

Impact of Bill 33 on Class Size and Class Composition in 2006–07

1. Bill 33 has not produced adequate learning conditions.

Classes are still too large. Even the target of a maximum of 30 students is too high.

It is too high in the nearly 10,000 classrooms with four or more students with IEPs. It is too high for classrooms that have health and safety concerns, such as technology education shops, science labs, and rooms with stoves for cooking, all of which are designed for classes of 24. It is too high for many other classes where more could be done to assist student learning with better conditions.

Bill 33 [Education (Learning Enhancement) Statutes Amendment Act, 2006] did reduce class sizes, but not enough.

The greatest improvements came in the reduction of class sizes in Grades 4 to 7. Eighty-five Grade 4 to 7 classes in the province had more than 30 students. It is clear that this reduction was a result of the teachers in those areas being able to protect the conditions in their classroom by not consenting to the placing of more students in their classes.

The intent of the legislation to limit class sizes in secondary schools did produce some declines in the number of classes with more than 30 students as well. However, although teachers had to be consulted if more than 30 students were placed in a class, a larger number could be assigned to the class by the principal without the consent of the teacher.

Legislation should establish lower class size limits and should require the consent of secondary teachers. In particular, provision should also be made for a limit of 24 in those programs where equipment and safety requirements can only be met by smaller classes.

2. More resources are required to support students with special needs.

For many teachers, a priority is provision of real support for students with special needs and the teachers who work with those students. The lack of much change in class composition has been the biggest disappointment to teachers looking at the impact of the legislation.

Adequate support for students with special needs has two key elements. One is a limit to the number of students with special needs in each classroom. The other is the provision of specialist supports to assist in developing and carrying out programs appropriate for the students with special needs.

a. Class composition continues to be a central concern of teachers.

On the issue of numbers, the legislation says “a board must ensure that any class in any school in its school district does not have more than three students with an individual education plan **unless...**”

The “unless” was utilized frequently, with it becoming the norm rather than the infrequent exception. As with the rationale for classes larger than 30, many reasons given for putting four or more identified students in a class were not based on the realities of the class. Rather, they were generic reasons, often based on inadequate resources, not on the belief that the learning situation was adequate for both the students with special needs and the other students in the class.

Nearly half the boards in the province (twenty-seven districts) actually reported **more classrooms with four or more students with an IEP than they had in September 2005**. The total number of classes reported with four or more students with identified special needs dropped only from 10,697 to 9,406 from 2005 to 2006.

Most of that reduction was reported in three large school districts—Coquitlam, Central Okanagan and Vancouver. However, the teacher local president in Coquitlam counters that the reported reduction in special needs of four or more was really a case of delisting some of the students who had previously been identified, or only identifying them for some secondary courses and not for others. Even the limited reduction in classes with more than three students with special needs seems not to reflect the reality.

Teachers report that class composition is still the most significant issue they face in the classroom. Since funding of students with high incidence special needs has been moved into the block and not specified as special education funding, not as many students are being identified, even though they still have the same special needs. In addition, teachers point out that many “gray area” students are not officially identified, but have learning needs that require supports that do not exist.

b. Restore the specialist supports stripped from the collective agreement.

Support for students with special needs is not just in the composition of the class, but also the specialist supports for the student and the teacher. For students with IEPs, this specialist support is primarily from special education teachers.

Other specialist supports are important as well: counsellors, ESL teachers, and teacher-librarians. Minimum ratios for all of these were provided in the collective agreement, but those provisions were stripped from the collective agreement by legislation in 2002. The effect of that action by government can be seen in the impact on the provision of inadequate specialist services for students.

Between 2001–02 and 2006–07, more than half the reduction in teaching staff in the province has taken place in four areas: special education, ESL teachers, counsellors, and teacher-librarians. Those provisions of the collective agreement that contained staffing formulas should be restored to ensure that support services are available to those students who need them.

The impact of the decline of specialist positions goes beyond the specialist time available to support students. Many experienced and trained specialist teachers have returned to the classroom because of the lack of time to do the specialist work. In addition, specific specialist positions are being combined—such as ESL and special education, which have different methodologies.

Experienced teachers abandoning specialist positions has resulted in inexperienced teachers being hired into these positions. The ministry has acknowledged this problem in granting \$600,000 to the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) to provide training to these inexperienced teachers.

While the number of specialist teachers has been reduced by 15% since 2001–02, the number of Education Assistants working with students with special needs has increased by 16.9%. These trends mean that the people most qualified to provide specialist service to students with special needs are being replaced by less-experienced teachers and by Education Assistants.

c. Require less paperwork and end waitlists.

The bureaucracy to get students assessed and to provide all the paperwork required is keeping students from getting the service they need and deserve.

Teachers report it often taking months and sometimes years to get students assessed so that there is a plan in place to support them. A lack of people qualified to do the assessments is one factor cited. In other cases, teachers report that schools are given quotas of the number of students to be assessed, so some students who need to be assessed are passed over because the quota is full.

Specialist teachers also report that the paperwork now required keeps them from being able to get to students who need help until well into the fall, often in November. Similarly, a period at the end of the school year is devoted to completing paperwork rather than directly working with students and teachers.

Much of the paperwork is a result of an auditing system that seems to run the services. Some districts have been conducting mock audits to prepare for the audits, taking time and effort away from the children with special needs.

3. Require administrators to provide rationales that actually address the learning situation.

The legislation requires the principal and the superintendent to provide a rationale that the learning situation is adequate for the class as a whole, as well as for individual students.

One would have expected that there would actually be an examination of the situation of the group of students assigned to the class. Although the reports in some cases actually spoke to the situation in a specific class, many administrators simply used generic messages. These are a couple of examples: “Academic needs of the students are best met in this class” (the same

comment used for 76 classes in this particular district); and “Timetabling considerations” (used more than 350 times in another district).

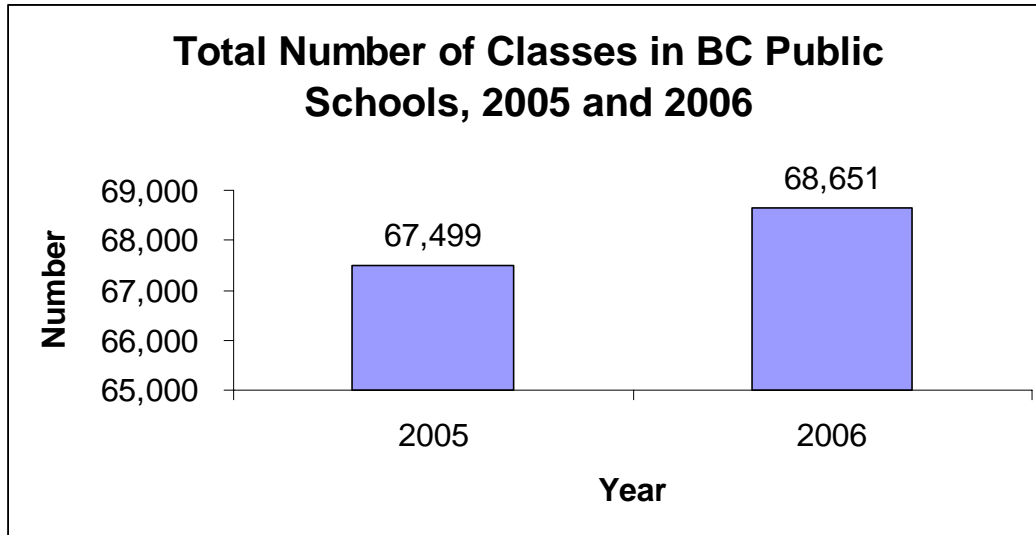
Others did not say that the learning situation was adequate, but rather identified that there were not enough resources to create smaller classes—a clear indicator that the funding for education is not adequate to meet all the class size expectations of Bill 33.

Administrators and superintendents should be held accountable by Boards of Education for providing rationales that speak to the actual learning situation in specific classes they approve to be over the legislated limits

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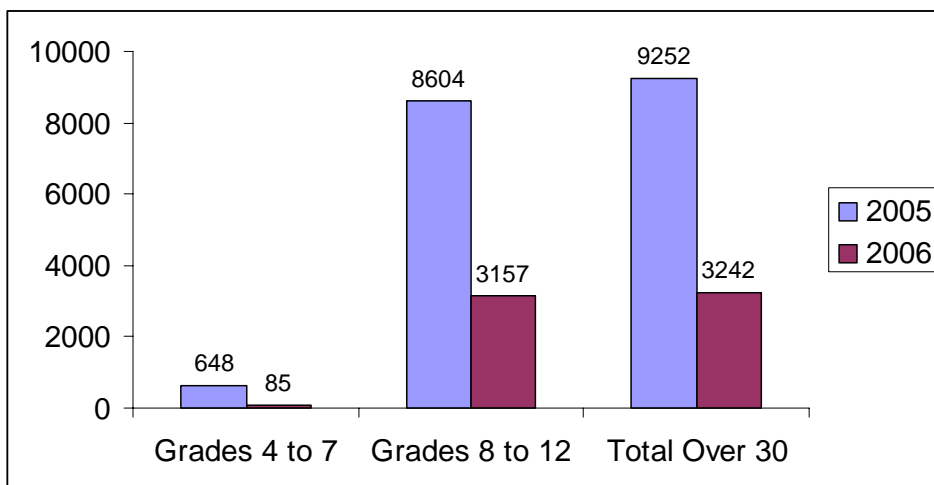
Class Size

- The total number of classes has increased 1.7% from 67,449 in 2005 to 68,651 in 2006.



- Compared to last year there are 65% fewer grades 8 to 12 classes with more than 30 students.
- Compared to last year there are 87% fewer grades 4 to 7 classes with more than 30 students.

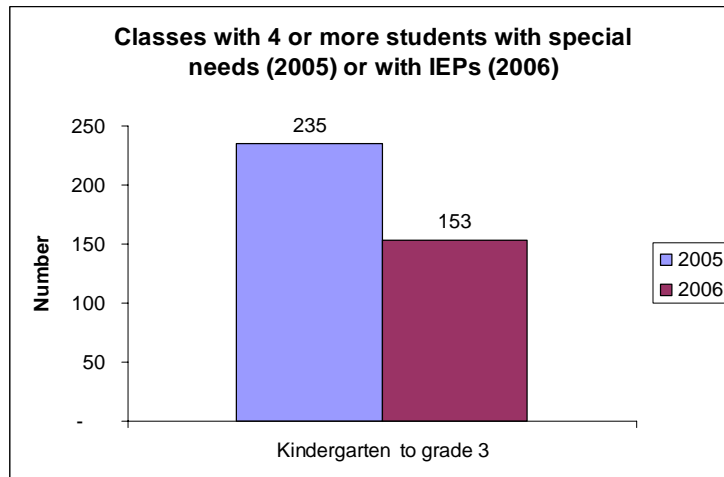
Number of Classes with more than 30 students, 2005 and 2006



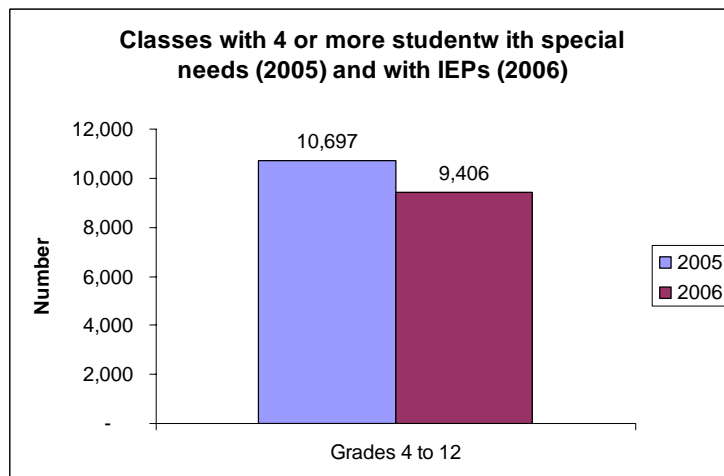
Gains have been made in the reduction of class size but more work needs to be done. There are still over 3,200 grades 4 to 12 classes with more than 30 students.

Class Composition: Special Needs

- Classes with 4 or more students identified as special needs (2005) or with IEPs (2006) declined in grades K to 3 by 35%.
- There are 153 kindergarten to grade 3 classes with 4 or more students with IEPs (2006).



- Classes with 4 or more students identified as special needs (2005) or with IEPs (2006) in grades 4 to 12 declined by 12%.
- There are 9,406 grades 4 to 12 classes with 4 or more students with IEPs (2006).



Significant percentage of the reduction in classes in grades 4 to 12 with 4 or more students with special needs can be attributed to large reductions in numbers of classes among a few districts, for example: Coquitlam (-556), Central Okanagan (-160), Vancouver (-150). See attached data table.

Twenty seven districts had increases in the number of classes with 4 or more students with special needs.

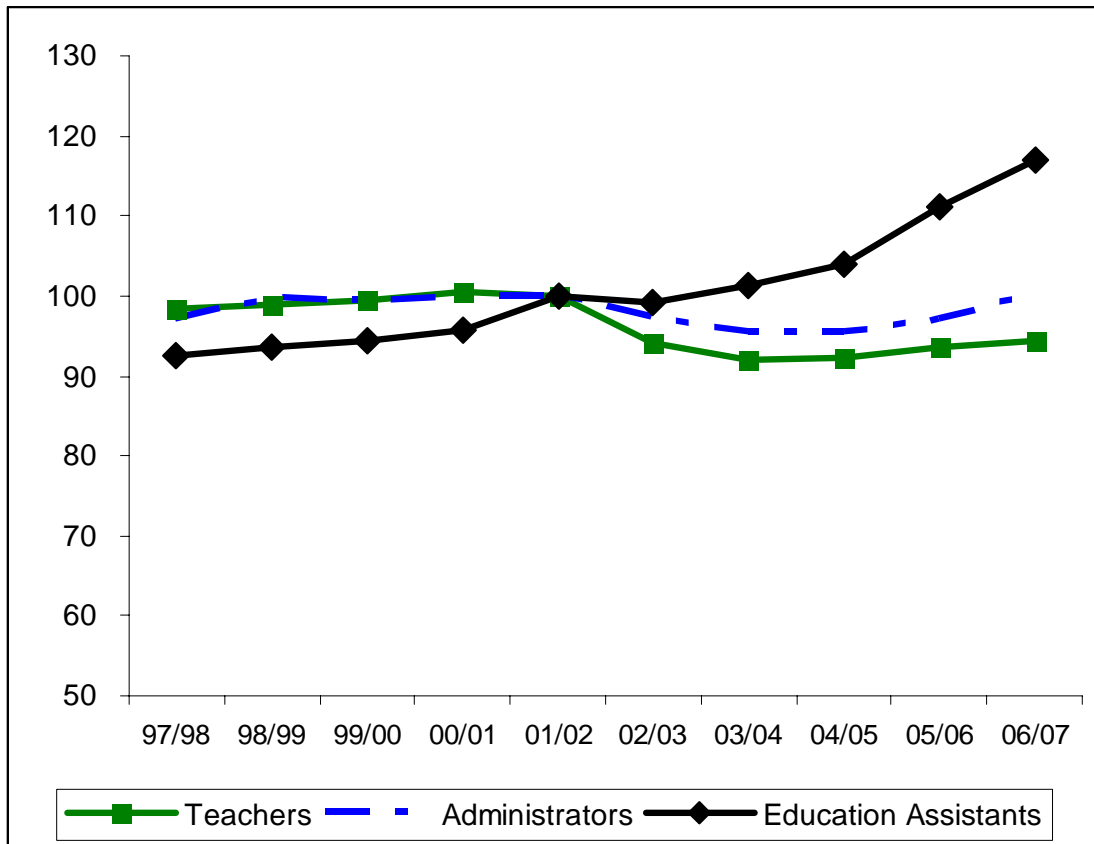
Class Size and Class Composition, September 30, 2005 & 2006

Classes with 4 or more students with special needs (2005) or with IEPs (2006)

Dist#	District Name	K-3			4 to 12		
		2006	2005	Change	2006	2005	Change
5	Southeast Kootenay	12	9	3	241	179	62
6	Rocky Mountain	0	0	0	68	109	-41
8	Kootenay Lake	1	1	0	79	96	-17
10	Arrow Lakes	1	0	1	41	21	20
19	Revelstoke	0	0	0	29	36	-7
20	Kootenay-Columbia	2	4	-2	72	65	7
22	Vernon	2	1	1	64	120	-56
23	Central Okanagan	0	1	-1	309	469	-160
27	Cariboo-Chilcotin	1	2	-1	102	81	21
28	Quesnel	1	2	-1	84	81	3
33	Chilliwack	0	3	-3	94	195	-101
34	Abbotsford	0	0	0	110	143	-33
35	Langley	1	5	-4	337	375	-38
36	Surrey	22	44	-22	695	802	-107
37	Delta	8	2	6	434	403	31
38	Richmond	4	9	-5	253	327	-74
39	Vancouver	7	9	-2	937	1087	-150
40	New Westminster	1	1	0	19	44	-25
41	Burnaby	8	7	1	248	269	-21
42	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	1	1	0	260	198	62
43	Coquitlam	3	24	-21	334	890	-556
44	North Vancouver	3	1	2	184	173	11
45	West Vancouver	0	0	0	80	90	-10
46	Sunshine Coast	4	5	-1	144	156	-12
47	Powell River	0	0	0	72	72	0
48	Howe Sound	0	1	-1	73	99	-26
49	Central Coast	0	0	0	1	4	-3
50	Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte	0	0	0	9	32	-23
51	Boundary	0	1	-1	12	18	-6
52	Prince Rupert	9	8	1	103	97	6
53	Okanagan Similkameen	0	2	-2	47	53	-6
54	Bulkley Valley	0	3	-3	60	58	2
57	Prince George	5	9	-4	108	161	-53
58	Nicola Similkameen	2	2	0	138	100	38
59	Peace River South	1	7	-6	5	86	-81
60	Peace River North	3	2	1	148	136	12
61	Greater Victoria	9	10	-1	389	361	28
62	Sooke	4	3	1	401	358	43
63	Saanich	0	1	-1	115	111	4
64	Gulf Islands	1	1	0	44	22	22
67	Okanagan Skaha	3	6	-3	251	355	-104
68	Nanaimo-Ladysmith	3	5	-2	158	96	62
69	Qualicum	3	4	-1	189	140	49
70	Alberni	3	0	3	152	77	75
71	Comox Valley	7	10	-3	436	541	-105
72	Campbell River	3	2	1	223	192	31
73	Kamloops-Thompson	0	4	-4	126	151	-25
74	Gold Trail	1	1	0	60	51	9
75	Mission	1	1	0	82	77	5
78	Fraser-Cascade	0	3	-3	65	91	-26
79	Cowichan Valley	3	3	0	236	225	11
81	Fort Nelson	0	0	0	7	9	-2
82	Coast Mountains	0	2	-2	146	116	30
83	North Okanagan-Shuswap	6	10	-4	181	235	-54
84	Vancouver Island West	0	1	-1	14	48	-34
85	Vancouver Island North	1	0	1	80	62	18
87	Stikine	0	1	-1	4	14	-10
91	Nechako Lakes	3	1	2	42	24	18
92	Nisga'a	0	0	0	4	1	3
93	Conseil scolaire francophone	0	0	0	7	15	-8
	Total	153	235	-82	9,406	10697	-1291

Ministry of Education Form 1530 Staffing Data

Relative change in Teacher, Administrator and Education Assistant full-time equivalents, 2001/02 to 2006/07 (2001/02 = 100)



- Teacher FTEs have increased since 2004/05, but are still 5.6% fewer teacher than there were in 2001/02.
- Between 2001/02 and 2006/07 there has been a 6% decrease in FTE students.
- Administrator FTEs have gone back up to 2001/02 numbers.
- The percentage of Education Assistants has increased significantly (17%) since 2001/02.

This graph shows that there have been significant teacher losses while administrators and education assistants numbers are increasing. Given that over 50% of all teacher losses after 2001 were in special education categories, this chart suggests that education assistants are filling the gap; lesser qualified staff are working with students with greatest need in the classroom.

FTE Staffing and FTE Student Enrolment Change: September 30, 2001-02 to September 30, 2006-07

	Provincial			
	2001-02	2006-07	Number Change	Percent Change
Student FTE Enrolment	595,156.90	559,619.00	-35,537.90	-6.0%
Teachers	33,275.44	31,416.80	-1,858.64	-5.6%
Career program	340.23	241.20	-99.03	-29.1%
Teacher-librarians	921.79	746.55	-175.23	-19.0%
Counsellors	990.92	908.59	-82.33	-8.3%
Special education teachers*	4,051.47	3,442.85	-608.62	-15.0%
Aboriginal education	205.89	196.05	-9.84	-4.8%
Continuing education	122.87	84.48	-38.39	-31.2%
ESL teachers	1,015.60	828.97	-186.63	-18.4%
Off-Shore Students	151.23	397.10	245.87	162.6%
Education assistants	6,896.17	8,062.47	1,166.30	16.9%
Clerical and support staff	11,947.20	11,034.92	-912.29	-7.6%
Administrators	2,668.43	2,673.04	4.61	0.2%

*Special education teachers in 2001 include 1.04 Learning Assistance; 1.13 Special Health Services; 1.16 Severe Behavior; 1.17 High Incidence-Low Cost; 1.18 Low Incidence-High Cost; 1.19 Dependent Handicapped; 1.32 Gifted; 1.33 Hospital/Homebound; and 1.45 Identification/Planning.

Source:

Ministry of Education Form 1530 staffing data.

Ministry of Education, 2001/02 - 2005/06 Student Statistics, www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/enrol/student.php

Ministry of Education, 2002/03 - 2006/07 Student Statistics, www.bced.gov.bc.ca/reporting/enrol/student.php