



CHAPTER 9:

Teachers' priority areas for BCTF bargaining and advocacy

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This report is one of a series documenting the findings of the *Worklife of BC Teachers: 2009 survey*.
For additional information, see www.bctf.ca/TeacherWorklife.aspx.

WORKLIFE OF
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2009



Table of contents

Introduction.....	1
Teachers’ priority areas for improving working and learning conditions	1
Differences in priority areas by gender, grades taught, and teaching experience.....	3
• Gender.....	4
• Elementary and secondary teachers	5
• Years of teaching experience	6
Summary.....	7

List of charts and tables

Charts

Chart 1: Percentage of teachers rating areas of focus as <i>quite</i> or <i>very important</i>	2
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Tables

Table 1: Mean (average) level of importance for each strategy to improve working and learning conditions	3
Table 2: Gender—Areas of focus to improve working and learning conditions	4
Table 3: Grades taught—Areas of focus to improve working and learning conditions.....	5
Table 4: Years of teaching experience—Areas of focus to improve working and learning conditions.....	6

Introduction

One objective of the [Worklife of BC teachers: 2009 survey](#) was to assess on which working and learning conditions teachers would most like to see the BCTF focus its efforts in terms of bargaining, lobbying the provincial government, and other forms of advocacy.

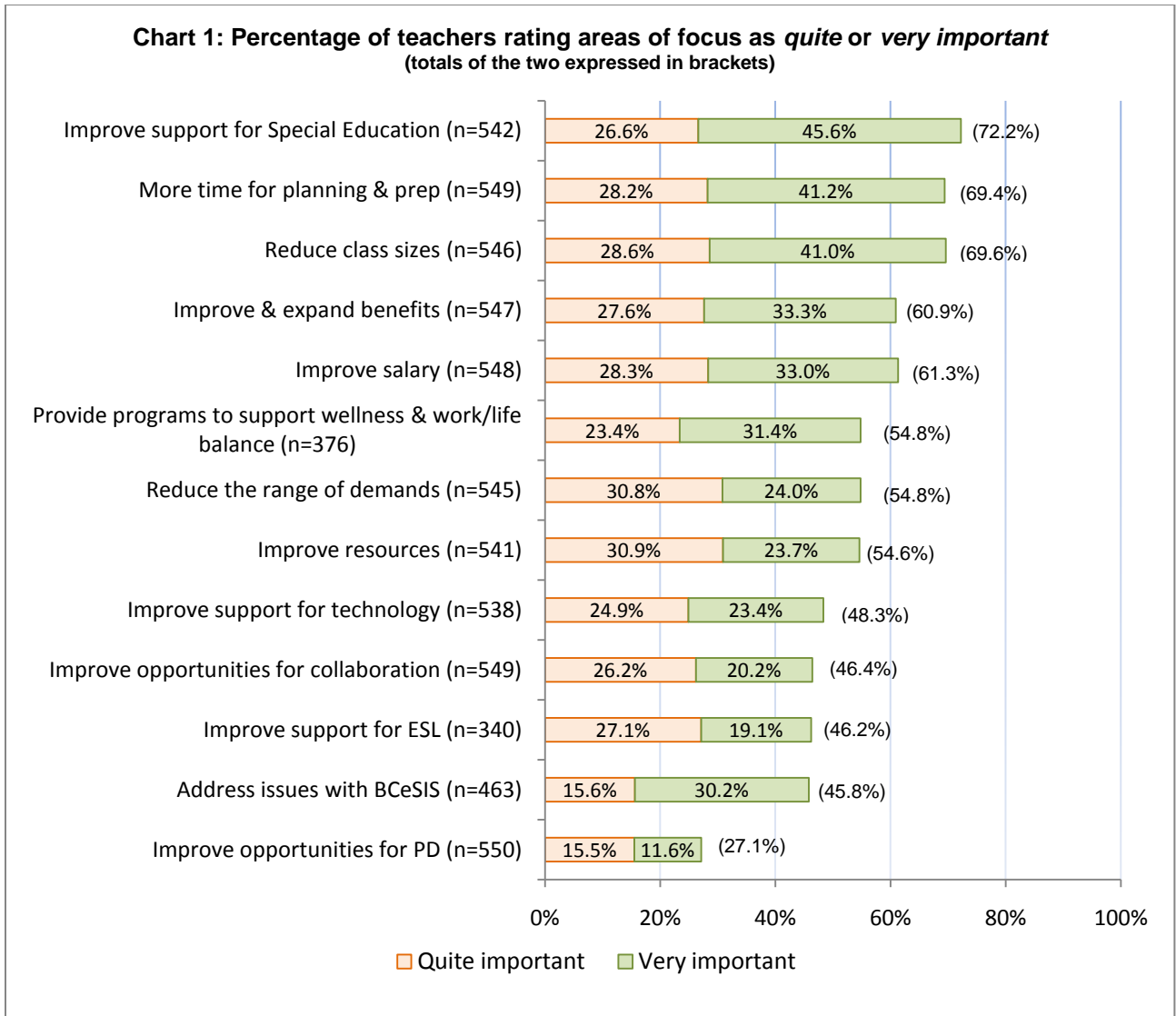
The *Worklife of BC teachers: 2009 survey* concluded with the question: “Which areas of your work should the BCTF focus on to improve your working and learning conditions?” The survey listed 13 potential areas of focus for improving working and learning conditions, asking teachers to rate the level of importance of each of these areas, on a scale where 1=*not at all important* and 5=*very important*.

Teachers' priority areas for improving working and learning conditions

The results show that teachers rate learning conditions as the highest priority for the BCTF to focus on, followed by improving salary and benefits. Chart 1 shows the percentage of respondents ranking each focus area as *quite important* or *very important*, and the combined total. The five most important areas of focus are *improve support for Special Education* (72.2%), *reduce class sizes* (69.6%), *more time for planning and preparation* (69.4%), *improve salary* (61.3%), and *improve and expand benefits* (60.9%). Roughly half of responding teachers rate most other areas of focus as *quite* or *very important* except for *improve opportunities for professional development*, where only 27.1% do so.

Other suggestions made by teachers

The questionnaire provided space for individual teachers to describe other areas of focus in addition to those listed. Suggestions included improving conditions in school libraries, more support for teacher mentorship, improving working conditions for teachers teaching on call (TTOC), more support to address interpersonal issues at work, addressing assessment issues, funding advocacy, and improving the image of teachers in the public and the media. A few teachers suggested provisions or programs to support wellness and work/life balance.



Differences in priority areas by gender, grades taught, and teaching experience

While it is important to assess overall priorities for teachers in the survey, the data also provide insights into the differing priorities among teacher groups. This section presents the average (mean) level of importance for each area of focus for all survey respondents as well as a comparison of means by gender, grades taught, and years of teaching experience.

Table 1 shows the number of teachers who answered each item and the mean (average) score for each area of focus, listed in the order of importance based on teacher responses. The five most important areas for the BCTF to focus on to improve working and learning conditions are: *improve support for Special Education* (4.04), *more time for planning and preparation* (3.98), *reduce class sizes* (3.94), *improve salary* (3.80), and *improve and expand benefits* (3.78).

Table 1: Mean (average) level of importance for each strategy to improve working and learning conditions

Issues for BCTF to focus on to improve working and learning conditions	Number of responses	Mean level of importance 1=not at all; 5=very
Improve support for Special Education	542	4.04
More time for planning and prep	549	3.98
Reduce class sizes	546	3.94
Improve salary	548	3.80
Improve and expand benefits	547	3.78
Improve resources (e.g., books, computers)	541	3.60
Provide programs to support wellness and work/life balance	376	3.55
Reduce the range of demands (e.g., daily physical activity)	545	3.48
Improve support for technology (e.g., BC enterprise Student Information System (BCeSIS), Individual Education Plans (IEPs), reporting formats, etc.)	538	3.43
Improve opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers	549	3.40
Improve support for English as a Second Language (ESL)	340	3.31
Address issues with BCeSIS	463	3.29
Improve opportunities for professional development	550	2.97

Tables 2 to 4 on the following pages examine how priorities differ with respect to gender, grades taught, and years of teaching experience, by comparing the mean scores for each area of focus, by group.

Gender

A comparison of means by gender reveals differences in the importance placed on various areas of focus (Table 2). Female teachers rate all areas of focus at a higher level of importance (on average) than do male teachers, except for *improve salary* and *improve and expand benefits*, which male teachers rate slightly higher.

Four areas of focus that female teachers rate, on average, noticeably higher in importance than male teachers include *improve support for Special Education*, *improve support for ESL*, *improve support for technology*, and *address issues with BCeSIS*.

Table 2: Gender—Areas of focus to improve working and learning conditions (mean score)

Areas of focus	Gender		
	Female	Male	Sample
Improve support for Special Education	4.23	3.37	4.03
More time for planning and prep	4.02	3.83	3.98
Reduce class sizes	4.01	3.69	3.93
Improve salary	3.76	3.96	3.81
Improve and expand benefits	3.73	3.95	3.78
Improve resources (e.g., books, computers)	3.70	3.30	3.61
Provide programs to support wellness and work/life balance	3.68	3.21	3.56
Reduce the range of demands (e.g., daily physical activity)	3.57	3.15	3.48
Improve support for technology (e.g., BCeSIS, IEPs, reporting formats, etc.)	3.56	2.97	3.42
Improve opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers	3.52	3.00	3.40
Improve support for ESL	3.53	2.62	3.31
Address issues with BCeSIS	3.45	2.82	3.29
Improve opportunities for professional development	3.05	2.74	2.98

Elementary and secondary teachers

Some of the gender differences in priorities may be due to the concentration of female teachers in elementary grades and male teachers in secondary grades. Table 3 shows that secondary teachers do rate *improve salary* and *improve and expand benefits* higher than elementary teachers, suggesting these factors are related to gender. However, unlike the gender comparison, there are three areas that secondary teachers rate higher in importance (on average) than elementary teachers. These include *more time for planning and prep*, *address issues with BCeSIS*, and *provide programs to support wellness and work/life balance*.

Table 3: Grades taught—Areas of focus to improve working and learning conditions (mean score)

Areas of focus	Grades taught		
	Elementary	Secondary	Sample
Improve support for Special Education	4.28	3.61	4.04
More time for planning and prep	3.92	4.19	3.98
Reduce class sizes	3.99	3.87	3.94
Improve salary	3.76	3.96	3.82
Improve and expand benefits	3.71	3.97	3.79
Improve resources (e.g., books, computers)	3.64	3.55	3.58
Provide programs to support wellness and work/life balance	3.53	3.66	3.54
Reduce the range of demands (e.g., daily physical activity)	3.60	3.35	3.49
Improve support for technology (e.g., BCeSIS, IEPs, reporting formats, etc.)	3.47	3.43	3.43
Improve opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers	3.44	3.31	3.39
Improve support for ESL	3.56	2.86	3.31
Address issues with BCeSIS	3.25	3.35	3.29
Improve opportunities for professional development	3.01	2.86	2.96

* Numbers too small for comparisons for teachers in combined K–7 and 8–12 grades (n=45 teachers).

Years of teaching experience

It is reasonable to expect that priorities may differ between the least-experienced and the most-experienced teachers. Table 4 shows the mean level of importance for each strategy by years of teaching experience. There is some variation in the importance assigned to each area of focus, especially between the least- and most-experienced teachers.

Teachers with less than 10 years' experience, on average, rate the importance of *improve resources (e.g., books, computers)* and *improve opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers* somewhat higher than teachers with 20 or more years' experience.

Newer teachers rate technology concerns as less important than their more-experienced peers. The mean score for *improve support for technology (e.g., BCeSIS, IEPs, reporting formats, etc.)* increases with years of teaching experience, as does *address issues with BCeSIS*.

Mid-career teachers assign a somewhat lower priority to *improve salary* and *improve and expand benefits* compared to the least- and most-experienced teachers. Teachers with 20 or more years' experience assign a higher priority to *provide programs to support wellness and work/life balance* compared to the least-experienced and mid-career teachers.

Table 4: Years of teaching experience—Areas of focus to improve working and learning conditions (mean score)

Area of focus	Years of teaching experience			
	Less than 10 years	10 to 19 years	20 or more years	Sample
Improve support for Special Education	4.01	4.01	4.07	4.04
More time for planning and prep	3.96	4.03	3.93	3.97
Reduce class sizes	3.89	3.95	3.94	3.93
Improve salary	3.80	3.68	3.91	3.80
Improve and expand benefits	3.70	3.61	3.97	3.78
Improve resources (e.g., books, computers)	3.67	3.64	3.53	3.60
Provide programs to support wellness and work/life balance	3.45	3.44	3.73	3.55
Reduce the range of demands (e.g., daily physical activity)	3.31	3.53	3.52	3.47
Improve support for technology (e.g., BCeSIS, IEPs, reporting formats, etc.)	3.05	3.37	3.65	3.42
Improve opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers	3.58	3.34	3.36	3.40
Address issues with BCeSIS	2.91	3.20	3.55	3.28
Improve opportunities for professional development	2.89	2.93	3.07	2.98

Summary

Most important areas of focus

The survey results provide useful information for the BCTF regarding teachers' priorities for collective bargaining and advocacy efforts. The five most important areas of focus (in order of importance) are improved support for Special Education, more time for planning and preparation, reduced class size, and improvements in salary and benefits. At least 60% of teachers in the survey ranked these areas of focus as *quite important* or *very important*.

Differences in priorities by gender, grades taught, and experience

Priorities differ among teacher groups. Female teachers (on average) rate all areas of focus except for improving salary and benefits as more important than male teachers do. Secondary teachers assign a higher priority to providing more time for planning and prep, addressing issues with BCeSIS, programs to support wellness and work/life balance, and improving salaries and benefits. Elementary teachers rate the importance of improving support for Special Education and ESL students considerably higher than secondary teachers do. Teachers with less than ten years' experience assign higher importance to improving resources (e.g., books, computers) and opportunities for collaboration and sharing with peers. Newer teachers rate technology concerns as less important than their more-experienced peers do.

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