

BCTF Research Report

Part of the BCTF Information Handbook

SECTION III
2008-WLC-01

Changes in specialist teaching positions and student enrolment: 2001–02 to 2007–08

bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=5630

By Margaret White
Research Analyst

The public education system in British Columbia responds to the diverse needs of students by offering specialty programs that address the unique needs of a student group (e.g., English as a Second Language) or offer a specialized service to students as a whole (e.g., library services). Prior to 2002, provisions to protect specialist teacher/student ratios were negotiated and protected within the collective agreement with the goal of ensuring all students receive the support they need to succeed. In 2002, the Liberal government enacted Bill 28 which effectively removed guaranteed levels of specialist services such as librarians, counsellors, English as a Second Language, as well as special education and learning resource teachers. Decision-making about staffing for specialty programs was left to the discretion of individual school districts. This report describes the changes in specialist teaching positions and student enrolment, between 2001–02 and 2007–08, and examines the impact of Bill 28 on student access to specialist teachers.

The data in Table 1 shows that specialist programs experienced a significant loss of FTE teaching positions between 2001–02 and 2007–08. The programs with the greatest loss of teaching positions include English as a Second Language (-22.1%), Library Services (-20.8%), and Special Education (-14.9%). There are now 604.97 fewer Special Education FTE teachers, 224.43 fewer English as a Second Language FTE teachers, and 191.83 fewer FTE Teacher-Librarians than in 2001–02.

Table 1: Specialist teacher FTE positions: 2001–02 to 2007–08

Program	FTE Specialist Teachers			
	2001-02	2007-08	Change	% Change
Library services	921.79	729.96	-191.83	-20.8%
Counselling	990.92	915.80	-75.12	-7.6%
Special education	4051.47	3446.50	-604.97	-14.9%
English as a 2nd Language	1015.60	791.17	-224.43	-22.1%
Aboriginal education	205.89	190.88	-15.01	-7.3%

The decline in specialist teaching positions cannot be attributed solely to changes in student enrolment. Chart 1 shows that FTE student enrolment increased in the English as a Second Language program by 3.9% and in the Aboriginal Education program by 17.9% between 2001–02 and 2007–08. Yet both programs experienced a loss of specialist teaching positions. Table 2 shows that since 2001–02, Aboriginal FTE student enrolment increased by 8,452.6 FTE students. Yet there are 15.01 fewer FTE Aboriginal education teachers in 2007–08 than in 2001–02.

Chart 1: Percent change in FTE teachers and FTE student enrolment: 2001–02 to 2007–08

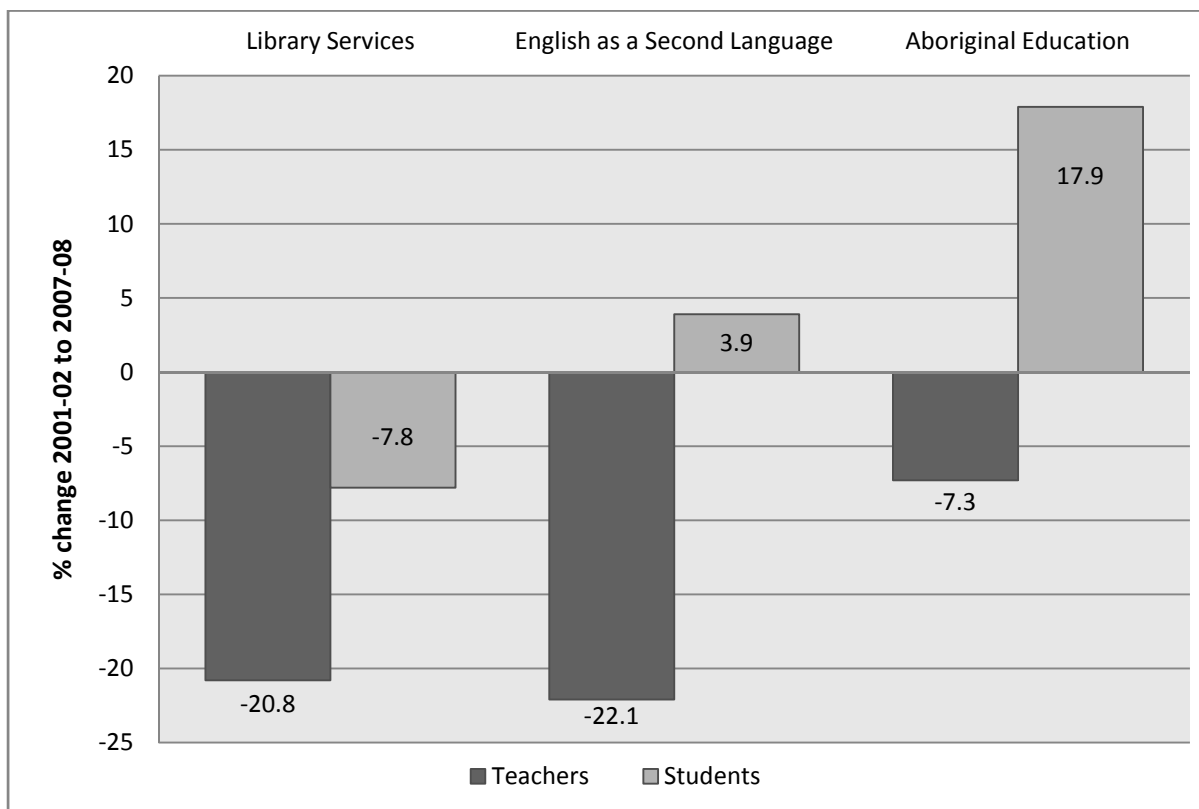


Table 2: Public school student enrolment: 2001–02 to 2007–08

	2001-02	2007-08	Change	% change
FTE Students*				
School-aged students	589,201.6	543,019.2	-46,182.4	-7.8%
English as a 2nd Language students	56,676.3	58,898.5	+2,222.2	+3.9%
Aboriginal students	47,130.8	55,583.4	+8,452.6	+17.9%
Headcount				
Special education students	65,701	57,349	-8,352	-12.7%

Ministry of Education. Student Statistics: 2003–04 to 2007–08, Full-Year Summary Report, January 2008.
 Ministry of Education. Student Statistics: 2001–02 to 2005–06, Full-Year Summary Report, December 2005.
 Ministry of Education. Summary of Key Information: 2002–03, February 2003.

Students in British Columbia today have less access to specialist teachers than in 2001–02. Table 3 shows changes in student/specialist teacher ratios, in those programs for which comparable data is available. Between 2001–02 and 2007–08, the number of FTE students per FTE specialist teacher increased from 639.19 to 743.90 students in Library Services, from 55.80 to 74.45 students in ESL programs, and from 228.91 to 291.20 students in Aboriginal Education programs.

Table 3: Ratio of FTE students per FTE specialist teacher: 2001–02 and 2007–08

Program	2001-02			2007-08		
	Students	Teachers	Students/Teacher	Students	Teachers	Students/Teacher
Library Services*	589,201.6	921.79	639.19	543,019.2	729.96	743.90
ESL	56,676.3	1015.60	55.80	58,898.5	791.17	74.45
Aboriginal Education**	47,130.8	205.89	228.91	55,583.4	190.88	291.20

*Based on FTE school-aged public school students and FTE Teacher-librarians.

**Based on FTE Aboriginal students and FTE specialist teachers in the Aboriginal education program.

It is important to note that these numbers describe the relative and absolute changes in staffing levels and student enrolment. They do not capture the changing complexity of student needs which may increase the demand for specialist teachers beyond restoring staffing levels to pre-2002 levels. For example, children living with the effects of poverty may need additional educational support. The BC child poverty rate increased from 20.9% in 2005¹ to 21.9% in 2006, with BC recording the worst child poverty rate in all of Canada for the fifth consecutive year. Poverty affects children in school districts across the province. Census data reveals that a number of rural and suburban municipalities have higher than average child poverty rates as do urban centres such as Vancouver and Victoria. As of 2006, at least 181,000 children in BC were living in poverty², increasing the need for specialized educational services to support students to overcome educational barriers associated with poverty.

When specialist teacher staffing ratios were removed from the collective agreement, an important protection was lost for some of the most vulnerable students in the public education system. The data in this report shows that specialist teaching positions were particularly hard hit by the enactment of Bill 28, as were the students who need access to the professional services of specialist teachers.

MW:av/tfeu

RT09-0005
September 2008

¹ First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. BC Campaign 2000. 2007 Child Poverty Report Card, Fact Sheet #2.

² First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. Press release. BC's child poverty rate still worst in Canada for fifth consecutive year in 2006. May 5th, 2008

Appendix 1: FTE Specialist teachers staffing levels by school district, 2007–08

School District	FTE Specialist Teachers				
	Aboriginal Education	Library Services	English as a 2 nd Language	Counselling Programs	Special Education
Southeast Kootenay	.	7.69	.30	7.74	33.59
Rocky Mountain	.10	4.23	.20	6.80	13.69
Kootenay Lake	1.59	2.55	.30	7.43	29.34
Arrow Lakes50	3.34
Revelstoke	.	2.20	.	2.45	8.81
Kootenay-Columbia	.60	5.62	.40	6.66	26.78
Vernon	4.62	9.54	4.10	13.47	54.20
Central Okanagan	4.00	32.22	3.74	29.13	117.08
Cariboo-Chilcotin	11.31	10.00	7.36	8.67	40.70
Quesnel	2.34	7.00	4.89	9.23	34.97
Chilliwack	3.50	19.23	6.03	26.51	61.19
Abbotsford	3.26	7.38	27.87	24.35	97.80
Langley	2.00	15.60	24.45	36.38	126.80
Surrey	15.37	92.90	178.00	103.33	468.62
Delta	.71	24.17	24.82	30.14	140.11
Richmond	2.00	27.17	58.14	39.89	121.79
Vancouver	10.43	85.39	149.71	99.86	331.85
New Westminster	1.80	2.69	4.71	6.70	19.76
Burnaby	10.70	36.20	78.44	44.62	136.13
Maple-Ridge-Pitt Meadows	3.00	14.48	16.50	19.90	112.32
Coquitlam	3.30	40.10	55.36	62.52	184.75
North Vancouver	6.10	25.13	17.49	27.42	88.34
West Vancouver	.	8.97	10.54	11.36	37.38
Sunshine Coast	3.86	4.60	.40	5.00	28.34
Powell River	2.95	2.35	.60	4.80	15.20
Howe Sound	.90	4.50	2.77	4.58	28.57
Central Coast	2.00	1.00	1.50	.50	.50
Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte	1.23	.60	.89	.49	1.13
Boundary	1.99	2.07	.	2.75	9.57
Prince Rupert	9.20	2.71	7.05	3.75	15.58
Okanagan-Similkameen	.95	3.28	2.60	4.11	14.61
Bulkley Valley	.80	6.10	.	3.63	19.68
Prince George	2.92	23.65	13.50	21.35	86.85
Nicola Similkameen	1.85	3.92	.	5.16	23.98
Peace River South	3.17	4.34	.82	8.92	17.85
Peace River North	2.00	6.80	1.45	8.22	45.33
Greater Victoria	10.40	22.20	12.67	27.02	114.56
Sooke	3.50	9.20	2.80	15.25	35.01
Saanich	3.97	10.78	2.91	9.01	47.86
Gulf Islands	.25	1.77	.30	1.83	9.06
Okanagan Skaha	4.61	10.60	2.46	12.77	50.04
Nanaimo-Ladysmith	5.42	20.46	6.61	16.33	100.91
Qualicum	.29	5.88	1.30	7.06	26.61
Alberni	3.80	3.40	7.45	5.79	17.47
Comox Valley	4.23	6.50	1.82	15.57	57.36
Campbell River	5.61	6.66	6.41	7.98	37.65
Kamloops-Thompson	5.00	19.43	1.07	18.80	96.00
Gold Trail	.	1.75	2.50	1.70	12.11
Mission	1.32	13.90	6.16	14.06	26.29
Fraser-Cascade	1.00	2.99	.81	3.05	13.11
Cowichan Valley	7.00	8.99	5.00	10.55	39.97
Fort Nelson	.	1.88	.	2.29	6.01
Coast Mountains	5.16	10.46	5.80	10.24	39.48
North Okanagan-Shuswap	3.50	12.63	1.00	10.33	45.67
Vancouver Island West	.	1.00	1.70	.50	3.90
Vancouver Island North	.50	2.05	1.55	2.36	15.56
Stikine	1.00	.50	.20	.	2.00
Nechako Lakes	1.10	5.00	1.50	9.00	31.00
Nisga'a	2.50	1.00	.50	1.50	2.50
Conseil scolaire francophone	.17	4.55	13.72	14.49	19.84
Total	190.88	729.96	791.17	915.80	3446.50

Source: Ministry of Education. Form 1530 Data: 1997–98 to 2007–08, April 2007–08.