



Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

## 2009-2010 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

to the Vancouver Board of Education  
Committee III / V



25 February 2009

# VSTA 2009-2010 BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

February 25, 2009

The Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association is cognizant of the local and provincial economic context within which these budget consultations are taking place, and has carefully considered the VBE forecast of a significant funding shortfall for the 2009-2010 school year. Though the provincial budget has specified a modest increase in education funding dollars, the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association notes that even though the provincial budget has been tabled, it will not be passed by the legislature until after the election in May. The VSTA notes that the modest increase in education funding from the province does not keep pace with actual cost pressures which continue to rise. The net effect is that the marginal funding increase by the province will force the VBE to make cuts to services. In this economic climate, the VSTA's budget priorities for 2009-2010 are founded on two principles that the VSTA believes should underlie all budgetary and operational considerations: stability and the maintenance of direct services to students. Therefore, the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association recommends the following priorities for the 2009-2010 VBE budget:

## **1. Commit sufficient instructional staffing to ensure full compliance at the secondary level with the class size and composition limits.**

*Despite the efforts of the Board to comply with Section 76, Vancouver secondary schools hold the dubious distinction of having the highest number of class size and composition violations in the province. The Board's October 2008 Report on the Organization of Classes confirms the trend of increasing numbers of class size violations.*

*(Table 1) The VBE 2009-2010 Budget should provide staffing that ensures that Vancouver secondary schools are fully compliant with limits set out in Section 76. No class should exceed the class size and composition limits set out in Section 76 of the School Act. Additionally, we need to be clear that adequate staffing should be provided from September and not added in dribs and drabs as happened in September, October and November of 2008. This caused classes and staffing to be re-organized more than once and was very disruptive. Unfortunately, since the inception of Bill33/Section 76, this has been the pattern of adding staffing for secondary schools in Vancouver and gave rise to the now ubiquitous term "hokey-pokey staffing". We strongly urge this Board to ensure adequate staffing ratios from September 1, 2009. Teachers are adamant that they do not want these disruptions again.*

**Table 1 Increasing Trend of Secondary Class Size Violations 2007-08 to 2008-09**

2007/2008 October 5	2008/2009 September 26
451 classes	528 classes

Source: 2008 Report on the Organization of Classes

**2. Direct resources to teaching and learning.**

*The 2007-08 staffing entitlement for secondary school-based administration provided for 44.85 FTE administrators, while the actual number of administrators assigned was 53 FTE. This illustrates that school-based administrative positions are subsidized by the diversion of instructional blocks from teaching and learning. (Table 2) The result of this school-based administrative staffing subsidy is increased class size across all classes. From 2007-08 to 2008-09, the average class size in Vancouver secondary school increased by 2.81 percent. (Table 3) Adequate provision of enrolling and non-enrolling staff reduces school based problems and resultant administrative tasks. Additionally, in Vancouver between 2001-2007 the number of administrators was up by 4.9% while the number of teachers decreased by 6.3%. Equally, with the decline in enrolment, there has not been a concomitant decline in the number of school or board-based administrators, though we have seen a decline in the number of teaching staff. The VSTA recognizes that on occasion Vice Principals might actually direct their efforts toward teaching; it must be noted, however, that this is the most expensive teaching in the district. Of equal concern is the growth of district-based administrative positions. The Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association urges the Board to review district-based administrative costs, minimize the bureaucracy, and redirect cost savings directly into school-based services for students.*

**Table 2 Actual Secondary School Based Administrative FTE vs. Administrative Staffing Entitlement in 2007-08**

Actual Number of Secondary Administrators	Secondary Administrative Staffing Allocation	Total Administrative FTE Diverted from Instruction	Number of Instructional Blocks Diverted from Instruction (8.15 x 8 blocks)
53	44.85	8.15 FTE	65.2

Source: VBE Secondary Staffing Allotment Documents for 2007-2008

**Table 3 Current Trend Showing Increasing Average Class Size in Vancouver Secondary Schools**

2007 Vancouver Secondary Schools Average Class Size	2008 Vancouver Secondary Schools Average Class Size	% Increase in Average Class Size of Vancouver Secondary Schools
24.9	25.6	↑ 2.81 %

Source: B.C. Ministry of Education Class Size Reports for 2007 and 2008

### 3. Direct support and resources for diverse learning needs into the classroom.

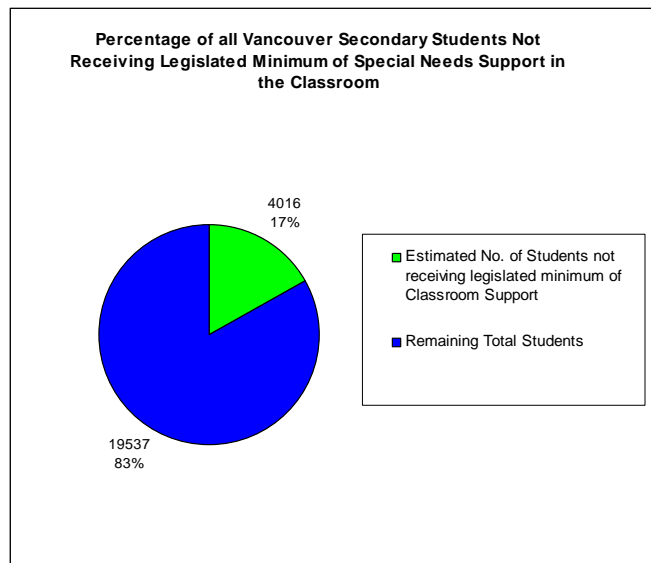
The VBE's October 2008 Report on the Organization of Classes identifies 1004 classes with more than 3 Ministry designated students. Even by a conservative estimate, this figure represents 4016 adolescents with challenging learning needs who are not receiving adequate levels of specialized services for which they are entitled through legislation. (Table 4) These 4016 students represent 17.05 % of the total number of Vancouver secondary school students. (Figure 1) This number fails to capture the large number of "grey-area" students who have challenging learning needs, but who have not been designated by the Ministry, those who are still waiting to be tested, and those who have never made it on to the waiting list despite being referred by a classroom teacher simply because the number of available spots for testing is capped.

**Table 4 Number of Vancouver Secondary Classes and Students Affected by Violations of Class Composition Legislation (Section 76, BC School Act)**

Vancouver Secondary Classes with More than 3 Ministry Designated Students in 2008	Estimated <b>Minimum</b> Number of Ministry Designated Students Not Receiving Legislated Minimum Levels of Service in 2008
1004	4016

Source: 2008 Report on the Organization of Classes

**Figure 1 Percentage of All Vancouver Secondary Students Not Receiving Legislated Minimum of Special Needs Support in the Classroom**



Source: VBE 2009 Ready Reference and 2008 Report on the Organization of Classes. All numbers current as of October 1, 2008.

**4. Support on-going Board advocacy for additional funding to address Class Size/ Class Composition issues, including mid-year improvements.**

*The VBE, together with stakeholder groups, need to continue advocacy efforts with the Government to improve funding levels and to create consistent and stable funding to effectively implement Section 76 of the School Act, and seek improvements to existing legislation. The VSTA extends its cooperation to the Board and other stakeholder groups to work for solutions that will meet the complex needs of Vancouver School District and Vancouver's diverse learner needs.*

**5. Adequate funding of learning resources to support new curriculum and unfunded Ministry initiatives.**

*Apart from the new Math and Science curricula mandated for several grades over the last several years, ongoing development of curricula in a wide variety of subject areas and new, unfunded Ministry initiatives, such as the Grad Transitions program, means that new resources to implement and support these courses and programs must be found. The VSTA recommends that the Board target funds specifically to address school-based funding shortfalls due to the elimination of revenue previously generated by school fees. Additionally, the Board must ensure that funds for classroom resources not be diverted to offset the costs of the implementation of new technology such as BCeSIS. Additionally, new funding resources must be found to offset the costs of replacing computer hardware that was rendered obsolete by the recent computer virus problem.*

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association urges the Board of Trustees to maintain the stability of the system overall by focusing the diminishing resources of the district toward direct services to students at the school level. We encourage the Board to carefully consider the recommendations of the VSTA, and we are eager to work in partnership with the Board to ensure the cuts to services that appear to be inevitable are kept as far away as possible from students in the classroom.

