



# British Columbia Teachers' Federation

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## **Distributed Learning 2010 survey: DL WORKING CONDITIONS**

Distributed Learning Action Research Project  
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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Distributed Learning 2010 survey was to collect information from Distributed Learning teachers about working conditions in DL programs in British Columbia. Neither the *School Act* nor the current collective agreement addresses working conditions of DL teachers. The survey is aimed at gathering information that will assist in increasing the understanding of the work of DL teachers and in the development of relevant policies.

The Ministry definition of DL says “**Distributed Learning** means a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between learners and educators, including internet or other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing or correspondence.”

## 2. DEMOGRAPHICS

### a. Who are the DL teachers?

The survey received 147 responses from DL teachers. The total number of DL teachers in the province is not known—some DL teachers are part-time, others have a mix of DL and face-to-face courses.

Female teachers made up 60% of respondents and male teachers the other 40%. The teaching force as a whole is more than 70% female.

Respondents to the questionnaire are experienced teachers. Some 61.4% have taught 15 years or more. Given the growth of DL in recent years, it is not surprising that more 53.4% have taught in DL for less than five years. About a third (33.6%) have taught from 5 to 9 years and 13% for 10 or more years. Most of those with long years of DL experience would have worked in the regional mail-based correspondence schools that have become a part of the current DL programs.

## 3. WORK ENVIRONMENT

### a. Working from home

The majority (56.9%) said that their district has a policy against DL teachers working at home rather than at a school-district facility. Only 2.8% said their district encourages DL teachers to do their work at home.

Of the remainder, some said that their district has no formal policy, with some indicating that it was permitted, but without a formal policy.

Many indicated that they would like the option of working from home. In some cases, this was because the district facilities were too crowded or had hardware and bandwidth that were inadequate, with better resources at home.

Many also pointed out that secondary students, in particular, often do their work after school or in the evenings and that there would be better contact with students if they had more flexibility in the time that they work, with work at home in the evenings and on weekends, rather than the regular school hours in a district facility.

## **b. Work environment**

Teachers who would have preferred to work at home at least part of the time provided reasons for this that included:

“Facilities at the work site are too small and without privacy.”

“Bandwidth and technical problems at the work site, with faster access at home and/or better equipment at home.”

“Teaching DL lends itself to being available 24/7 so more flexibility in the work location would help.”

“The working environments in the DL schools in my district are not conducive for both quiet work and online discussions and workshops which are noisy.”

“Health and safety issues with bad ventilation and inadequate fire escapes”

Some teachers reported that they are allowed to work at home for part of the week. Many more indicated they would like that opportunity. Some part-time DL teachers had more flexibility to work at home.

Reasons given for not permitting working at home included Workers’ Compensation issues and “public perception” problems.

## **c. Work space in school district facilities**

Nearly everyone had some physical work space in a school-district facility.

Only 13.5% had enclosed office spaces. More than two-thirds (70.9%) indicated they shared work space with one or more other DL teachers, with some of these describing small cubicles or a bunch of teachers in one room, each with a computer and a desk.

Other arrangements included teachers who have a mix of DL and regular classes, using the classroom for both.

66% said that their work space is not adequate to have privacy for conversations over the phone or with students who are physically in the room. Despite these limitations, 79.3% said that the work space is large enough to work in comfortably.

## **d. Health and safety**

Asked whether the school district facility work space is ergonomically sound, including desk, chair, monitor and mouse, 67.9% said yes. 86.8% said that their DL school had a Health and Safety Committee and 68.4% said that the committee had carried out an assessment of conditions. However, in at least one facility, an attempt to get an ergonomic assessment was rejected.

Teacher-identified problems from long periods of sitting, looking at a monitor, and using a mouse included carpal tunnel, sciatica, leg and back pain, and pain in the wrist and forearm.

Some reported improvements made after identifying the problems to administrators.

“I acquired tendonitis at this job. I have had to open a WCB claim just so that someone could look at my work space, rather than having ergonomics considered initially and preventatively.”

In another case, a teacher reported that school district refused to make the changes necessary for teachers who were in offices not fire-safe because there was no direct access out of the teacher's office.

## 4. WORKLOAD

### a. Satisfaction from teaching in Distributed Learning

Many teaching in a DL environment find it to be a positive experience, despite the concerns and issues survey participants identified with their work as DL teachers.

When asked “What aspect of online teaching produces the greatest satisfaction for you?” the most common response was working with students on an individual basis. The contacts identified were both online, and in many cases face-to-face for some portion of the teaching as well.

The online interaction with students, not surprisingly, is often by email. However, a number of participants identified a virtual classroom with multiple students (usually using Elluminate) as providing the most satisfaction.

The positive element of interaction was reflected by a participant who said “even though I don't get to interact as much with a student as I did when I was a classroom teacher, when I do interact with them it is more directed towards a student's individual needs.”

The students who have the most to gain, and who provide positive satisfaction to many teachers, are those who have not succeeded in the face-to-face classroom, and sometimes not in alternative programs. These include “gifted kids who simply haven't had the one-on-one that they get with a DL teacher's feedback.”

Providing options for students who otherwise would not be able to get specific courses also provides satisfaction, particularly to those who teach specialized subjects that cannot otherwise be offered in some circumstances.

After working with individual students, the next-most-common source of satisfaction was course and resource development. In some cases, this involves customizing already existing courses, in others the initial development of a course. While it is a source of satisfaction for many, it also raises issues of equity and the rights to the use of material beyond the teacher who developed it.

The other area of satisfaction to many is flexibility—for both teachers and the students. The ~~lack~~ absence of rigid timetables, learning individual responsibility for managing time, and modification of courses to fit individual needs—this flexibility is seen as an advantage for both students and teachers.

Interestingly, an issue that barely surfaces as a source of satisfaction is the technology. Relationships with students and professional responsibility and autonomy are the key satisfiers, with the technology being a medium, but not the purpose. Problems with the technology, though, can be disruptive for both students and teachers.

## **b. Sources of dissatisfaction**

Some of the sources of dissatisfaction are similar to those of most teachers:

“There is too much to do in a day and too little time to do it.”

Other sources of dissatisfaction are more specific to the DL teaching environment:

A significant problem is the paperwork that must be done for the compliance audits. The audit criteria for DL take up 13 pages available on the ministry web site at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/compliance/0910/0910-dl-audit-program.pdf>. These audit requirements are changed frequently, with different criteria in September 2009 from those provided in January 2009.

Data must be provided for all of this. It’s not just the amount of record-keeping, but also that the compliance audits set up “an atmosphere of doubt, fear, and threat.”

Extensive clerical work takes up too much time, usually without secretarial support. This includes photocopying and extensive record keeping.

Negative perceptions of DL teachers are also felt. This includes “negativity from classroom teachers,” “needing to constantly explain what DL is about,” and “lack of understanding by administration at the school and district level for the complex skills, expertise, and dedication required of a DL teacher.”

While many find satisfaction in one-to-one work with individual students, others are concerned that they see not enough social connections among students.

Technology is obviously key for online programs, but it is often a source of great frustration. This can include inadequate bandwidth, outdated equipment, constantly-changing technology, as well as the learning curve in being able to use it effectively, and lack of adequate technical support.

Some DL teachers have an extensive range of courses they are asked to teach. For example, one teacher covers all of the courses for grades K to 5, another all core courses from K to 9.

The competition that has been set up between districts to attract students has created an environment that discourages co-operation of teachers across programs.

## **5. HOURS OF WORK**

### **a. 12-month school year and summer school**

When asked whether their school offered courses on a 12-month basis, 55.8% said yes. 58.1% said that summer courses were time-limited, separate courses through July and August.

(Under the new funding rules adopted by the ministry for summer 2010, these summer-only courses will not be funded. 12-month programs will have to be funded only from the 10-month funding from the September, February and May student counts.)

## 6. QUANTIFYING TEACHER WORKLOAD IN DISTRIBUTED LEARNING

The work of teaching is complex and diverse. Teaching in Distributed Learning is particularly so. While similarities exist in typical face-to-face classrooms, albeit with important differences from class to class, the similarities are fewer among teachers in programs designated as Distributed Learning.

Some DL teachers work entirely online, others only with paper that is communicated through the mail and still others with significant face-to-face contact with students. Despite the many differences from one situation to another, it is important to find some ways of comparing workload that help us define as much equity as possible in the workload of teachers.

The survey asked an open-ended question:

If an objective were to provide equity in teaching loads among DL teachers, what factors should be elements that are considered?

The responses to this question were as diverse as the realities of teachers in DL programs. A composite of the many responses is framed in two parts.

The first part is a catalogue of many aspects of DL teaching that have an impact on the workload of DL teachers (see page 7). This was developed by analysing the many responses and producing an aggregate description based on the many different specifics mentioned by teachers on the survey. No teacher would have all of these affect their work, but all would have at least some of them define what they do and how they do it.

The second part is a process for trying to describe equity using a rubric to assist. The rubric might use an agreed-upon version of the catalogue of aspects of DL teaching and identifying a continuum that includes both the complexity and the time required for a task. The teacher would go through the list to identify where they felt their work fell on the rubric. These assessments could then be compared among the teachers in the particular DL program.

This rubric could be used to facilitate discussions between the teacher(s) and administrator about the workload. This could then lead to an allocation or reallocation of the work among the teachers.

This is a subjective process, subject to quite different perceptions of the work, its complexity and the time it takes to carry out the work effectively. To create a sense of fairness of the decisions arrived at, it would be important to have an external process that would involve an outside person looking at the different perceptions, with the authority to make reallocations of work to better achieve equity in the work of the DL teachers in that particular school.

This approach to defining workloads might be of help, as well, in comparing workloads from one DL school to another. While it would not make direct comparisons, it would provide a basis for dialogue.

It should be noted that this approach does not take into account some of the teacher roles in DL. We heard, for example, from counsellors in DL schools, and hospital-homebound teachers, whose work is different from those who are teaching in DL programs, saying that they had significantly different roles that were not covered in the survey.

**“If equity in teaching loads among DL teachers is the objective, what factors should be considered?”**

Student factors:

- Student numbers along with the marking requirements of the courses taught
- Number of students who are active vs. inactive
- Spectrum of learning styles among the students
- Number of students with special needs and nature of those needs
- Time required to deal with parents who provide support to the student in elementary level programs
- Time required to support students to become familiar with the online environment and its tools
- Amount of time (if any) of face-to-face contact with students.

Course factors:

- Number of different courses taught
- Time required to develop course(s)
- Courses that require continuous updating and adapting to online environment
- Single grades versus multiple grades being taught
- Marking load for the course
- Requirements for scheduling outside of regular teaching hours (e.g., counsellors working in evenings, face-to-face evening consultations with parents).

Pedagogy factors:

- Amount and type of engaging online instruction (constructivist, problem-based) vs. online textbook
- Asynchronous vs. synchronous classes
- One-to-one communication requirements—every student the equivalent to an IEP
- Continuous assessment for learning vs. marking primarily for reporting
- Face-to-face time as part of a course.

Teacher factors:

- Training in pedagogy of online/distributed teaching
- Technology comfort and capability of the teacher
- Work time required to learn the constantly-changing technologies
- Developing an approach to controlling the 24/7 level of expectation created by the technology.

Supports and resources:

- Time and support to learn to use new software and hardware
- Professional Development relevant to online teaching
- Technology support available
- Tutoring available for students to supplement the teacher
- Support available to look after clerical/administrative work and data entry
- Availability of existing courseware
- Availability of online resources that can be used in course design or modification.

Accountability demands:

- Time required to meet ministry audit demands.

Process approaches:

- Research on conditions that facilitate student and teacher success in DL
- Guidelines and rubrics that provide a framework of issues to be considered in determining workload
- Collaborative approach between DL administrators and teachers to apply the guidelines
- Independent monitors and advocates to mediate differences.

## 7. PEDAGOGICAL AND RESOURCE FACTORS

### a. Development of courses and resources

Developing an online course is a common element to DL teaching, with 68.1% saying that they had developed a course as a part of their workload as a DL teacher. However, of those, only 22.2% said that their student load had been reduced to reflect the time required to write the course. 38.8% indicated they had received extra technical or other resources to assist in preparing the course.

These courses did not go through any peer review or evaluation, according to 64.3% of those who had developed a course.

Only 17.8% of the respondents had been contracted outside of their teaching to produce a course by their district or another agency. The Open School was the largest single source of these contracts, with some being with school districts.

40.6% indicated that they had developed an online course entirely on their own time and resources, with 94% of those indicating that it was done while they were employed by a school district. 21.2% of those who had developed a course indicated that their school district had claimed ownership because they were a school-district employee when the course was developed, while 46.2% said no, and 32.7% did not know if the district had made a claim of ownership.

Only 0.8% said that their district had sold any of the material the teacher had developed outside the district, while 54% said no and the rest did not know.

To assist in course development and individual lessons, 70.8% said that they had access to some form of learning objects repository (“learning objects” are items or units that can be used independently of a particular course). The most common source of resources was the web. The Open School, the Consortium of DL Schools, and individual school districts were the most common sources identified. Only 19.7% identified commercial publishers as a source, fewer than the 23.1% who identified “Resources on the Web with Creative Commons designation.”

### b. Copyright issues

When asked “have you found that copyright provisions are a problem in using online resources,” 43.3% said yes.

One respondent indicated that “publishing companies, with good reason, often disallow their resources from being posted online. Specifically, I’ve run into several roadblocks finding secondary grammar resources.”

One district, New Westminster, has collective agreement provisions that allow for the teacher who develops a resource to hold the copyright and receive most of the financial return from any sales outside of the school district.

(New copyright legislation will be introduced into Parliament in the current session. The proroguing of Parliament twice has left the issues unresolved when legislation died on the order paper or was not even introduced.)



## 8. DL FUNDING AND BUDGETS

### a. Information about funding

Respondents were evenly split when asked “Are you informed, by district and/or school administrator, about the amount of funding the district receives for Distributed Learning programs?”

Some respondents said they were mostly kept in the dark, with no staff input or consultation. And, as one person put it, “Since ministerial funding formulas change a couple of times a year, I always feel disadvantaged or screwed.”

Funds that are provided for DL are supposed to be used to provide DL services. The contract that the school district signs with the ministry to be able to offer a Distributed Learning program (in its 2009–10 school year version) says:

5.02 Upon request by the Ministry, the Board will provide all information necessary to demonstrate, to the Ministry’s satisfaction, that:

- (a) the funds provided under this Agreement are being used to support Learners using services, courses or programs through Distributed Learning; and
- (b) the process used to determine the amount of funding to be allocated to direct and indirect costs by the Board including, but not limited to instruction and technology, is transparent.

5.03 The Board agrees that it will not use funds budgeted to support an educational program, or offer equipment required to participate in a Distributed Learning educational program or course (such as computers), as an incentive to have a Learner register in an Distributed Learning educational program or course. ([http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/docs/dist\\_learn\\_agmt.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/docs/dist_learn_agmt.pdf))

See Appendix II of this report for a description of DL funding for 2010–11 as provided in the Ministry Operating Grants Manual. Per-student funding for each DL student for 2010–11 has been frozen at the 2009–10 amount, while funding for students in face-to-face programs has been increased by about \$1,000 for 2010–11.

The expectation that DL would be used by the government to reduce funding has become a reality for the 2010–11 school year.

## 9. COURSE COMPLETION RATES

### a. Course completion rates

Very little is known about course completion rates on a provincial or district level, even though that should be a key issue for adopting sound policy on DL programs.

As many respondents pointed out, a number of elements affect success of students in DL, including the social circumstances, personal qualities, and supports from home, as well supports at school for those in mixed DL and regular school programs.

Even the baseline from which to measure completion rates is not clear. Should it be based on those students who completed one assignment and were thus counted for funding? Or should it

be based on the number of students who complete at least some work beyond the initial assignment that qualifies them to be counted for funding purposes?

The type of course is a factor, as well.

Are the students signing up for DL because they don't find their courses to be sufficiently challenging?

Are they students who are not successful in the face-to-face program and encouraged to leave their face-to-face school and take a DL program?

Elementary programs depend on parents to support the student, and students are passed on the basis of moving from one grade to another, so the meaning of completion is likely to be different than for these programs than for Grade 10–12 courses, each one of which is a stand-alone course.

Completion rates would be misleading if a student leaving a DL course and registering for the course in a face-to-face school is counted as not completing the course. It is also difficult to calculate completion when a program is on a 12-month, continuous-entry basis or students are allowed to continue in a course until finished even if it takes more than a year.

The Ministry of Education has data from the funding and audit systems, but in the past has said they don't have data they think is reliable on this issue.

## **b. Common reasons for not completing courses**

Often students have unrealistically low expectations of the amount of work required to succeed in a DL course, whether online or by mail. They may have been pressured into signing up for a DL course either by the school or by parents.

Some students do not have the reading or the technology skills necessary for online courses.

Some courses that are much like the old textbook method—read this and answer these questions—discourage an active interest.

Students may not be motivated for a range of reasons, nor have parents who are able to provide the support required.

Internet distractions—Facebook, video games, email—may take away from the focus of coursework.

No assessment is carried out, before signing up for the course, on whether the student has the skill or motivation to be successful in a DL environment.

## **c. What factors could increase the course-completion rate of students register in your DL courses?**

Respondents identified a range of possible ways of improving completion rates.

Some identified teacher factors, such as offering effective professional development in the pedagogy of teaching online and in the technologies that are or could be used. It would help to have more teacher time to follow up with students who stop submitting work.

Others identified course characteristics. Develop more interactive online courses would help and having multi-media experts assist in course design. More user-friendly access to courses. Less emphasis on “any pace” and more specific time-related deadlines. More face-to-face or online meeting time.

#### **d. Shopping around among DL programs for courses**

Shopping around is the practice of students signing up for multiple versions of a course, making a judgement on which is the easiest and sticking with that one. Or it can be getting information from sources such as other students about which are the easiest courses or courses where they are most likely to get a high grade.

This shopping around can be from course offerings from private schools as well as from public school districts since students can be enrolled in a combination of public and independent schools at the same.

Shopping around does exist according to 67.6% of respondents. Only 5.1% said no, while 27.2% don't know.

#### **e. What are the qualities of students who are most likely to succeed in a DL program?**

Not surprisingly, when asked about the qualities for student success, the phrase used by nearly everyone is “self-motivated.”

The second most common comment was some version of support at home. That was followed by “independent learner.” Presumably, the motivation either has to come from the student or the family of the student, with the family particularly being key in the case of elementary students.

The key skills identified are being a good reader and being comfortable with computer technology.

One excellent motivator is when “the student really needs a course and has no other options.”

### **10. MOST IMPORTANT CURRENT ISSUE**

#### **a. What is the most important current issue for DL teachers?**

Nearly every respondent identified workload as the most important current issue. Those who have been teaching in DL over the past several years report that they have experienced increases in the workload as districts have increased numbers of students without the requisite number of teachers.

The number of students was a key element, with no provisions in the collective agreement or the *School Act* to hold the number of students to a load that can be effectively taught.

In addition to equity in teaching load among DL teachers, equity between DL and teachers in face-to-face programs was also important. Some see a maximum student load limits of 200 to 210 for DL programs for secondary courses as being needed and equivalent numbers in elementary programs to maximum class sizes.

This was combined, in many cases, with other specifics that relate to size of student load: class composition and the amount of marking.

A number of other issues were mentioned, but in small numbers compared to the student load issue. These included:

- Access to quality DL courses and resources
- An excess of paperwork—the amount of time required to document for compliance audits
- Need for administrators who have worked as DL teachers and understand the work
- A disconnect between the ministry’s K–12 DL Standards and what can be accomplished with current conditions.

## **11. OTHER ISSUES**

### **a. Teachers teaching on call (TTOC)**

If TTOC are not available, all the work of teaching and marking is waiting when a teacher returns from sick leave or other absence. However, if the TTOC do not have background in a DL environment, they will not be able to carry out the work.

Two approaches were identified to having effective DL TTOC: some districts offer workshops for TTOCs who want to be called for DL work; others have a handbook for TTOC.

### **b. Support in a school for students taking a DL course from another school or district**

In signing the contract with the ministry to operate a DL program, the Board has agreed to offer services to students who are taking a DL course being offered in another school district.

6.07 The Board will provide appropriate support for Learners who reside in the Board’s school district and who are enrolled in an educational program provided by a Distributed Learning School in another school district within British Columbia. Appropriate support includes but is not limited to testing services and supervision, timely sharing of Learner information and records, coordinating reports to Learners and to the Ministry, and any other service that positions the Board as an education provider within a coordinated province-wide distributed learning system.

Schools and teachers are being asked to provide support for students who are taking DL courses that are offered by another school, whether in their own district or another district. The expectation to provide this support often is not calculated in the teaching assignments of non-DL teachers.

## **12. ROLE OF THE EDL PSA**

### **a. Role of the Educators for Distributed Learning PSA**

44.9% of the DL teachers responding were aware of the existence of the PSA, but only 14.2% indicated that they were members of the PSA.

### **b. What role do you think the EDL PSA should play?**

The most common response to this question was, in some form, to improve communication among DL teachers:

- Send out regular communications to PSA members.
- Identify common concerns.
- Create a community among DL teachers.
- Organize online discussions and listserv.
- Develop networking among teachers to overcome the competition between programs.
- Co-ordinate DL teachers at a provincial level to share resources.

Some other roles suggested:

- Advocate for DL teachers within the BCTF.
- Pursue getting DL issues included in the collective agreement.
- Help improve the quality of DL programs.
- Provide PD specifically for online teachers.
- Hold regional conferences and support local LSAs.
- Tell our districts and face-to-face teachers what we do.
- Define a framework for DL programs.

## **13. PARTICIPANTS IN THE DL ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT**

The DL action research project was carried out with consultation from a group of DL teachers from a range of programs. Participants included Dane Allison (Nelson), David Comrie (Kamloops), Kathy Couch (Nelson), Cecelia Griffiths (Burnaby), Gudrun Heckerott (Burnaby), Alfred Hubner (Chilliwack), Perry Mathias (Vancouver), Hedy Miller (Langley), Rod Peters (Vernon), Paul Porter (Kamloops), Chris Rozitis (Vancouver), Nimi Sandhu (Vancouver), and Chris Stewart (Vancouver).



# Appendix I: Bargaining approach

## Example 1

### January 2008—Letter of Understanding

Dear [local president]:

The dual signatures below indicate an agreement between the [ ] School District and the [ ] Teachers' Association relative to the provision of Distributed Learning (DL) courses.

It is agreed that:

- A teacher of a DL course will remain on the staff of the school at which he or she is currently teaching, for staffing purposes, while at the same time delivering a course(s) through the [DL School].
- A teacher of a DL course will also be considered part of the staff of the [DL School].
- Should the teacher of a DL course choose to drop the course from his/her teaching load, the course shall first be offered to other staff members of that school.
- If no-one on the staff of the school wishes to teach the DL course it will be posted to enable all teachers in the district to apply.
- Any DL course generated by the district shall be offered to all teachers in the district through normal posting procedures.
- A generic template for the posting of DL courses will be used, with the only change from posting to posting being the specific course title.
- Class size for a DL course will not exceed current legislated class sizes.
- A DL course must be offered within the framework of the CA relative to the length of day.
- The offering of DL courses for the 2007–08 school year will be reviewed at the end of March, 2008.
- This model for offering DL courses in the [ ] School District will be reviewed in March of 2009.
- At the end of each review noted above, any necessary changes will be resolved with both parties involved.

Signed:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
[ ], Director of Instruction–Personnel Services  
[ ] School District

\_\_\_\_\_  
[ ] President  
[ ] Teachers' Association

## Example 2

### Letter of Understanding between the Board of School Trustees, SD [ ] and the [ ] Teachers' Association

#### Year-Round Distributed Learning [DL school name]

The parties recognize:

That Distributed Learning requires a flexibility and creativity regarding instruction that continues to be bound by the appropriate terms and conditions of the Collective Agreement.

That the implementation of this letter will require constant review and consideration and that the terms of this letter will be bound by the timelines of May 22, 2007 through June 30, 2008. Both parties will meet prior to the end of April 2008 to discuss continuation of the terms outlined or a refinement of the agreement outlined within this letter.

The parties agree:

That an alternate calendar model developed for Distributed Learning be implemented that requires that the work of teachers in Distributed Learning programs be organized throughout a 12-month period but seniority will be accrued as if it were a 10-month assignment. Salary will be paid over a 12-month period for teachers who work over 12 months and be paid on a monthly basis for those teachers who work less than 12 months.

That the [DL school] teacher's weekly instructional assignment be according to Articles 20.5.2 and 20.5.3.

That a year-long calendar, inclusive of ProD days, be developed by the [DL school] staff and be approved by the Board and the [ ]TA and that the calendar be approved no later than June 30, 2007.

That no Distributed Learning teacher be entitled to more than 1.00 FTE assignment and that the preparation time available to Distributed Learning teachers be allocated as outlined in Article 20.7.2.

All other working conditions shall be equivalent to that of a regular secondary teacher including access to established professional development days and TOC coverage unless otherwise agreed to by both the Board and the [ ]TA.

That the workload of Distance Learning teacher[s] shall initially be set by agreement between the Board and the [ ]TA and that this workload be reviewed regularly and collegially with program staff and administrators. If changes are recommended such change shall be approved by the [ ]TA and the Board.

That Distributed Learning positions be filled according to Article 12.4, current letters of understanding, and be based on the qualifications as outlined in Article 13.4 of the Collective Agreement and seniority where applicable.

Signed on this 23rd day of May 2007

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[ ] Teachers' Association

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Board of School Trustees



## Appendix II: Ministry funding of Distributed Learning —reductions for 2010–11

Funding for students in Distributed Learning for the 2010–11 school year will be less than for students in face-to-face (regular school) programs. This reflects a significant change in direction by the Ministry of Education, and will have a negative impact particularly in those districts with large DL programs.

The ministry informs school districts of funding for the next year through its Operating Grants Manual (available online at <http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/k12funding/funding/10-11/estimates/operating-grants-manual.pdf>). This year it provides for a lesser amount for each student in DL, as can be seen from these excerpts from the manual:

### **Basic Allocation**

→ For each eligible school-age full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled in Regular, Continuing Education and Alternate schools and reported in the September enrolment count, 2010/11—**\$6,740**

→ For each eligible school-age full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled in Distributed Learning schools and reported in the September enrolment count, 2010/11—**\$5,851**

### **ENROLMENT-BASED FUNDING (FEBRUARY)**

#### **DISTRIBUTED LEARNING**

##### **Basic Allocation**

→ For each eligible school-age full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled in Distributed Learning in Kindergarten to Grade 9 and reported in the February enrolment count—**\$2,926**

→ For each eligible school-age full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled in Distributed Learning in Grades 10 to 12 and reported in the February enrolment count—**\$5,851**

##### **Non-Graduated Adult Education Students**

→ For each eligible non-graduated Adult Education full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrolled in Distributed Learning and reported in the February enrolment count—**\$4,430**

In addition to these differences in funding for the regular school year, summer-school funding will not be available for Distributed Learning. If students are taking courses over the summer, that must be covered from the funding allocation received from the September or February enrolment count.

### **Reduced funding for DL in 2010–11**

The funding per DL student has been frozen at the per capita amount provided in \$5,851 while it has increased by nearly \$1,000 for the students in regular, non-DL programs. That means that a district with a large DL program will receive less than anticipated from past practice. Chilliwack, for example, with about 600 FTE DL students will get about \$600,000 less than if all those students were in a regular classroom.

The \$5,851 was the amount on a per capita basis in the 2009–10 school year. The increase of nearly \$1,000 for students in regular programs for 2010–11 is not really an increase in funding,

but rather a moving into the per capita funding some elements that were excluded in the past. The major portion is from incorporating funding for the collective agreement and other wage increases from the past four years into the per capita amount, rather than providing it as a separate allocation for labour adjustment.

The teachers in DL programs had their salaries increase at the same rate as those in non-DL programs over the first four years of the collective agreement. By excluding the increase in salaries from the per capita amount for DL students, the Ministry is, in effect, creating a 15% decrease in funding for DL students compared to students in other programs.

In addition, by providing only 50% of the funding from students in the K to 9 programs who are identified on the February count, a further movement of funds away from DL will take place.

## **No DL Summer School**

A further factor is the exclusion of DL programs from funding for summer school.

For the 2009 summer school, many district programs opted to offer their DL courses as summer school programs. Because some districts offered year-round DL programs, there was competitive pressure for all programs to offer courses. Some of these were time limited courses to be finished over the summer. Others were really continuations of courses that students had been taking during the regular school year, but with different teachers who had been hired as summer school teachers.

Two things have changed from the summer of 2009. The Labour Board has ruled that all summer school teachers are covered under the collective agreement, including provisions for salaries, rather than being set unilaterally by boards. While some contracts had provisions for summer school teaching, others were silent. All are covered now under many of the terms of employment during the regular school year.

In addition, the Ministry has made it clear that it will not fund summer DL courses. In 2009, DL programs were not listed in the exclusions of programs from summer school funding; they are listed as being excluded for 2010. If boards wish to offer year-round programs for students, the funding from September and February counts will have to be used to cover teacher salaries during the summer.

## **DL funding—An ever-changing story**

The basis of funding DL programs has changed nearly every year in the last decade. This had lead to confusion and constant change in the staffing and other budget support for DL programs.

Early in the decade, the BC Liberal government lifted the limit on the number of students who would be funded in DL programs. The Deputy Minister, in particular, promoted the any time, any place, any pace idea and encouraged school districts to develop DL programs.

Almost every district felt it had to have a DL school in order not to lose students and funding to other districts that did have these programs. Funding was provided on the same basis as funding for students in regular face-to-face programs. This lead to DL schools in 50 districts and an increase in the number of students in DL programs to about 50,000 (headcount, not full-time equivalent) from the 2,200 cap that had existed at the beginning of the decade.

The Ministry also adopted an unusual method of control of DL programs. The *School Act*, Regulations and Ministerial Orders are the usual tools for regulation of the schools. For DL

programs, however, an additional type of control was adopted—a contract between a Board of Education and the Ministry of Education.

This approach meant that a district had to get permission to offer a DL program and had to agree to many more elements of regulation than for other programs. The district also had to sign a new contract each year, so the Ministry could, in effect, shut down a program if it felt that the contract was not being followed. The most recent contract is for a longer period—effective until 2014.

When this contract approach was adopted, the funding also changed. The district could receive funding for each DL course that a student was taking in Grades 10 to 12 and students could sign up for as many courses as wanted without having to inform even their parent and school. Thus, a secondary student taking a full load of 8 courses in a face-to-face program could bring to the district full funding as a regular student plus 1/8 funding for each DL course taken. This was either a policy adopted without thinking through the implications or intentionally providing an incentive to get many more students into DL programs.

Adjustments were made after it became clear that some students were being used as a cash cow for districts and that some students were signing up for the same course in multiple districts, seemingly as a way to shop for the easiest course and the highest mark. For the 2009/10 school year, funding had essentially settled into a pattern that looked on DL programs as being funded in ways similar to face-to-face programs.

That has changed again for 2010–11. Now DL programs will be funded at a level that is less than funding for face-to-face programs.

### **District funds spent on DL programs—A mixed bag**

When the first contracts on DL between the Ministry and boards were proposed, they provided that a district must spend at least 90% of the funding received by the district for DL on DL programs. That provision was soon dropped because of pressure from districts. It was replaced with a motherhood clause calling for transparency by districts on how funds were being spent. Not surprisingly, many DL teachers report that they are given no information about the funding for DL coming into the district and how those funds are spent.

### **Negative impact of funding cuts on DL teacher workload**

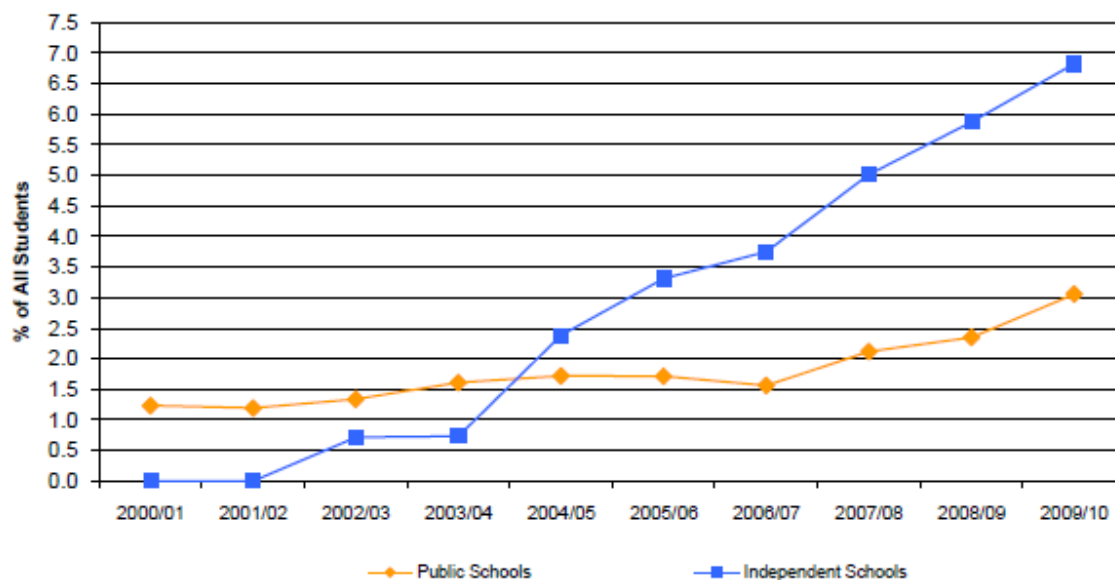
As with the rest of the school system, working conditions for many DL teachers have deteriorated from the heady days of opening up new programs. More students and staff reductions in combination have produced a situation where conditions for many DL teachers are getting worse from one year to the next.

With the changes in provincial funding for DL, along with the shortages in all areas of district budgets, one can only expect that working conditions for DL teachers will continue to deteriorate in the next year.

LK.af:tfu

## Appendix III: DL enrolment, 2001/02 to 2009/10

**Distributed Learning (DL) Students, 2000/01 - 2009/10**  
(Public and Independent)



School Year	Public Schools		Independent Schools		Total # of DL Students
	# of Students	% of All Students	# of Students	% of All Students	
2000/01	7,811	1.2	0	0	7,811
2001/02	7,519	1.2	0	0	7,519
2002/03	8,316	1.3	448	0.7	8,764
2003/04	9,911	1.6	466	0.7	10,377
2004/05	10,429	1.7	1,546	2.4	11,975
2005/06	10,282	1.7	2,190	3.3	12,472
2006/07	9,190	1.6	2,548	3.8	11,738
2007/08	12,355	2.1	3,454	5.0	15,809
2008/09	13,612	2.3	4,061	5.9	17,673
2009/10	17,743	3.1	4,738	6.8	22,481

### Notes:

- 1) Reflects enrolment at September 30th, including only those students who are taking most of their educational program by distributed learning (the DL program is considered the school of authority).
- 2) The numbers reported exclude cross-enrolment. (In 2006/07, changes in distributed learning legislation permitted cross-enrolment in Grades 10, 11 and 12.)
- 3) As students can enrol in DL courses at any time, this will under-represent the actual number of students taking courses by distributed learning in a year. The annual total DL enrolment was 33,022 for 2006/07 and 48,491 for 2007/08. The projected enrolment for 2008/09 is 56,000.

Distributed Learning (DL) Students by School District, 2007/08 - 2009/10

School District		2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	
		% of Students in District	% of Students in District	# of Students	% of Students in District
005	Southeast Kootenay	0.5	0.5	29	0.5
006	Rocky Mountain	1.5	1.2	55	1.7
008	Kootenay Lake	9.5	10.1	632	11.6
010	Arrow Lakes	-	-	-	-
019	Revelstoke	-	-	-	-
020	Kootenay-Columbia	-	0.0	Msk	0.0
022	Vernon	0.7	0.7	53	0.6
023	Central Okanagan	0.6	0.7	191	0.9
027	Cariboo-Chilcotin	2.8	0.9	70	1.2
028	Quesnel	0.4	0.9	32	0.8
033	Chilliwack	7.7	9.3	1,561	11.1
034	Abbotsford	1.6	1.6	334	1.7
035	Langley	1.1	1.4	278	1.4
036	Surrey	2.1	1.7	2,059	3.0
037	Delta	0.9	0.6	159	0.9
038	Richmond	-	0.0	13	0.1
039	Vancouver	1.7	2.1	1,267	2.1
040	New Westminster	2.2	4.6	459	6.4
041	Burnaby	0.9	1.2	299	1.2
042	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	0.3	0.9	153	1.0
043	Coquitlam	0.4	0.9	1,038	3.2
044	North Vancouver	-	-	133	0.8
045	West Vancouver	-	-	-	-
046	Sunshine Coast	0.9	1.2	22	0.6
047	Powell River	4.9	5.9	143	6.1
048	Sea to Sky	-	0.3	Msk	0.1
049	Central Coast	-	-	-	-
050	Halda Gwall	-	-	-	-
051	Boundary	-	-	-	-
052	Prince Rupert	-	-	-	-
053	Okanagan Similkameen	4.0	2.6	115	4.2
054	Bulkley Valley	1.8	1.2	43	1.8
057	Prince George	2.1	2.5	372	2.6
058	Nicola-Similkameen	15.9	11.2	336	12.4
059	Peace River South	1.8	2.4	57	1.4
060	Peace River North	6.0	6.3	434	7.2
061	Greater Victoria	1.3	1.3	313	1.5
062	Sooke	1.2	4.4	313	3.4
063	Saanich	13.8	17.9	2,260	23.3
064	Gulf Islands	-	-	-	-
067	Okanagan Skaha	1.3	1.4	81	1.2
068	Nanaimo-Ladysmith	1.3	1.8	349	2.4
069	Qualicum	1.4	2.2	110	2.4
070	Alberni	1.7	0.9	124	2.8
071	Comox Valley	9.0	8.8	1,214	13.0
072	Campbell River	1.1	0.7	40	0.7
073	Kamloops/Thompson	2.7	2.4	597	4.0
074	Gold Trail	12.3	10.6	97	6.9
075	Mission	4.0	4.6	318	4.9
078	Fraser-Cascade	-	-	-	-
079	Cowichan Valley	0.3	-	23	0.3
081	Fort Nelson	-	-	-	-
082	Coast Mountains	5.9	6.3	411	7.5
083	North Okanagan-Shuswap	1.4	1.6	155	2.2
084	Vancouver Island West	-	-	-	-
085	Vancouver Island North	-	-	Msk	0.1
087	Stikine	-	-	-	-
091	Nechako Lakes	15.7	15.0	992	18.3
092	Nisq'ala	-	-	-	-
093	Conseil scolaire francophone	-	0.0	Msk	0.0
All Public Only		2.1	2.3	17,743	3.1
All Independent Only		5.0	5.9	4,738	6.8
Province (Pub + Ind)		2.4	2.7	22,481	3.5

## Appendix IV

### Distributed Learning: Useful website links

#### BCTF sites:

- BCTF Members' Guide: Part 3—Policies and Procedures (51.11: Distributed Learning)  
<http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/public/AboutUs/MembersGuide/guide.pdf>
- BCTF Research Reports on Distributed Learning  
<http://www.bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=5630#Technology>

#### Government of British Columbia sites:

- Distributed Learning home page  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/)
- Distributed Learning Agreement  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/documents/dist\\_learn\\_agmt.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dist_learn_agmt.pdf)
- Distributed Learning Standards  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist\\_learning/documents/dl\\_standards.pdf](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dl_standards.pdf)
- Distributed Learning Policy  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/active\\_learning\\_distance\\_ed.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/active_learning_distance_ed.htm)
- Distributed Learning Funding Policy  
[http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/distributed\\_learning\\_funding.htm](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/policy/policies/distributed_learning_funding.htm)
- Bill 33  
[http://www.leg.bc.ca/38th2nd/3rd\\_read/gov33-3.htm](http://www.leg.bc.ca/38th2nd/3rd_read/gov33-3.htm)

# Appendix V

## Recommendations on Distributed Learning

You are invited you use this format to submit recommendations relating to distributed learning in BC schools. Send your ideas to Larry Kuehn, [lkuehn@bctf.ca](mailto:lkuehn@bctf.ca).

Issue	Suggested recommendations	To whom?
<b>Number of students</b>		
<b>Equity of DL teaching loads</b>		
<b>Equity with other teachers</b>		
<b>Amount of marking</b>		

Issue	Suggested recommendations	To whom?
<b>Better match of students with DL requirements for success</b>		
<b>Record-keeping for compliance audits</b>		
<b>Competition between districts</b>		
<b>Student shopping around</b>		
<b>Hours of work and work year</b>		



<b>Issue</b>	<b>Suggested recommendations</b>	<b>To whom?</b>
<b>24/7 expectations of students</b>		
<b>TTOCs to cover when sick or otherwise absent</b>		
<b>Work environment/ Health and Safety</b>		
<b>Copyright issues</b>		

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Suggested recommendations</b>	<b>To whom?</b>
<b>Access to appropriate professional development</b>		
<b>Funding for DL programs</b>		
<b>Other issues</b>		

# Notes

# Notes