CHAPTER 9:

What is needed to support students and families experiencing poverty, and teachers’ recommendations for what needs to change

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 districts\(^1\). 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.

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

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\(^1\) 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](http://www.bctf.ca/PovertyResearch.aspx).
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Introduction and summary

Over the past decade, BC has experienced persistently-high child poverty rates. The 2014 Child Poverty Report Card\(^2\) shows that child poverty worsened after the 2008 global recession, with only marginal improvements since 2010 (using the after-tax Low Income Measure). In 2012, child poverty rates remained unacceptably high, with one in five (20.6%), or 169,420, BC children aged 0–17 living in poverty. This means tens of thousands of children who attend BC public schools are experiencing the effects of poverty, and in some areas almost half of the children are in families with poverty-level incomes.

This provincial survey of teachers in BC public schools about poverty and education issues provides evidence that resources are inadequate to meet the needs of students in need of extra learning support. The survey results suggest that most teachers have some students in their class whom they would consider as “grey area” students in need of extra support to address learning gaps, with many teachers indicating having several “grey area” students. Of the 697 teachers who responded to the question, 44.2% consider that at least one-quarter of the students they currently teach are “grey area” students in need of extra learning support and have not been assessed.

When asked to indicate the level of need for specialist teachers at the school (if it applied to their teaching situation), 64.8% indicated a “high need” for specialist teachers at their school to address learning gaps, 60.5% a “high need” for counselling services for students and families, and 43.6% a “high need” for school library and literacy programs at their school to support students who are experiencing poverty. The need for additional professional staffing resources and for programs to support and strengthen the school community were rated the highest by teachers in schools located in low-income neighbourhoods, and rated the lowest by teachers for schools located in high-income neighbourhoods. This suggests that the current resources provided by government to support students vulnerable to poverty are not sufficient and that professional staffing resources in schools located in affluent neighbourhoods are more adequate to address the learning needs of their students.

When asked about priority areas to focus on in advocating for the needs of students who are experiencing poverty, over half of respondents chose Extra teaching support to address learning gaps related to poverty (56.5%) and Increased provincial funding for programs that support students in poverty (55.2%), as either a first priority or second priority area. When asked about recommendations for the provincial government, teachers recommended that the province make improvements to classroom conditions so teachers can address diverse learning needs (staffing ratios, class size), and provide more specialist teachers for students in need of extra learning support, early-intervention literacy programs, psychologists and counsellors to provide emotional support to students and families, and speech language pathologists to assess and support students.

What is most needed to support students and families?

The survey asked teachers to indicate the level of need in their school for a range of staffing and other resources to support students who are experiencing poverty—‘‘For each of the following, do you consider there to be no need, a low need, moderate need, or high need, for additional resources at your school to support students who are experiencing poverty?’’

Professional staffing resources

Of those teachers for whom the resource applied to their teaching situation, 64.8% indicated a “High need” for Specialist teachers to address learning gaps, 60.5% a “High need” for Counselling services for students and families, 43.6% a “High need” for School library and literacy programs, and 35.4% a “High need” for a School nurse, to address health-related needs of students. A comparison by socio-economic context of the school shows that the need for all four types of professional staffing resources is rated the highest by teachers in schools located in low-income neighbourhoods, and rated the lowest by teachers at schools located in high-income neighbourhoods.
Unmet needs for professional staffing resources, by zone and socio-economic context of the school

The following tables show, on average, how the need for additional resources to support students who are experiencing poverty varies by socio-economic context of the school and regional zone, for each type of staffing resource.

By socio-economic context of the school

A comparison by socio-economic context of the school shows that the need for all four types of professional staffing resources is rated the highest by teachers in schools located in low-income neighbourhoods, and rated the lowest by teachers for schools located in high-income neighbourhoods. The data also suggests there is a moderate to high need for Specialist teachers to address learning gaps and Counselling services for students and families in middle income and mixed incomes schools.

Need for additional resources at your school for professional staffing resources to support students who are experiencing poverty (where 1=a low need, 2=low need, 3=moderate need and 4=high need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic context of the school</th>
<th>Specialist teachers to address learning gaps (n=698)</th>
<th>School library and literacy programs (n=701)</th>
<th>Counselling services for students and families (n=700)</th>
<th>School nurse, to address health-related needs of students (n=695)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low income</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.42</td>
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<td>3.26</td>
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<tr>
<td>middle income</td>
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<td>2.87</td>
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<tr>
<td>high income</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.53</td>
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<td>2.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>mixed incomes</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample average</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By zone

There is less variation by regional zone. The need for additional Specialist teachers to address learning gaps, Counselling services for students and families and School library and literacy programs is rated in the moderate to high range across all zones. Teachers in Vancouver Island North and Vancouver Island South rate the need for additional School library and literacy programs higher, on average, than the other six zones. Teachers in Metro Vancouver area & West rated, on average, the need for a School nurse, to address health-related needs of students the highest of all zones.

Need for additional resources at your school for professional staffing resources to support students who are experiencing poverty (where 1=a low need, 2=low need, 3=moderate need and 4=high need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Specialist teachers to address learning gaps (n=700)</th>
<th>School library and literacy programs (n=703)</th>
<th>Counselling services for students and families (n=702)</th>
<th>School nurse, to address health-related needs of students (n=697)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanagan</td>
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<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central/Peace River</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>2.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser Valley</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Vancouver area &amp; West</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island North</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island South</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample average</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

See appendix for a list of the school districts (locals) in each zone.
Chapter 9: What is needed to support students and families experiencing poverty, and teachers’ recommendations

Programs and resources to support and strengthen school community

Of those teachers for whom the resource applied to their teaching situation, 42.5% indicated a “High need” for Community services accessible to low-income families, 30.7% a “High need” for Resources to strengthen connections between parents and school, 25.9% a “High need” for Fully-funded meal programs, and 24.9% a “High need” for Staff training to increase awareness about poverty.

A comparison by socio-economic context of the school shows that the need for all four types of programs and resources is rated the highest in schools located in low-income neighbourhoods, and rated the lowest in schools located in high-income neighbourhoods.

Need for additional resources at your school to support students who are experiencing poverty – percent who rated as “High need”

Percentages are based on the number of valid responses (excludes missing values)
Unmet needs for programs and resources to support and strengthen the school community, by zone and socio-economic context of the school

The following tables show, on average, how the need for additional resources to support and strengthen the school community varies by socio-economic context of the school and regional zone, for each type of resource.

**By socio-economic context of the school**

A comparison by socio-economic context of the school shows that the need for additional resources to support and strengthen the school community, for all four types of resources, is rated the highest by teachers in schools in low-income neighbourhoods, and rated the lowest by teachers in schools in high-income neighbourhoods. Teachers in middle income (3.03) and mixed income (3.15) schools rated the need for additional Community services accessible to low-income families (on average) as moderate although not quite as high as the average rating for low-income schools (3.49).

**Need for additional resources at your school to support students who are experiencing poverty:**
(where 1=a low need, 2=low need, 3=moderate need and 4=high need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Socio-economic context of the school</th>
<th>Fully funded meal programs (n=693)</th>
<th>Staff training to increase awareness about poverty (n=700)</th>
<th>Resources to strengthen connections between parents and school (n=698)</th>
<th>Community services accessible to low-income families (n=694)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>low income</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle income</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high income</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mixed incomes</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample average</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.79</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.87</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**By zone**

A comparison of the average level of need for additional programs and resources to support and strengthen the school community shows that teachers in the North Coast rate the need as moderate or higher, for all four types of resources. Teachers in North Coast and Vancouver Island North rated the need for Fully funded school meal programs the highest. While all teachers rated the need for Community services accessible to low-income families as moderate or higher, teachers in rural and remote areas rated the need higher than teachers in Fraser Valley and Metro Vancouver area.

**Need for additional resources at your school to support students who are experiencing poverty:**
(where 1=a low need, 2=low need, 3=moderate need and 4=high need)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Fully funded meal programs (n=695)</th>
<th>Staff training to increase awareness about poverty (n=702)</th>
<th>Resources to strengthen connections between parents and school (n=700)</th>
<th>Community services accessible to low-income families (n=695)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kootenay</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>3.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okanagan</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Coast</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central/Peace River</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser Valley</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Vancouver area &amp; West</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island North</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver Island South</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample average</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.79</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.87</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.97</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.22</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9: What is needed to support students and families experiencing poverty, and teachers’ recommendations

Priority areas for the BCTF to focus on in advocating for the needs of students who are experiencing poverty

The survey asked teachers to rank the following five areas of focus, from highest (1) to lowest (5), with regard to how important they consider each as a priority area for the BCTF to focus on in advocating for the needs of students who are experiencing poverty.

Of the five areas of focus listed, the percentage of teachers who chose the area as either a first priority or second priority is as follows: Extra teaching support to address learning gaps related to poverty (56.5%), followed by Increased provincial funding for programs that support students in poverty (55.2%), A poverty reduction plan to address factors contributing to family poverty (36.5%), Elimination of school fees and adequate funding so all students can participate fully at school (30.4%), and Expanded PD on poverty and education issues (13.7%).

![Percentage of sample who ranked area of focus as a first or second priority - combined percentages (n=778)](chart)
Teachers’ recommendations for the provincial government

The survey asked teachers if they had recommendations for what the provincial government could do to improve learning conditions and address poverty-related barriers for students. About one-third of respondents made recommendations, which can be grouped in four thematic areas:

1. **Provide extra resources to address learning gaps**
   Many teachers expressed concern about the inadequacy of resources to address learning gaps of “grey area” students, many of whom are experiencing poverty. Teachers described the types of resources needed as: provide extra staffing resources such as specialist teachers for students in need of extra learning support, psychologists and counsellors to provide emotional support to students and families, speech language pathologists, early-intervention literacy programs, and educational assistants. Some teachers specifically recommended the government focus on improving classroom conditions so teachers can address diverse learning needs (staffing ratios, class size).

2. **Improve education funding to address poverty-related barriers**
   Several teachers recommended the government fully fund public education. Some teachers commented that cutting educational programs and services negatively impacts on students in need of extra learning support, many of whom live in poverty. Many comments indicated a need for improved funding for schools with students vulnerable to poverty but which do not receive extra funds to support these students, such as “inner city schools project funding”. Some teachers recommended the provincial government address funding inequities that arise between schools due to differing capacities to fund-raise. Other recommendations made by teachers to government about funding include providing fully-funded meals programs, improving funding for counsellors to assist families to overcome poverty-related barriers, and eliminating school fees.

3. **Address underlying causes of poverty**
   Some teachers recommended the government address underlying causes of poverty by implementing poverty reduction strategies. Teachers’ suggestions for policies for reducing family poverty include: raise the minimum wage, implement a living wage, raise social assistance and disability rates, improve training and jobs in remote areas, and provide access to affordable, quality childcare, including out-of-school care. Teachers also recommended that the government address the shortage of affordable housing, and improve access to health services in rural areas.

4. **Increase government awareness and understanding of poverty and education issues**
   Some teachers recommended that government increase their awareness and understanding of poverty and education issues by listening to teachers’ ideas about what is needed to address poverty-related barriers, visiting schools in low-income neighbourhoods to learn about the challenges experienced by families and schools, increasing awareness of the poor housing conditions for families in low-income areas, and visiting rural schools to better understand the unique issues of these schools.

5. **Other recommendations**
   Other recommendations by teachers include: address hunger and nutritional needs, improve mental health services and community programs for students and families, co-ordinate efforts between schools and social agencies, and improve access to technology for low-income students.
Thematic area 1: Provide extra resources to address learning gaps

Many teachers expressed concern about the inadequacy of resources to address learning gaps of “grey area” students, many of whom are experiencing poverty. Teachers described the types of resources needed as: provide extra staffing resources such as specialist teachers for students in need of extra learning support, psychologists and counsellors to provide emotional support to students and families, speech language pathologists, early-intervention literacy programs, and educational assistants. Some teachers recommended the government focus on improving classroom conditions so teachers can address diverse learning needs (staffing ratios, class size).

Teachers’ comments organized by topic within this theme

The need for, and benefits of, providing additional resources to address learning gaps

- Improve funding, especially for grey area children who could thrive, achieve their potential and be successful, productive adults if they received the extra support they needed as soon as and for as long as they need it. Government would save billions in health care, welfare, etc. in they helped give these kids what they need as youngsters. (Fraser Valley)
- When a student lives in poverty, has a learning challenge/disability, and disengaged parent(s), they need the weight of each of those conditions lifted in order to find success. The provincial government needs to provide support in all the areas that burden a student. If a student can enter the classroom free of those burdens then she and the teacher can get down to business. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- There are significant learning gaps with these children, often due to poor attendance over the years, lack of good food and exercise, and inability of parents to support their learning. We need intensive intervention with these grey area kids, who have the potential to meet grade level, but are behind when they start middle school. Undesignated they fall between the cracks. Last year we got some First Nation support and this one on one with one of my students, once or twice each week, made a huge difference. (Vancouver Island South)
- More learning support to help early elementary students bridge the gap between low- and average-income students (language & math skills). (Vancouver Island South)

More-timely assessment for all students in need of extra learning support

- Put more money into school psychologists to reduce wait-times for assessments. (Okanagan)
- Provide more support to the learning [of] needy students, i.e., school psychologists and post testing support in the classroom. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- The biggest and best way to help is providing well trained staff and enough to actually meet the needs of the school population. Elimination of need for so much documentation in order to get a little tiny bit of support, usually not enough to make a real difference and quicker assessment. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Revamp designation criteria so that those students who need support receive it. The system seems to reduce the ability for our students to get the extra support they need as the “requirements for designation” have been revised. (Vancouver Island North)
- More assessments for grey area students...I understand that each school is allowed 2 psych assessments per school per year. In a high-risk school there should not be [a] cap if a student is exhibiting difficulties that would be considered extraordinary in an upper class school. In each classroom at least 50% or more of the students are affected by poverty. A huge factor and result of poverty is the regular occurrences of students experiencing trauma. As we all
know, trauma affects brain functioning and can deem children at risk for being a “grey” area student. Full-time school counseling and proper assessments will lead to better support [for] students at risk and who may be living in poverty. (Vancouver Island South)

**More professional specialist teachers to address learning difficulties**

- Hire more special needs and LRT [learning resource] teachers, librarians, counselors, and speech therapists. (Okanagan)
- Increased counselling time at elementary schools. (Okanagan)
- Increase the funding to schools for Special [Education] teachers, libraries, and resources (counsellors, one for 4 or 5 schools is ridiculous) so we can all address the needs of students. (Okanagan)
- Improve/replace funding for specialist teachers, learning assistance and assessments. (Put) back teachers who work with students living in poverty by supporting their personalized knowledge of these students and their needs. STOP marginalizing students living in poverty by taking away basic services like learning specialist teachers or not providing supports like adequate breakfast programs. (North Coast)
- Provide learning supports for all students who require it. Increase access to counselling for students and families. (North Central/Peace River)
- Provide more specialists for remote schools, put back programs that have been removed due to lack of funding such as libraries, music, art... (North Central/Peace River)

**Fraser Valley**

- Some kind of “social worker” tied to the school. We have a childcare worker but her scope is limited. (Fraser Valley)
- Need for specialist teachers and EA [educational assistant] support. (Fraser Valley)
- We are in desperate need [of] more support teachers, learning assistants, counselors, and other specialists. I cannot wear all these hats at once and possibly address the needs of all my students! (Fraser Valley)
- Provide counselling, psychological and testing resources right away to schools. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase school funding in order to ensure adequate learning support teachers, librarians, and counsellors. (Fraser Valley)
- Provide schools with proper staffing and resources so we can help those students who are in need. (Fraser Valley)
- Need for specialist teachers and EA support. (Fraser Valley)
- More counsellor hours, more speech hours, more testing by psych-ed, and some hours with an occupational therapist. (Fraser Valley)
- More money to help pay for learning assistance, speech therapy, and people to help with children having behaviour issues.

**Metro Vancouver area & West**

- Provide enough teachers—not more support workers—teachers to teach kids how to learn—all kids—especially ones with learning difficulties. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- If you don’t leave elementary school knowing how to read, write, be numerate and be socially/emotionally balanced then the cycle of poverty continues AND a new one is created if poverty was not an issue to start with. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Provide FULL TIME support staff (counselors, Youth and Family workers, Aboriginal support, librarians, resource teachers) to support families (if support staff are only part time, families have a more challenging time trying to track down the person they are trying to get
help from, and staff obviously have a fuller case load the more schools they need to be at). (Metro Vancouver area & West)

- Continue the Alternate Program! Don’t discontinue the support program! (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Adequately fund early intervention programs and mental health supports for families (the current waitlist for one of my students who is in crisis at this moment is at six months—that is not right...). (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- More Specialist / Resource teachers to address the learning needs of students who are living in poverty. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Provide more support teachers. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- More resource teachers and educational assistants. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Hire more special education teachers and counsellors; hire more EAs [educational assistants]—anything that increases the ratio of caring adult:student! (Vancouver Island North)
- ...Counsellor for every school. More support for special needs. Shorter wait lists for help and evaluation of special needs. Less paperwork and more hands-on help. (Vancouver Island North)
- At school: way more learning assistance teachers, more counselling time. (Vancouver Island South)

Address class size and composition issues

- Teachers need more prep time to create and adapt [lesson plans] to assist our at-risk students. We also need realistic classroom compositions so we’re not too burned out to help anymore. (Okanagan)
- Increase the help needed in school to educate all students (more support to classrooms) (Okanagan)
- Smaller class sizes (Fraser Valley)
- Reducing class size and/or putting in additional Early Literacy Teachers. (Fraser Valley)
- Reinstate meaningful class composition, class size, and non-enrolling teacher service levels clauses similar to those stripped from our collective agreement a decade ago. (Fraser Valley)
- Decrease class size; decrease number of designated students in each class; consider the unique needs and composition of a school, not just relying on a numerical formula for determining levels of student services teachers. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Address class size and composition issues. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Lower class size numbers. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Reduce teacher:student ratio and class size. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Make class size and composition a priority. (Vancouver Island North)
- Full staffing to provide low student-to-teacher ratios. (Vancouver Island North),
- Smaller class sizes and fewer students with learning challenges in each classroom, not necessarily based solely on “ministry designations”, but also very challenging students that do not fit the current requirements for extra funding. (Vancouver Island North)
- Better funded schools, smaller class sizes, more support in the classroom (e.g., EA time and support), etc., etc. (Vancouver Island South)
- Smaller class sizes in inner city schools. (Vancouver Island South)
School library and literacy resources
- Better school libraries and classroom resources that students, who do not have exposure at home, can have access to. (Fraser Valley)
- Have all schools’ libraries staffed by a full time librarian. Students who live in poverty often come to school with limited background knowledge, little school readiness skills, little exposure to literacy. It is critical to have school libraries open all day five days a week. (Fraser Valley)
- Specialized programs for students who fail to acquire adequate literacy skills by the end of the primary years. (Fraser Valley)
- School should be a level playing field for all children. More intensive learning support is needed. If we don’t help children when they are young their problems just multiply. (Vancouver Island North)

Early intervention and literacy programs
- Early literacy and a good education help struggling families to help themselves. Statistically, post-secondary education leads to better jobs and gets families out of poverty. If we can’t provide them with the basics early on, the likelihood they will continue to educate themselves decreases drastically. (North Central/Peace River)
- Increase funding for outreach programs to new parents. Example, the community health nurse home visit (that was cut). This program should be expanded to include follow-up phone calls with invitations to strong starts and library groups. Kids living in poverty start school at a disadvantage. With current teacher-student ratios and cuts to special ed services, it is near impossible to close the gap between the low-income and middle/high income kids. (Fraser Valley)
- Reduce the gap in literacy achievement proactively—as most children who struggle with poverty haven’t had enriching preschool experiences in literacy—their families’ focus has been on survival rather than literacy. (Fraser Valley)
- Provide free or low cost early childhood education as well with a mandated curriculum so that all our kids come to school with a grounding in preschool skills and a greater ability to self regulate. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Increase funding for early literacy programs. (Metro Vancouver area & West)

Education assistants to assist with students in need of extra support
- MORE SUPPORT STAFF FOR EACH SCHOOL!!!... (North Central/Peace River)
- A TA [teaching assistant] in every classroom to help those kids who are struggling due to poverty. We all know that kids who aren’t getting good nutrition, good sleep and have an unstable family life often struggle at school. These kids do not qualify for TAs because they have no diagnosis, but they are a huge drain on teacher time because they often lack academic support at home as well. Each class should have a TA to support these learners!!!! (Fraser Valley)
- Additional EAs [educational assistants] can help lessen the learning gaps... (Metro Vancouver area & West)
Community support part of the solution

- Focus on strengthening/funding neighbourhood schools and making more community connections. (Fraser Valley)
- I really think there needs to be more direct support for families. Community programs after school that also liaise with the family. Kids need to learn all kinds of important skills they don’t get sitting at home with no English or stimulation other than electronics. The kids that I teach (Spec. Ed program gr. 8) just don’t seem ready to learn the academics. That’s what I teach so I’m frustrated. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- ...If there were a way to teach the academic classes in the morning and do experiential, discovery, hands on in the afternoon, it might help. Ultimately, unless a kid has eaten well, had a good rest, and exercised enough, s/he won’t be ready to focus on reading, writing and arithmetic. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Increase staffing so we can put more resources into building bridges between home and school with home visits and help with paperwork to apply to services; more resource staff to handle the extreme and urgent emotional/educational stress associated with students living in poverty. (Metro Vancouver area & West)

Additional comments by teachers about what is needed to address learning gaps

- It is difficult to determine what programs and funds are needed to adequately support students so that they may succeed both socially, physically and academically in this time of fiscal restraint. I think this needs to be determined. (Fraser Valley)
- Without adequate support it is not possible to teach meaningfully. The classroom teacher cannot cover all the bases. We try but one person cannot do the job of so many. I think we need to consider specialized classes and schools where students can receive trained support that they deserve and require. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- It’s my experience that students and their families tend to be ashamed of their poverty, or don’t think of themselves as impoverished... I think the psychology of poverty needs to be interpreted for teachers and support staff. I don’t think we always recognize it. The education of the impoverished student must convey the possibility of positive change. Too many students seem to ‘go through the motions’ of education in the public school system without believing that their efforts in their education can change their circumstance. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Look to what Finland did for its students. All meals are provided; students receive counseling and timely interventions to become successful. Successful students are productive adults. (Vancouver Island North)
- We need to start retaining students who come into school with significant learning gaps and speech issues. These students often cannot socialize with their peers and would benefit from two years in Grade 1. (Vancouver Island North)

Policies to address low school attendance

- There should be a law in BC governing attendance at school. (Kootenay)
- Bring back the truancy act, so that families are accountable for getting their children to school. Too many children are home all day playing video games, it is so sad. There is a huge increase in school refusal. (Okanagan)
- Enforce school attendance. (North Coast)
Thematic area 2: Improve education funding to address poverty-related barriers

Several teachers recommended the government fully fund public education. Some teachers commented that cutting educational programs and services negatively impacts on students in need of extra learning support, many of whom live in poverty. Many comments indicated a need for improved funding for schools with students vulnerable to poverty but which do not receive extra funds to support these students, such as “inner city schools project funding”. Some teachers recommended the provincial government address funding inequities that arise between schools due to differing capacities to fund-raise. Other recommendations made by teachers to government about funding include to provide fully-funded meals programs, improve funding for counsellors to assist families to overcome poverty-related barriers, and eliminate school fees.

Teachers’ comments organized by topic within this theme

Increase funding for school meal programs
- Funding for classroom support and meal program. (Okanagan)
- Fully fund a breakfast program for every school. (Okanagan)
- More money should be given to help pay for breakfast programs and/or lunch programs (Fraser Valley)
- More funding for counselling and in-school food programs. (Fraser Valley)
- Provide schools with some funding for breakfast programs or meal programs. (Fraser Valley)
- It’s very hard to learn on an empty stomach! (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Need food to learn—kids should not be hungry. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- A good meal at breakfast and at lunch for ALL students at schools that are vulnerable. This means less stigma attached to the kids who do need it and nutrition for all types of students. Having money does not mean eating well, nor does it mean parents are packing healthy food. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Fully funded healthy school meals! Even in wealthy areas children don’t eat well; it would benefit all children and our future generation. B-universal meal programs. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Offer basic food programs in all schools as staff may not be aware of hunger issues (they may not be obvious). (North Central/Peace River)
- Breakfast programs as well as lunch programs. (Vancouver Island South)
- Funded school meals plans in all schools. (Vancouver Island South)

Suggestions for involving community in addressing food insecurity
- Have community garden programs at all schools. Have community gardeners come in and teach students how to grow own vegetables and fruits and how to cook with them. Encourage schools to partner with community businesses…Food support and involvement (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- More education for families on living on a budget, how to eat nutritionally. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Poverty is a community issue; it is unacceptable that in a country that is as wealthy as ours that any student would go with adequate housing and nutrition. I do not know how we can address this, but do acknowledge the important role of schools in providing food and resources to families. (Vancouver Island North)
Increase funding for improved staffing resources to support students

- Return funding to previous levels so that teachers can do their job...teaching students. Non-enrolling teachers have to be able to do their jobs and not be forced to pick up extra duties to fill out their FTE. (Okanagan)
- Get people and resources back into (the) classroom. (North Coast)
- Teaching is labour intensive...the government needs to properly fund the system so that teachers are not so overworked that they cannot meet individual student needs. Adequately funded counselling and library programs will go a long way to addressing many poverty-related barriers our most disadvantaged students face in school. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase funding to education, especially special needs students, teachers, and schools. (Fraser Valley)
- Ongoing Community links, more funding to community for poverty reducing and inclusion. More specialists and quality counselling time. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Commit adequate funding to hire more teachers, and related professionals to work in our schools. Give us the money!!! (Vancouver Island North)
- There needs to be adequate funding for staffing and materials for ALL students, not just the ones who are affected by poverty. The schools, in my opinion are in a state of poverty. (Vancouver Island North)
- Provide adequate funding for human resources in classrooms and schools. (Vancouver Island North)
- Recognize the strain it puts on schools and fund those schools accordingly. Increase support staff at schools with high levels of poverty. Restore funding that has been taken away over the past ten years. (Vancouver Island South)

Provide funding for the resources necessary to learn

- Fund our schools appropriately. Give us money to buy books for primary classes. Provide up to date text books, don’t just rely on the internet! (Kootenay)
- Immediately ensure that, since the 21st C. learning plan involves a lot of technology, every student has a web-enabled laptop available during all school hours, and that each school has regular tech support and excellent/fast internet. (Okanagan)
- More funding for the arts. (Fraser Valley)
- Provide funding for all curriculum-based activities and materials. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Education should be the highest priority for funding. Fully funded meal programs, support for families and children who are struggling, full funding of books, text books and supplies. (Vancouver Island North)
- All supplies for school included and delivered at beginning of year. Increase funding for supplies, field trips, etc. (Vancouver Island South)
- Provide adequate funding for all programs for all students so that those living in poverty get interesting opportunities and not just those [students] whose parents pay for out-of-school assistance or programs. (Vancouver Island South)
- Ensure libraries and technology access to allow equity for Learners (Vancouver Island North)

Funding poverty-related needs at the school

- Adequately fund the education system with a priority to students in poverty and address the issues of all our students. (Kootenay)
- Increased funding and support to schools in low-income neighbourhoods. (Okanagan)
• More support for smaller schools... we have 120 kids, some in great need, and very little support as we just miss qualifying as an inner city school. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Give more inner city funding. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Our school should be recognized as a very vulnerable school on the vulnerability scale, but we are not recognized due to our location... & the government overlooking the school as a statistic as part of Stats Canada (we need to be recognized). (Vancouver Island South)

Adequately fund schools to eliminate dependency on school fees
• As much as possible, reduce “extra” fees for parents for all students. (Kootenay)
• Fund all schools adequately so no school fees are required. (Okanagan)
• Eliminate school fees. (Fraser Valley)
• Adequately fund the system so fees don’t need to be charged to families for basic educational experiences (like fieldtrips & the accompanying TOC costs when a secondary school teacher takes a class on a fieldtrip). (Fraser Valley)
• Remove fees, adequately fund ALL districts (that does not mean EQUAL funding per school—some schools have greater needs). (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• To stop decreasing, and start increasing, the amount of money put into education. This would help in the elimination of school fees and provide a better student/teacher ratio in addressing the needs of student learning. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• I think governments should provide funds for each school that would allow families in poverty to be exempt of those educational costs that they are not able to meet. I think it is also important to keep in mind that these families also need to maintain their pride. It’s important to be able to provide opportunities for them to work/volunteer at the school for their needs. (Metro Vancouver area & West)

Revise funding formula
• Provide funding for support teachers/staff based not on enrolment but on need. For example, we have one counsellor one day/week, but up to half of our students require counselling. (Okanagan)
• Provide funding to ensure remote students get the educational services they need. (North Coast)
• Fund education adequately and not expect school districts to use the one size fits all per pupil funding. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Change the funding formula for rural school districts to one that will better address the issues. (Vancouver Island North)
• Improve public education funding. Especially in rural and remote areas. (Vancouver Island North)

Address inequities between schools arising from school fund-raising
• Funding to individual schools should not merely be based on numbers of students in attendance...it should be based on need... If a school [has sufficient]...smart boards in every classroom, new laptops every 2nd year, and isn’t struggling for textbooks, books, and learning resources (not to mention food), it shouldn’t be receiving the same amount of government funds. Shouldn’t we be feeding the kids first? Aren’t basic needs more important? I’ve been teaching 17 years and have taught in schools at both ends of the spectrum, enough is enough. (Okanagan)
• Recognize that it is a problem in some areas in BC. For example, in (a suburban school district), some areas are very affluent (often because they have strong advocacy to get
sufficient funding) whereas others aren’t and aren’t considered inner city (which means extra funding) but have many of the same needs. (Fraser Valley)

- Abolish school fund-raising and provide equal basic funding across schools. Take into consideration many increased needs and challenges at inner city schools and fund accordingly. (Fraser Valley)

- Increase funding to schools to eliminate fund-raising at the school level. (Metro Vancouver area & West)

- Increased funding to school programs so that the inter-school inequities AND the in-school inequities can be reduced. Reduce dependency on fund-raising for basics. (Vancouver Island South)

**Restore programs and services lost because of funding cuts**

- Funding — funding — funding. More speech language pathologists, EAs [educational assistants], LST [learning specialist] teachers. In our school this year our Early Literacy teacher’s time was CUT from 60% to 50%. She works with K and Grade 1. This year, when she went from 60% to 50%, our Kindergarten numbers increased to 3 classes from 2 classes. She cannot support the needy kids as she did previously. (Fraser Valley)

- Stop cutting and start funding! (Metro Vancouver area & West)

- Stop cutting school programs. Specialist teachers, learning resources. Put the money back into the classrooms directly and stop spending dollars on technology and focus more on the human aspect of education! (Metro Vancouver area & West)

**Shift spending priorities so a greater share goes to classroom needs**

- Eliminate, as much as possible, the high cost of “consultants” to administration, so we can hire more, less expensive support staff to help with provincially neglected mental health issues that have now become a drain on finances in education. (Kootenay)

- Stop using public funds to fund private schools and put those funds into fully funding public schools. (North Central/Peace River)

- Do not just give these issues lip service! Fully fund the system and do not spend money frivolously (i.e. MLAs’ salaries and pensions, BC Place, bridges that are far bigger than necessary... (Fraser Valley)

- Shift funding from major infrastructure projects to education and health. (Metro Vancouver area & West)

- Stop spending money within the bureaucracy and get the funding down to the grass roots where it is needed. Too many managers not enough doers. (Vancouver Island South)

**Address poverty-related of needs of children now to break the cycle of poverty**

- Funding must be increased substantially in order to improve our education system. This will save the government money in the long run by reducing their spending on health, justice, and drug and alcohol abuse programs. (North Central/Peace River)

- Breaking the cycle of poverty is in everyone’s best interest and the government must make this a priority. This can be achieved by providing a well-funded education, in particular to our most vulnerable. (Fraser Valley)

- Education funding needs to be returned to the level it was 12 years ago. It is more economical to support young children than it is to support adults (jail, welfare, health, crime) and it’s the right thing to do. (Vancouver Island North)

- Funding needs to be increased to provide an education to enable students to get out of the cycle of poverty. (Vancouver Island South)
Other recommendations related to funding

- Adequately fund the system so those who are in need don’t have to “beg” for help and those that can afford don’t have to prop up the system to aid those in need. (Kootenay)
- Realize there is a big problem and put money toward your best resource that any country can have. Take care of your children. It takes a village to raise a child. It also takes the government to help the village. (Okanagan)
- Stop being so stingy and disrespectful to education and children. Give us the tools we need to help students. (Okanagan)
- The provincial government should be addressing the above five [priority] areas. We are a resource rich province that should be generating a lot of money and we only have 4.4 million people. Where is all the money going? (North Central/Peace River)
- Set up a royal commission into the state of public education and private education in BC (Fraser Valley)
- Focussed/targeted programs that include a large population of students—not this pilot program business where enrolment is less than a full class and comes and goes. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- RESPECT the teaching profession and FUND it like they do the medical health professionals. We are training the future medical professionals who make heaps more money and access to numerous resources! (Vancouver Island North)
Chapter 9: What is needed to support students and families experiencing poverty, and teachers’ recommendations

Thematic area 3: Address underlying causes of poverty

Some teachers recommended the government address underlying causes of poverty by implementing poverty reduction strategies. Teachers’ suggestions for policies for reducing family poverty include: raise the minimum wage, implement a living wage, raise social assistance and disability rates, improve training and jobs in remote areas, and provide access to affordable, quality childcare, including out-of-school care. Teachers also recommended that the government address the shortage of affordable housing, and improve access to health services in rural areas.

Teachers’ comments organized by topic within this theme

Address underlying causes of poverty

• End poverty! Get a plan to deal with poverty! Get kids and families out of poverty! (Kootenay)
• Get rid of the poverty. (Okanagan)
• That there should be two pronged approach at least. 1) To deal with children now who are in need, hungry, and in inadequate situations. These children need every opportunity to maximize their early education in order to break potential cycles of poverty and improve society moving forward to the next generation. 2) To look at long-term solutions for families in poverty that are not isolated programs. For example, a school counsellor is fine but they are not around outside of school time. Support that is universal and holistic that can help a family over time instead of piecemeal approaches to put band-aids on this or that. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Students need their basic needs for food, shelter, security and attachment before they can learn. Funds allocated to addressing these basic needs are well spent, as they reduce the future dollars that will otherwise be spent on health care, incarceration, and the adult related social safety net. (Vancouver Island North)
• The poverty itself needs to be addressed outside of the classroom so that my students arrive ready to learn. (Vancouver Island North)
• The learning conditions at school are not the issue. The issue is the living conditions of our students. Efforts need to be put into the community....Address mental health issues, addiction issues, and living conditions on Reserves. (Vancouver Island South)

Implement a poverty reduction strategy

• A poverty reduction plan with targets and timelines. (North Coast)
• Implement a poverty reduction plan that has firm targets, timelines, and a minister responsible for its success. (North Central/Peace River)
• Create a poverty reduction plan. (North Central/Peace River)
• Reduce or eliminate the number of children living below the poverty line—recognizing that the actual poverty line is much higher—i.e., the working poor. (Fraser Valley)
• Implement a poverty-reduction plan. (Fraser Valley)
• More funding and plans to reduce poverty. (Fraser Valley)
• Make structural/societal changes in order to support families and protect them from moving into poverty. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Reduce poverty! (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• We need a poverty reduction plan and proper funding for public education. (Vancouver Island North)
• Establish a poverty reduction plan that has clear goals, timelines, measures and strategies. Insure that evaluation of the plan is done in a timely fashion. (Vancouver Island South)

Social and economic policies to reduce poverty

Umbrella of policies
• Stop pandering to businesses that make huge profits on the backs of minimum wage earners. Create regulations for construction workers that allow some kind of pay when weather is bad—which is most of the time in this province. Find ways for cheaper housing without having to wait years on a wait list. Feed the children. Stop homelessness. People really do not want to be on the streets! Stop filling our heads with that kind of propaganda and hire people to help those poor mentally ill souls, medically and mentally—we are in 2012 for goodness sake—surely we can find ways to avoid poverty. (Fraser Valley)
• Raise the rates for social assistance and disability assistance; more support for housing costs; free public transit for all school aged kids; increased subsidy for daycare; junior kindergarten; more financial support for single parents; a social justice type peace corps for youth during summers that pays them well if they are going to go to post-secondary school. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Raise welfare rates. Raise the minimum wage. Increase school funding. Implement meaningful poverty reduction strategies. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Yes. We need more resources and jobs for people, also a better health system. (Vancouver Island North)
• Raise the minimum wage. Expand cooperative housing. Improve transit to rural areas. (Vancouver Island South)
• Put more money towards supporting families: fully funded day care, subsidies for families in need, provide affordable housing, no school fees. (Vancouver Island South)

Living wage and quality job opportunities
• Stop importing foreign workers so that local people get good wage jobs, stop exporting work overseas, actively support the creation of a manufacturing and value-added segment of the economy. (Kootenay)
• Provide programs for parents to increase their education so they can find higher paying jobs. Investment in jobs instead of layoffs. (Okanagan)
• We have a lot of young parents and a very high unemployment rate. In our remote area there are a limited number of courses offered and a high dropout rate. If there were more opportunities for employment and more options for courses that could spark an interest in attendance, as well as more education for youth on substance abuse and pregnancy prevention....There certainly could be some impact here. (North Coast)
• Implement the living wage. (Fraser Valley)
• Improve labour laws to protect jobs and jobs that offer a living wage, increase corporate taxes, establish a levy or tax imposed on corporations for every job that is shipped out of the country/province. (Fraser Valley)
• A living wage and adequate child care would alleviate much of the pressure on the working poor. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Ensure parents are receiving adequate living wages for the jobs they work at. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Living wage for all! (Metro Vancouver area & West)
Chapter 9: What is needed to support students and families experiencing poverty, and teachers’ recommendations

- Provide job opportunities for parents so they can work, as well as skills training programs so they can upgrade. Support apprenticeship programs for high school students so they can learn job skills. Support career preparation programs in high schools so students can learn about different careers. Ensure the Labour and Women’s ministry divisions are doing their job to support the public with real, funded programs to increase BC’s workforce. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Ensure there is an adequate family income for those in need. Many of our students can be considered poor even though their family has an earned income. Wage supplements. (Vancouver Island North)
- Families need a living wage. (Vancouver Island North)
- Create better employment and economic activity! (Vancouver Island South)

Minimum wage
- Poverty begets poverty. It is a difficult cycle to escape and as long as the reality of the working poor exists, there really isn’t such a thing as a “free hand-out”. These families are WORKING but simply not making enough to make ends meet. Minimum wage standards need to reflect the rise in inflation. (Okanagan)
- Increase the minimum wage to a livable wage. (North Central/Peace River)
- Raise minimum wage to a wage that actually will eliminate poverty. No one can live on $10 an hour. (Fraser Valley)
- Raise minimum wage. Support union jobs that can provide benefits and security. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase our below the poverty line minimum wage!!! (Fraser Valley)
- Raise the minimum wage. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase the minimum wage. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase minimum wage; reduce tax amounts on poor; provide jobs and retraining for people who have lost theirs. (Vancouver Island North)

Income assistance
- Increase the minimum wage and help low income families so they can survive above the poverty line. (Okanagan)
- Completely overhaul the welfare system in BC so that families do not simply get an average of $600/month for ALL needs, given that this is not even enough for rent in this province. Families should never have to make a choice to EITHER feed OR house themselves. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase access to/amount of social assistance to families with children. Increase funding to Children and Families so social workers’ caseloads is manageable. (Fraser Valley)
- Welfare Increase. (Fraser Valley)
- Increase income support levels and do not reduce monthly income if a person takes on partial employment. (Fraser Valley)
- Raise welfare rates to support families; increase and expand welfare-to-work programs; higher welfare funding for unemployment due to disability or temporary injury. Hire more Social Workers so that each has a smaller and more manageable caseload and can provide real support. (Fraser Valley)
- Social Service and disability assistance should be raised to $1,200 a month and then indexed. (Fraser Valley)
• Better ensure that families have the financial means to not be in extreme poverty and ensure that this assistance is being used for the children. Also provide support for family before removing children into care. (Fraser Valley)
• Stop cutting social assistance programs. Adequately fund social assistance ministries so that enough people can be hired to meet the needs. (Vancouver Island South)
• Increase welfare rates to an amount you can actually live off. Provide affordable day care to support working parents. (Vancouver Island South)

Cost of living and housing issues
• More affordable housing. (Okanagan)
• Start by providing adequate housing at rates they can afford and then subsidizing adequate groceries. (North Central/Peach River)
• Government needs to provide affordable housing. (Fraser Valley)
• Jobs, housing families can afford. (Vancouver Island South)
• They need to do something about house and food prices...Throwing money at people won’t help as they may misuse it. If things were cheaper at the source then of course poverty would decrease. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Find affordable housing for these families for them to keep money for food. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Focus on affordable housing and more training for adult learners. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• 1) Consider poverty in our province to be shameful. 2) Show respect for the actual costs of living when setting income amounts (e.g., welfare), including reasonable amounts for clothing, supplies, and transportation required to provide children with what they need. (Vancouver Island South)

Child care
• Provide $5 child care for young families. (Kootenay)
• Subsidize after-school care for working families whose incomes are inadequate. (Okanagan)
• Provide fully subsidized daycare and require all persons on social assistance to attend classes or job training so that parents can gain education and employment in order to break poverty cycle. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Provide daycare program across the province to provide choice for parents and older students so young children can be adequately cared for without parents or siblings losing out on their employment or schooling. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
• Provide free or low cost out of school care so that kids are well cared for and even fed after school. Many, many children, due to lack of funds go home on their own or into the care of those who are unable or unwilling to care for and about them... Some kids go to childcare after school and need to be woken up to go home because their parents work such long hours. No family should have to sacrifice care for their child to pay the bills. (Metro Vancouver area & West)

Taxation, fiscal policy, and income inequality
• Fairly tax the population for real educational requirements. (Kootenay)
• Raise taxes and make children and families a priority. (Okanagan)
• Cut government pay...ACTUALLY work on child poverty!!! This will increase revenue that can be used for child poverty and education. (Okanagan)
• Take a pay cut and give it back to the 99%! (Okanagan)
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- Have corporations pay their fair share of taxes so that public schools can be funded adequately for the benefit of society. Public school children should not be marginalized because their parents cannot afford to send their children to private schools. Private schools should be self-funded, so that the public school dollars given to the elitist private schools goes back to where it is needed!! (North Central/Peace River)
- Invest in kids and not corporations. (North Central/Peace River)
- Focus on poverty/impoverished not on wealthy. (North Central/Peace River)
- Tax breaks to families of school-aged [students]...acknowledging that it costs a lot to raise a child in BC and stressed out, overworked parents are not what children need for optimal development. (Fraser Valley)
- Raise corporate taxes, and charge higher fees for the extraction of natural resources (e.g., timber and gas). (Fraser Valley)
- Increase taxes for high income workers. (Fraser Valley)
- Political will; stop corporate greed. (Fraser Valley)
- Really put families FIRST! There needs to be higher taxes for corporations and the elite in society to help fund those that are living in poverty and eliminate the ‘epidemic’ of the working poor. (Fraser Valley)
- The government should bite the bullet & increase provincial taxes adequately to increase the education budget by 50%. I’m serious that I would pay such an increase. Everyone should consider children our very best investment (not prisons!). (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Understand that spending tax money on helping poor people raise their kids is not money that is lost to us... child poverty comes back and bites all of us in the butt at some point or other... (Vancouver Island South)
- Raise income taxes on everyone making more than $75k/yr, then decrease user fees for health, etc. (Vancouver Island South)

Support employment training and higher education

- Promote trade-schools and implement apprenticeship programs. (Okanagan)
- Eliminate tuition fees for post-secondary education to increase accessibility for all students not just ones from families with money. (North Central/Peace River)
- Reduce welfare recipients, training—against raising taxes. (North Central/Peace River)
- Train [low-income people on social assistance] for jobs...The taxpayer is taxed to the limit...The BC government is also in huge debt. (North Central/Peace River)
- Remove barriers to post-secondary education by reducing tuition fees and by bringing back grants. (That’s how I got my degree.) Pay for this by raising the corporate tax rate to the average G8 amount. (Vancouver Island North)

Involve communities and expand services to support families

- I don’t believe that the schools should be the place to try and ‘fix’ the poverty issue, it should be done by the community and society as a whole. It is simply that school staff see the effects so strongly because kids are so vulnerable and honest. As the kids get older and move into high school it may seem that the issue disappears. It is not that the kids are any less poor than they were in Grade 1, it is simply that they are better at hiding it. All you have to do is say “I accidentally put an extra apple in my lunch, does anyone want it?” and you will see that several hands pop up. (Okanagan)
- More help for single parent families. Support for families 24/7. (Okanagan)
- ...People without money don’t have computers!!! Why is everything on computer now? Also, People without money usually have disabilities so cannot sit on a phone listening to push this
button or put in that number. Really? In this day and age? Contacting someone is so difficult most needy people give up. Where are the advocates for the people? (Fraser Valley)

- Provide better medical and dental services, fully funded for families living in poverty. (Fraser Valley)
- Make decisions based on long term health of communities, rather than short term economic gain. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Pay up! Support families and working people. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Improve supports for adults living in poverty. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Ensure the Health ministry is doing its job to provide food and safe environments for our young people. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- We need a greater social safety net and increased liaising between school and community resources. (Vancouver Island North)
- Start at home by supporting their families. (Vancouver Island South)
Chapter 9: What is needed to support students and families experiencing poverty, and teachers’ recommendations

Thematic area 4: Increase government awareness and understanding of poverty and education issues

Some teachers recommended that government increase their awareness and understanding of poverty and education issues by listening to teachers’ ideas about what is needed to address poverty-related barriers, visiting schools in low-income neighbourhoods to learn about the challenges experienced by families and schools, increasing awareness of the poor housing conditions for families in low-income areas, and visiting rural schools to better understand the unique issues of these schools.

Teachers’ comments organized by topic within this theme

- Come to the schools and spend a week. Not an hour, but a full week and see what goes on in a real school—not the ones that they show on the TV. See the kids who this really affects. (Kootenay)
- Recognition that small rural schools have different needs than other schools. The Government and the BCTF Executive need to visit Rural Schools and see what happens in these places. (Okanagan)
- Dust their privileged glasses off! It appears to me that they simply do not care. (Okanagan)
- It would be wonderful if the government took on some responsibility or showed awareness as to the conditions we deal with daily, and sad we depend so much on the PAC program to enable us to participate in activities. (North Central/Peace River)
- Come into the schools/classrooms to see what it is ‘REALLY’ like. (Fraser Valley)
- Government is full of ideas for what teachers should be doing, but there seems to be very little understanding of our busy classroom lives and demands. Some real, authentic, relevant support is needed. (Fraser Valley)
- Visit the homes and the old dilapidated schools that are overrun with mice and rats and insects and leaks and old equipment. Visit the rundown housing units where stratas have run out of money so roofs leak and fences are broken and heating doesn’t work and there are no laundry facilities. I thought we had standards for buildings so where are the inspectors? (Fraser Valley)
- Visit these schools, talk to these parents and teachers, and see what it’s like to work in such a school compared to an affluent one. It’s a simple recommendation but, it is important. (Fraser Valley)
- They should provide adequate funding for all school programs and some of the funding should be targeted at poverty-related barriers. To be blunt, until politicians and ‘Ministry types’ are forced to experience the poverty issues in schools, I don’t expect much will ever change. A lot of talk, but little action....sort of like the bullying issue. (Fraser Valley)
- Fund education and listen to what teachers need in the classroom. We are the ones spending the most time with the children, not the people making the decision of what they think we need. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- The politicians need to understand just what it means to be living in poverty. I think that if they truly understood what it is to be poor that perhaps they would be less heartless. Our children are our future. The govt cannot rob the next generation by denying them the right to equality of educational outcome. A child living in poverty has fewer options than a middle-class child. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- The teachers know what is needed to best support their students. Talk to the teachers! (Metro Vancouver area & West)
Poverty and Education survey: A teacher’s perspective

- Get out of Victoria and meet poverty stricken parents and students. (Vancouver Island North)
- Listen to teachers! (Vancouver Island North)
- Actually visit the schools to see what is happening. (Vancouver Island South)
- Using teachers who are in the trenches to make decisions, be in the schools more for more than a 2 min photo op and really understand what is going on in our school. (Vancouver Island South)
Thematic area 5: Other recommendations

Other recommendations by teachers include: address hunger and nutritional needs, improve mental health services and community programs for students and families, co-ordinate efforts between schools and social agencies, and improve access to technology for low-income students.

Other recommendations—organized by topic

Co-ordination of schools and social agencies
- Co-ordination with community agencies. (Fraser Valley)
- Co-ordinate with other community agencies to locate and provide services to children at the school before, after, and between instructional hours, as needed. NOT DURING instructional time. (Fraser Valley)
- My concern is more related to Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) and their response to teachers’ concerns about their students’ home situations. (Fraser Valley)
- Stop restructuring MCFD and Community Living BC (CLBC). Provide adequate funding for services for special needs students after they graduate so school districts aren’t left to provide a “babysitting” service for these students. (Fraser Valley)
- Adequate funding for MCFD programs in order to provide better/mandatory counselling for kids in care and supports for foster parents could help break the cycle. (Vancouver Island South)
- Better inter agency co-operation. (Vancouver Island South)

Community programs and counselling services to support families
- Access to community programs within the school. Parenting programs within the school. (Okanagan)
- We need better services for mental health. More hospital beds for children’s mental health concerns. (Okanagan)
- Provide a basic level of healthcare and mental health services to all communities, no matter how remote. (North Coast)
- School nurses, or a community health professional for schools—to ensure staff and parents understand what’s available, and how to access services. (North Central/Peace River)
- Increase funding to existing community programs, establish community support programs where needed. (Fraser Valley)
- We should connect schools and other resources in a central HUB to share the resources. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Really understand the issues facing low income families...this is a society problem...we need to understand the factors and use resources wisely to help those who can’t help themselves. People need a hand up, not a hand-out, though. (Metro Vancouver area & West)
- Increase accessibility to health programs for parents who may be abusing drugs and alcohol. Have more community counselling for families and after school programs for students during the school year as well as during holiday times, which includes nutritious meals. (Vancouver Island North)
- More counselors and community support linked to school. Often the parents need counselling too and the problem does not exist only within the child only during school hours. (Vancouver Island North)
- Provide more resources to help families in poverty because parents want the best for their children but are not always able to do what is necessary. More parenting help and mental health and addiction support services. (Vancouver Island North)
Appendix:
Zones and corresponding school districts (locals)

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<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>SD#</th>
<th>School Districts (locals)</th>
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