack of information on resources available to assist low-income families” was a challenge (85.7% vs. 81.1% of the sample).

There is a considerable gap between the proportion of teachers in low-income schools and teachers in high-income schools who encounter challenges such as “Lack of information on resources available to assist low-income families” (82.4% in low-income schools vs. 68.8% in high-income schools), “Transportation barriers families encounter re: travelling to and from appointments” (92.5% in low income schools vs. 50% in high-income schools), “Difficulty coordinating efforts between school and community agencies” (80.5% in low-income schools vs. 64.3% in high-income schools), and “Lack of translation services for parents” (67.3% in low-income schools vs. 40% in high-income schools). This suggests that teachers in low-income schools will spend more of their time, and could benefit most from additional resources at the school, to assist low-income families to obtain services for their children. Much remains to be learned about the extent to which these barriers prevent low-income students from accessing the services they need, and what the consequences are for their health and educational outcomes when they are unable to access much-needed services.

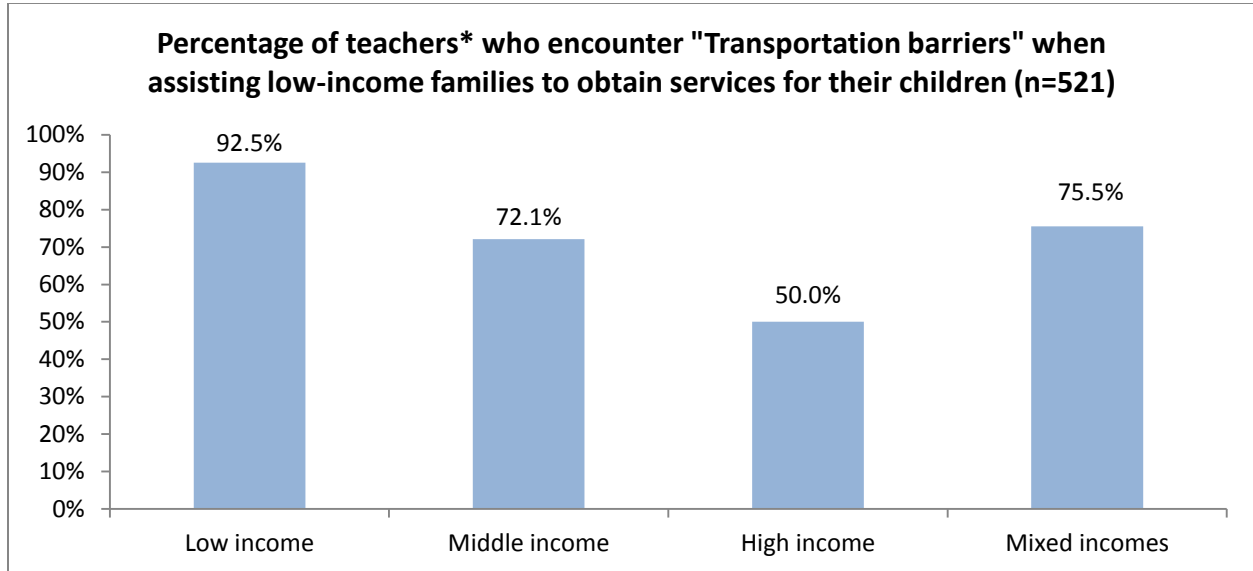
Percentage “Yes” responses to: Do you encounter any of the following challenges when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children? – Differences by Socio-economic context of the school

Type of barrier	Low income	Middle income	High income	Mixed incomes	All income groups
Lack of information on resources (n=544)	82.4%	85.7%	68.8%	79.4%	81.1%
Long wait-lists for diagnostic & treatment services (n=565)	95.7%	91.4%	94.7%	95.1%	94.9%
Transportation barriers (n=521)	92.5%	72.1%	50.0%	75.5%	80.8%
Lack of translation services (n=430)	67.3%	63.5%	40.0%	55.7%	60.5%
Difficulty coordinating efforts between school & community agencies (n=509)	80.5%	68.3%	64.3%	75.9%	76.4%

Total responses for each type of barrier excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses

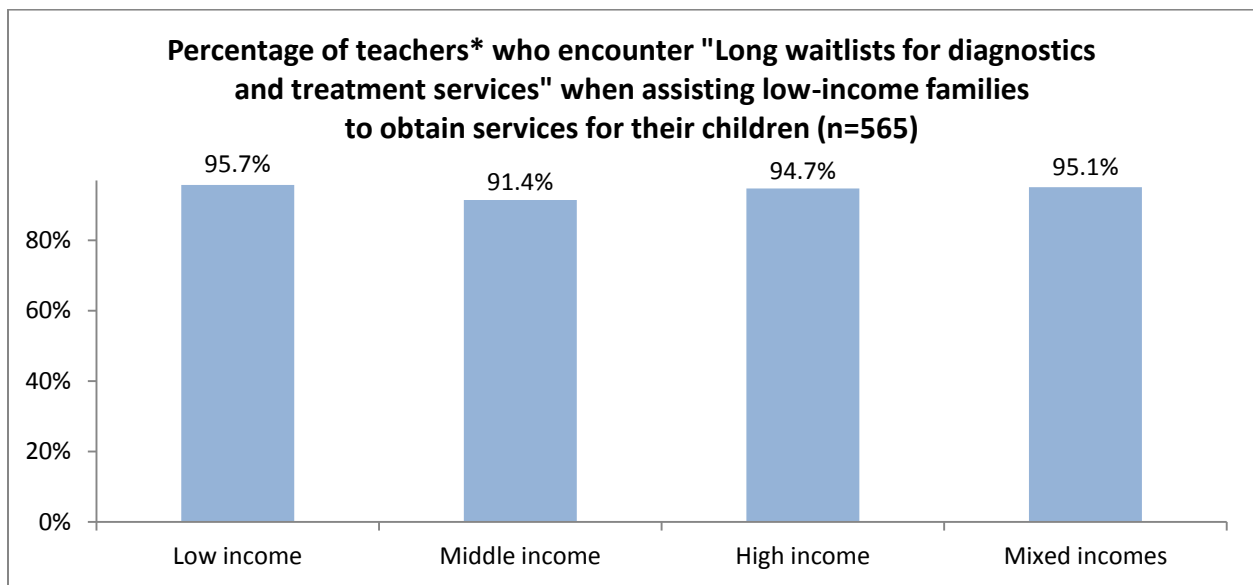
Transportation barriers

The following chart shows a significant difference in the percentage of teachers in low-income schools (92.5%) and the percentage of teachers in high-income schools (50%) who encounter transportation barriers when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children.



Long wait lists for diagnostic and treatment services

The next chart shows that teachers in all schools, independent of the socio-economic context of the school, encounter “Long waitlists for diagnostics and treatment services” when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. This suggests a province-wide shortage of diagnostic and treatment services that are essential for students to overcome learning gaps.



* Total responses for each type of barrier excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses

Challenges accessing health and community services—Regional zone

Some barriers vary by geographic region, with lack of translation for parents being a greater challenge for teachers in urban and suburban areas, and transportation barriers re: travelling to and from appointment a greater challenge in the northern regions of BC. Almost all teachers indicated “Long wait-lists for diagnostic and treatment services” as a challenge when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. This was consistent across all zones.

About eight in ten teachers (81.1%) indicated “Lack of information on resources available to assist low-income families” as a challenge when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children, with teachers in the North Coast (89.5%) and the Fraser Valley (87.1%) being the most likely to indicate this was a challenge, and teachers in Kootenay (69.2%) being the least likely to indicate this as a challenge. “Transportation barriers families encounter re: travelling to and from appointments” was most likely to be a challenge for teachers in North Coast (85%) and North Central/Peace River (88.1%), compared to 80.8% for all zones. Three-quarters of teachers indicated “Difficulty co-ordinating efforts between school and community agencies” was a challenge they encountered when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children, with a slightly higher proportion of teachers in North Coast (80%), Fraser Valley (81.7%), and Metro Vancouver area and West (82%) doing so. Teachers in Kootenay (60%) were considerably less likely to indicate “Difficulty coordinating efforts between school and community agencies” as a challenge compared to all zones (76.5%).

A higher proportion of teachers indicated “Lack of translation services for parents” as a challenge when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children in Metro Vancouver area and West (75.4%) and Fraser Valley (69.2%), than all zones (60.6%). The data indicated that “Lack of translation services for parents” was least likely to be a challenge for teachers in Kootenay (15.4%), Okanagan (38.6%), and North Central/Peace River (37.5%).

Percentage “Yes” responses to: Do you encounter any of the following challenges when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children? – By zone in which the school is located

	Kootenay	Okanagan	North Coast	North Central/Peace River	Fraser Valley	Metro Vancouver area & West	Vancouver Island North	Vancouver Island South	All zones
Lack of information on resources (n=546)	69.2%	81.8%	89.5%	77.3%	87.1%	77.8%	81.4%	79.6%	81.1%
Long wait-lists for diagnostic & treatment services (n=567)	85.7%	92.2%	94.7%	93.3%	96.9%	95.7%	96.3%	95.1%	94.9%
Transportation barriers (n=522)	76.9%	82.8%	85.0%	88.1%	80.5%	81.6%	81.9%	70.9%	80.8%
Lack of translation services (n=432)	15.4%	38.6%	50.0%	37.5%	69.2%	75.4%	53.7%	51.4%	60.6%
Difficulty co-ordinating efforts between school & community agencies (n=511)	60.0%	68.3%	80.0%	79.5%	81.7%	82.0%	73.5%	70.4%	76.5%

Total responses for each type of barrier excludes missing values and “Does not apply” responses

Chapter 8: Summary and discussion

Unmet needs of students attending BC public schools for vision, hearing and speech/language development

In summary, the survey results reveal that there are students in classrooms across BC in need for assessment and care for vision, hearing, and/or speech/language development. Without access to these services, these students will face significant learning challenges in school, depriving them of their potential to achieve the same level of academic success as their peers.

This analysis suggests that schools in low-income areas have the greatest number of students in need of assessment and/or care for vision, hearing, and/or speech/language development. While somewhat less so than for low-income schools, the data also suggests there is a significant need in middle- and mixed-income schools, especially for vision and speech/language development services. The analysis also suggests that the need is greater in the North Coast (vision, hearing, and speech/language development), Vancouver Island North (vision and speech/language development), and Kootenay (vision). These zones are mostly in rural/remote areas of the province, likely with fewer health services available, and greater challenges for families having to travel longer distances to attend appointments for assessment and/or care.

Barriers teachers encounter to assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children

The survey results show that teachers across the province encounter multiple challenges when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children, with at least three-quarters of teachers (for whom it applied) indicating four of the five barriers listed as a challenge. Some barriers vary by geographic region, with lack of translation for parents being a greater challenge for teachers in urban and suburban areas, and transportation barriers re: travelling to and from appointments a greater challenge in the northern regions of BC. Almost all teachers indicated “Long wait-lists for diagnostic and treatment services” as a challenge when assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. This was consistent across all zones and all socio-economic categories (whether school is located in a low-, middle-, mixed-, or high-income area). This suggests a systemic problem in the public education system with the delivery of diagnostic and treatment services for school-aged children across BC.

These survey results suggest that schools in the greatest need have fewer resources and face greater barriers to assisting low-income families to obtain services for their children. Teachers in low-income schools were much more likely than teachers in high-income schools to encounter barriers related to accessing information on resources to assist low-income families, transportation for families who need to travel to and from appointments, lack of translation services for parents, and difficulty co-ordinating efforts between school and community agencies. This makes it less likely that low-income students attending schools in low-income areas (compared to schools in high-income areas) will have access to the services they need to address health issues and obtain the extra support needed to address learning gaps.