

SUPPORT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN CLASSROOMS

**VESTA Recommendations for the
Vancouver Board of Education
2009-10 Operating Budget**

2009 February 25



SUPPORT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS IN CLASSROOMS

VESTA believes that the overriding principle to all budget decisions should be that they support students and teachers in classrooms. Any proposed additions or reductions in the 2009-2010 budget should always keep this in mind.

With that, VESTA is bringing to you the following priorities:

1. COMMIT TO FULLY ADDRESSING CLASS SIZE AND COMPOSITION CONCERNS

The Board must commit to staffing levels that keep class size and class composition configurations within the limits identified in Section 76.1 of the School Act, and provide sufficient resources so that meaningful decisions can be made at the school level when those limits are reached.

While the Board has met the School Act's class size regulations at the elementary level, composition issues remain far too prevalent. We are also aware of the situation in the secondary schools, where the class size and class composition statistics are shocking and among the worst in the province.

The learning conditions *are not* adequate for student learning in those classrooms, despite what was claimed in the Superintendent's October 15th report to the Ministry that was approved by the previous Board. The budget that you are developing needs to allocate sufficient funding to address class composition issues such as exist right now in elementary classrooms in the District where four or more students with special needs are stacked in a class. The budget should also provide sufficient staffing allocation to schools so that the district Weighting Formula (*see attachment*), which was developed over a number of years, will be adhered to (as was intended) rather than be used as guidance or be simply ignored.

2. MOVE EXPENDITURES ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS TO EXPENDITURES DIRECTLY IN CLASSROOMS

As you may be aware, your 1998-2001 Collective Agreement with teachers specified several specialist-support-teacher ratios, so that numbers of specialists in areas like ESL and Learning Assistance were linked to numbers of students. The contractual language was nuanced and detailed, and fit the needs of our learning community in Vancouver as the language was bargained with those needs in mind. At the start of the 2002 school year, legislative and contractual changes abolished these ratios as well as targeted funds for students designated with special needs.

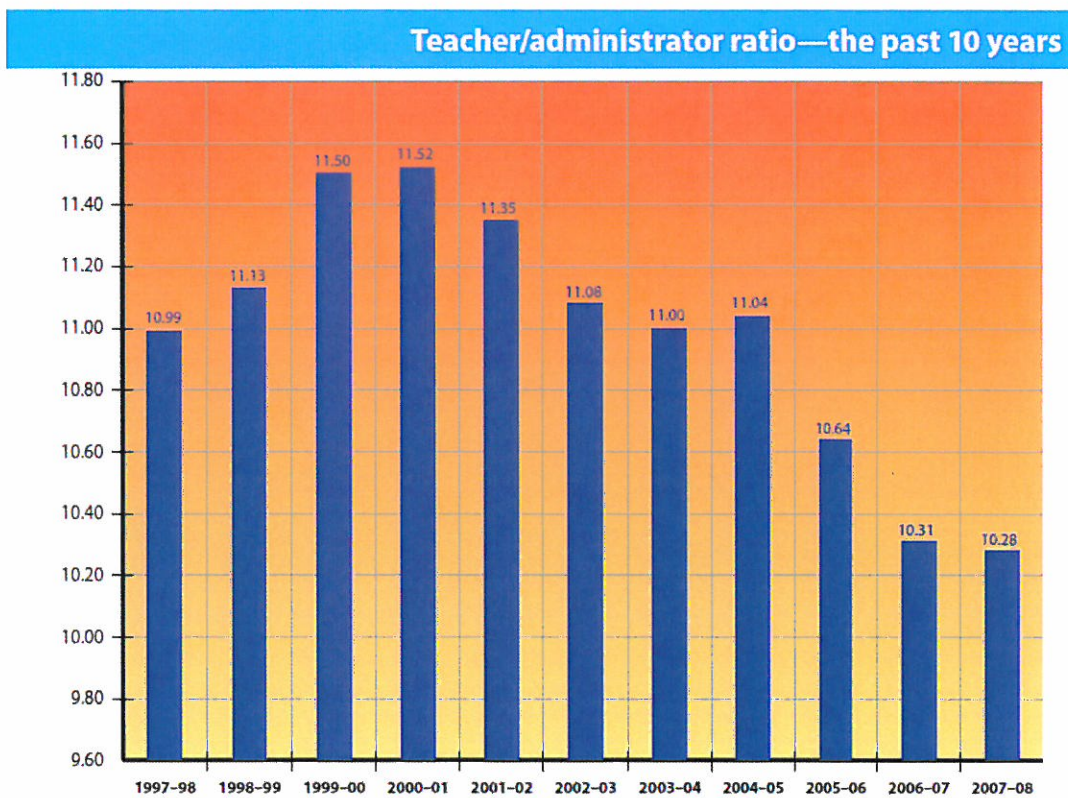
Since the legislated changes, which are being challenged in court, there are fewer teachers per administrator today than there were eight years ago. Fifty of the sixty public school

districts in BC show a decrease in the number of teachers per administrator, including Vancouver.

Attached to this document is a research report from last year that looks at teacher/administrators ratios across BC from 2001-2002 through 2006-2007. In looking at *Table 1*, you will see that while Vancouver had a -6.3% change in teachers, there was a 4.9% increase in administrators during that time.

Please note that this does not take into consideration middle-management or positions that have been added to Vancouver's operating budget over the past few years – such as the Alternative Program Coordinator, the Healthy Living Coordinator, the Sustainability Coordinator, or additional staff in ICT. It does not take into consideration the number of initiatives that the district has taken on, some because they have been imposed by the Ministry of Education and others because of decisions made at the district level, that have kept people in administrative roles occupied with activities not as closely associated with our core purpose – that is, the learning that occurs in classrooms.

The graphic below gives the overall trend for the province. Vancouver is in keeping with that trend.



Data source*: Ministry of Education. Summary of Key Information: 2006-2007, p 44. Teacher Statistics: 2003-2004 to 2007-2008, p. 3 & 5.

Looking at more recent data, almost two-thirds of school districts reported a decrease in FTE teaching positions between 2006-07 and 2007-08 compared to about one-third of school districts reporting a decrease in FTE positions for Administrative Officers, Education Assistants, Other Professionals, and Clerical staff.

Between 2006-07 and 2007-08, Vancouver experienced the greatest loss of FTE Teachers (-71.98) in the province. This time two years ago, the Board of the day chose to cut non-enrolling staffing at the elementary level above and beyond what was tied to a decline in enrolment. In conjunction with the 2002 strips to your Collective Agreement with teachers, the former Board's decision two years ago has had a profoundly negative effect on services to low incidence and high incidence students with special needs, as well as the district's ESL learners.

The former Board's decision, along with the overall teacher/administrator trend over the past nine years, has also had a detrimental effect on schools' capacity to deliver sufficient teacher-librarian services. Canadian research over the past decade has identified a crisis in Canadian school libraries and found that student achievement is higher in schools where the library is open all day and a professional teacher-librarian is on duty full-time.

VESTA's advice to trustees is to go carefully through the divisional budget, and to look for every possible way to move expenditures on administrative costs to expenditures on classrooms.

This may mean elimination of some programs and initiatives at the district level. This may mean fewer support staff in the Superintendent's Office. This may mean looking at different ways of distributing principals and vice-principals so that some of them are assigned to more than one worksite while removing any teaching responsibilities they have – in other words, achieving a cost savings by having fewer administrators, but maintaining the same FTE of school-based administration actually doing "administration work."

It should not mean fewer teachers.

3. SCALE-BACK BCeSIS IMPLEMENTATION

As stated at Committee I numerous times since 2004, VESTA understands the need to replace the outdated student information systems in school offices, so that accurate student FTE can be maintained, and so that student records can be more easily transferred from school to school. These were the reasons cited by the 2002-2005 Board for going ahead with the BCeSIS project. However, since then the project has expanded, without a formal Board decision, to expand to the classroom – which has raised a number of concerns from teachers, some of which are the same as what we expressed in 2004, and some of which have arisen as the project has unfolded. To reiterate our position articulated at Committee I in January of this year, the classroom-based components of BCeSIS are not

something Vancouver elementary teachers welcome nor view as anything but a misuse of funds. Our recommendations presented at Committee I stand, and are as follows:

That the Board revise its BCeSIS implementation plan to limit its use to that of an office-based administrative/management tool replacing SIS and TURBO, rather than a mandatory classroom system across the district; and,

That the Board conduct a full audit of BCeSIS expenditures from 2005 to the present before approving any additional funds to this project.

4. IMPLEMENT VESTA'S RESOURCE TEAM TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

VESTA is asking trustees to give careful consideration of VESTA's set of Resource Team Task Force Recommendations, which were first brought to trustees in the 2006-2007 school year, and again last school year during the budget setting process. In order to improve support for ESL learners and for students with special needs, the Board should implement the attached VESTA recommendations, some of which have cost implications and organizational changes.

5. TAKE ACTION ON EARLY IDENTIFICATION & WAIT-LISTS FOR SERVICES

On a related note, VESTA members are very aware of the needs young learners have when they enter our schools. While some children have their needs identified in pre-school, most students arrive in our Kindergarten classrooms straight from home. On the one hand, the district must be ready to maintain without disruption those services put in place during the pre-school years and also be ready immediately to undertake early identification assessments of children's needs within the first months of Kindergarten. This means staffing the District adequately with Teacher-Psychologists, Speech/Language Pathologists, Teacher-Counsellors and other behaviour specialists so that identification and intervention occur in a timely manner. Concomitantly, there needs to be a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy to address the shortages in these specialist areas.

6. ADDRESS THE WORKING CONDITIONS OF TEACHERS TEACHING-ON-CALL

While VESTA acknowledges previous Board's moves from providing a teacher teaching-on-call (TTOC) for non-enrolling teachers after 10 days of absence to after 3 days of absence and currently to after 2 days of absence, it must be stated again that programs such as those provided by Resource Teachers for our most vulnerable students have to be provided without interruption. The learning of at-risk children relies on continuity. The integrated nature of Resource and Classroom programs at schools rely upon continuity. Therefore it is imperative that TOC coverage be provided for each and every absence, and VESTA recommends that the Board proceed in making this change.

In making this change, the Board will also be addressing another need: the welfare of teachers teaching-on-call. Currently, the Board has approximately 1150 TTOCs in its employ. Some work for other districts as well, and some work exclusively for Vancouver, and it is VESTA's understanding that the Board maintains its pool of TTOCs at the current level in order to handle shortages during peak periods of absence during the year. However, there is the rest of the year to contend with.

Vancouver TTOCs are increasingly discouraged about the level of income they are making. Many do not make a living wage as they are called out irregularly by the substitute employee management system. Replacing all contract teachers from the first day of absence onward will address part of this problem.

That being said, the Board also needs to make several other commitments.

First of all, the Board needs to permanently eliminate preferential call-out for TTOCs. Presently, Human Resources has discontinued (on a temporary basis) preferential call-out by schools because of the number of unplaced continuing teachers that need to be given work each day. VESTA's position, as instigated by our TTOC members, is that preferential call-out should be discontinued on a permanent basis in both the K-12 and Adult Educator bargaining units, so that all TTOCs have an equitable footing within the system, and have equitable access to work.

VESTA also sets aside funds to for TTOCs to access in order to attend professional development activities. For example, the BCTF New Teachers & Student Teachers Conference is coming up, and VESTA helps off-set the cost of this for TTOCs who attend. VESTA recommends that the Board commit to matching any funds that we budget for TTOC professional development.

Finally, VESTA is recommending that the Board look at TTOC recruitment and retention initiatives in other districts – minimum guarantees for call-out, guaranteed continuing contract after a certain number of days, regular TTOC in-service at the district's expense, etc.

CONCLUSION

In closing, VESTA encourages Trustees and District Staff to utilize our advice in preparing your 2009-2010 preliminary operating budget.

Please review the attachments, and feel free to contact the VESTA office for any additional information you may require.

VESTA's RESOURCE TEAM TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

FOCUS ON RESOURCE TEAMS AND SUPPORT FOR ESL STUDENTS AND STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

THEME ONE: That the VSB establish consistent qualification requirements for resource positions, and provide for on-going training for teachers new to resource positions.

To achieve this, VESTA recommends that that the VSB:

- adopts a policy that a minimum of three years' classroom teaching experience be a prerequisite for teachers new to elementary resource positions
- ensures elementary resource teachers have specialist training for their specific roles, or that teachers new to resource positions are provided with comprehensive training by the VSB
- ensures that vice-principals providing resource service have specialist training for their specific roles, or that vice-principals new to resource positions are provided with comprehensive training by the VSB
- provides on-going in-service (with EOC coverage) for all teachers in resource roles, with opportunities for experienced resource teachers to go in-depth with latest research and thinking in the field
- encourages the development of a SFU or UBC diploma program available to all teachers with a focus on special education or ESL

THEME TWO: That the VSB establish an on-going mentoring program to assist teachers new to resource positions, and to encourage collaboration and positive working relations.

To achieve this, VESTA recommends that that the VSB:

- provides schools with release time for mentoring and orientation of teachers new to their resource roles, and for classroom teachers who are receiving students identified as having special needs
- establishes a policy that all schools receive an additional 0.2 FTE in teaching staffing specifically for school-based teacher-to-teacher coaching to develop collaborative teaching teams
- increases staffing allocations to facilitate weekly collaboration (with coverage) between classroom and resource teachers
- establishes a policy that directs district personnel responsible for the placement and support of students with special needs to spend at least 80% of their time in schools collaborating with teachers
- establishes policy that all other district personnel with teaching certificates contribute at least 10% of their time to provide on-site teaching support for integrated students with special needs

THEME THREE: That the VSB establish a district goal and organizational changes targeting the support for the education of ESL learners and students with special needs.

To achieve this, VESTA recommends that that the VSB:

- makes public this district goal, and engages the entire school community in its implementation
- closely re-examines the function of its current district special education programs, their effectiveness for students
- re-commits to the philosophy of integration, ensuring the proper supports are available in all schools so that integration is meaningful and that all students have the opportunity to learn in the least restrictive environment
- improves student access to teacher-psychologists and speech-language pathologists
- improves student access to counseling, occupational therapy, play therapy
- establishes reasonable caseload limits for resource teachers and itinerant teachers working with ESL students and students with special needs
- establishes a policy that all schools have non-enrolling teachers with qualifications or relevant experience to work with ESL, low incidence and high incidence students
- extends ESL service beyond the ministry's five-year cap, with clearly defined criteria for exit
- ensures that all district classes receive school-based resource team support and itinerant staff support, and that opportunities for collaboration are provided
- examines the amount and nature of paperwork and other documentation being completed by resource teachers, with the view to minimizing instructional time lost to students due to the completion of this documentation, and minimizing the workload associated with the documentation
- provide TOC coverage from the *first* day of absence for resource teachers and itinerant teachers working with students with special needs

WEIGHTING FORMULA

As developed by the Class Size & Class Composition Committee

Class Weighting Calculator

Division	Kinder	Primary	Inter	Level 1 AB	Level 2 CDEFG	Level 3 HK	Level 4 QR	ESL	TOTAL	Over Limit
1									0.00	
2									0.00	
3									0.00	
4									0.00	
5									0.00	
6									0.00	
7									0.00	
8									0.00	
9									0.00	
10									0.00	
11									0.00	
12									0.00	
13									0.00	
14									0.00	
15									0.00	
16									0.00	
17									0.00	
18									0.00	
19									0.00	

CATEGORY	WEIGHT
Kindergarten	1.47
Primary	1.33
Intermediate	1.00
Level 1 (A & B)	5.00
Level 2 (C, D, E, F & G)	3.00
Level 3 (H & K)	2.00
Level 4 (Q & R)	1.00
ESL	0.30

Maximum Allowed	35.00
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School:

Prepared By:

Date:

BCTF Research Report

Part of the BCTF Information Handbook

SECTION II
2007-TD-02

Teacher / Administrator Ratios, 2001–02 to 2006–07

bctf.ca/publications.aspx?id=5630

By Colleen Hawkey, BCTF Research Department

This report shows the full-time equivalent teachers and administrators, and the ratio of teachers to administrators in 2001 and in 2006. As can be seen in Table 1, there are 1,858.6 (5.6%) fewer full-time equivalent teachers in BC public schools compared to 2001, and 4.6 (0.2%) more administrators. By comparison, student enrolments have declined by 5.8% since 2001.

The ratio of teachers to administrators decreased from 12.47 to 11.75 between 2001 and 2006. In other words, overall there are fewer teachers per administrator today than there were six years ago. Fifty of the 60 public school districts in BC show a decrease in the number of teachers per administrators.

There is no consistent pattern in teacher/administrator ratio changes across districts. For the handful of districts with the greatest decrease in the teacher/administrator ratio there is a substantial decrease in the number of teachers and an increase in the number of administrators. Boundary (District #51), for example, shows a decrease of 4.61, reflecting a 40% increase in administrators and an 18% decrease in teachers. Powell River (District #47), on the other hand, with a ratio of -1.64 shows no change in the number of administrators and a 16% decrease in the number of teachers.

However, for other districts the change reflects a disproportionate decline in teachers compared to administrators. Quesnel (District # 28), for example, shows an 8.7% decrease in teachers and a 1.9% decrease in administrators, for an overall decrease in the number of teachers per administrator of 0.68.

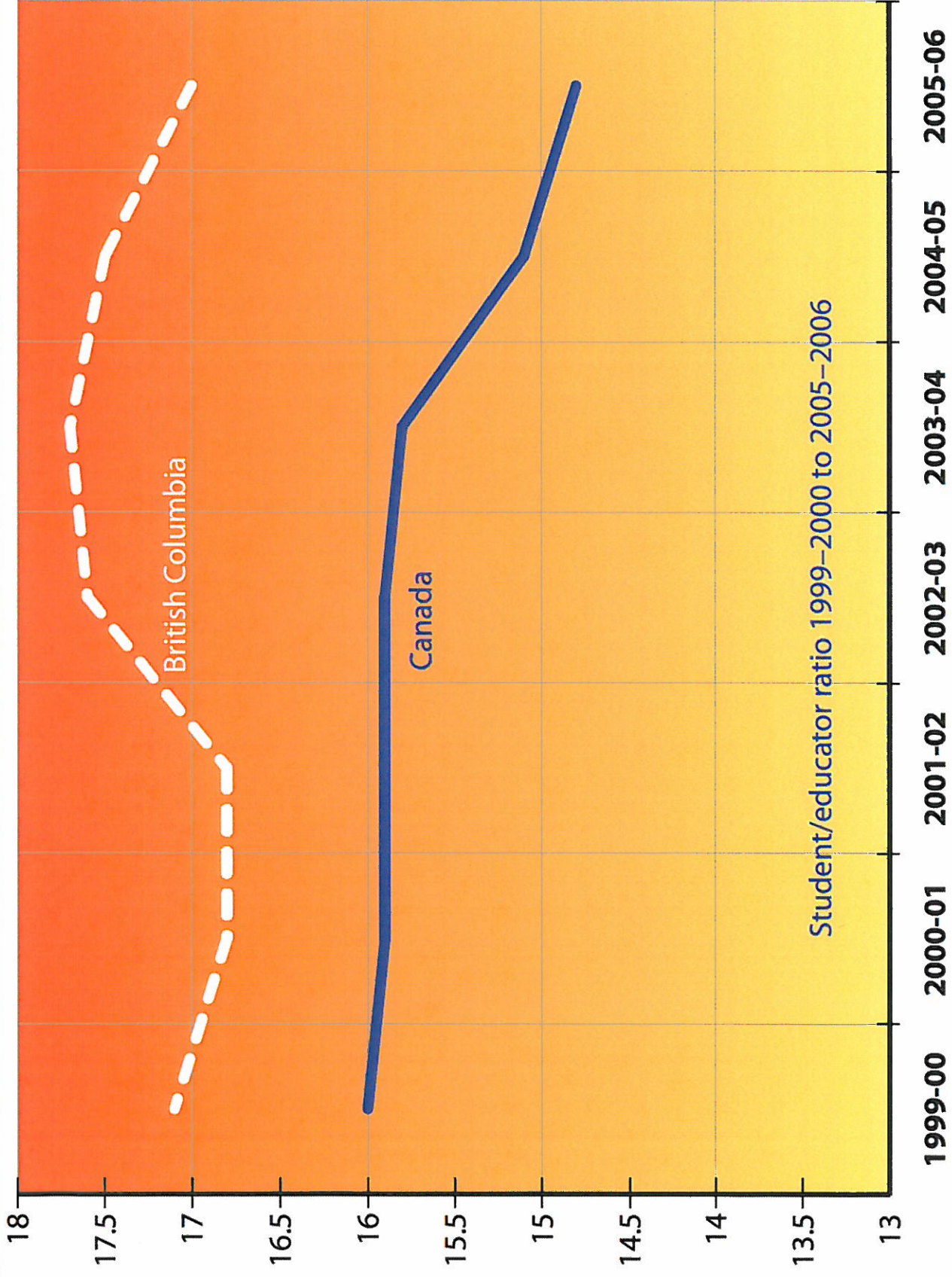
Table 1: Teacher / Administrator Ratios, 2001-02 and 2006-07

SD	District	2001-02 FTEs				2006-07 FTEs				2001-02 to 2006-07		
		Teachers	AOs	Ratio Teachers/AOs	Teachers	AOs	Ratio Teachers/AOs	Teachers	AOs	Ratio Teachers/AOs	% Change Teachers	% Change AOs
5	Southeast Kootenay	364.138	35.18	10.35	308.072	34	9.06	-15.4%	-3.4%	- 1.29		
6	Rocky Mountain	239.078	32	7.47	184.927	24	7.71	-22.6%	-25.0%	0.23		
8	Kootenay Lake	339.971	37.21	9.14	290.063	32.8	8.84	-14.7%	-11.9%	- 0.29		
10	Arrow Lakes	50.67	5	10.13	40.027	5	8.01	-21.0%	0.0%	- 2.13		
19	Revelstoke	83.672	6	13.95	73.978	6.7	11.04	-11.6%	11.7%	- 2.90		
20	Kootenay-Columbia	290.25	28	10.37	240.183	21	11.44	-17.2%	-25.0%	1.07		
22	Vernon	490.62	42.6	11.52	472.291	46.2	10.22	-3.7%	8.5%	- 1.29		
23	Central Okanagan	1160.21	79.6	14.58	1156.73	74	15.63	-0.3%	-7.0%	1.06		
27	Cariboo-Chilcotin	419.133	48.46	8.65	342.496	44.782	7.65	-18.3%	-7.6%	- 1.00		
28	Quesnel	255.536	26	9.83	233.1997	25.5	9.15	-8.7%	-1.9%	- 0.68		
33	Chilliwack	629.857	51.7	12.18	654.3085	55.6	11.77	3.9%	7.5%	- 0.41		
34	Abbotsford	1044.067	79.868	13.07	967.84	80	12.10	-7.3%	0.2%	- 0.97		
35	Langley	1099.027	95.143	11.55	1038.785	91.718	11.33	-5.5%	-3.6%	- 0.23		
36	Surrey	3496.095	213.252	16.39	3684.339	229.4	16.06	5.4%	7.6%	- 0.33		
37	Delta	907.71	60	15.13	912.75	60	15.21	0.6%	0.0%	0.08		
38	Richmond	1344.312	106.201	12.66	1221.895	105.792	11.55	-9.1%	-0.4%	- 1.11		
39	Vancouver	3479.07	183	19.01	3261.2	192	16.99	-6.3%	4.9%	- 2.03		
40	New Westminster	341.428	27.43	12.45	364.556	26	14.02	6.8%	-5.2%	1.57		
41	Burnaby	1371.09	75.6	18.14	1381.01	79.65	17.34	0.7%	5.4%	- 0.80		
42	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	863.574	62.169	13.89	866.423	62.1	13.95	0.3%	-0.1%	0.06		
43	Coquitlam	1838.125	113	16.27	1731.927	113	15.33	-5.8%	0.0%	- 0.94		
44	North Vancouver	1002.8	92.6	10.83	923.063	91.825	10.05	-8.0%	-0.8%	- 0.78		
45	West Vancouver	355.44	35	10.16	362.9865	39	9.31	2.1%	11.4%	- 0.85		
46	Sunshine Coast	231.529	17	13.62	211.729	18.7	11.32	-8.6%	10.0%	- 2.30		
47	Powell River	160.505	16	10.03	134.33	16	8.40	-16.3%	0.0%	- 1.64		
48	Howe Sound	253.678	21	12.08	236.62	23.817	9.93	-6.7%	13.4%	- 2.14		
49	Central Coast	31.5	3	10.50	22.815	3.2	7.13	-27.6%	6.7%	- 3.37		
50	Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte	62.577	9.184	6.81	51.0121	8	6.38	-18.5%	-12.9%	- 0.44		
51	Boundary	111.175	9.999	11.12	91.078	14	6.51	-18.1%	40.0%	- 4.61		
52	Prince Rupert	209.997	18.165	11.56	172.266	20	8.61	-18.0%	10.1%	- 2.95		
53	Okanagan Similkameen	172.426	19	9.08	148.735	18	8.26	-13.7%	-5.3%	- 0.81		

SD	District	2001-02 FTEs				2006-07 FTEs				2001-02 to 2006-07		
		Teachers	AOs	Ratio Teachers/AOs	Teachers/AOs	Teachers	AOs	Ratio Teachers/AOs	% Change Teachers	% Change AOs	Ratio +/- since 2001	
54	Bulkeley Valley	162.915	17	9.58	144.22	17	8.48	-11.5%	0.0%	- 1.10		
57	Prince George	1008.755	95	10.62	835.264	78.2	10.68	-17.2%	-17.7%	0.06		
58	Nicola-Similkameen	173.521	17.001	10.21	159.8596	17	9.40	-7.9%	0.0%	- 0.80		
59	Peace River South	242.843	31	7.83	226.201	36	6.28	-6.9%	16.1%	- 1.55		
60	Peace River North	308.312	29.8	10.35	326.068	33	9.88	5.8%	10.7%	- 0.47		
61	Greater Victoria	1144.081	115.23	9.93	1039.867	101.13	10.28	-9.1%	-12.2%	0.35		
62	Sooke	460.5	49	9.40	443.1	51	8.69	-3.8%	4.1%	- 0.71		
63	Saanich	465.302	37.8	12.31	413.4167	35	11.81	-11.2%	-7.4%	- 0.50		
64	Gulf Islands	98.36	14.6	6.74	85.0037	14.6	5.82	-13.6%	0.0%	- 0.91		
67	Okanagan Skaha	400.798	38.5	10.41	374.291	38	9.85	-6.6%	-1.3%	- 0.56		
68	Nanaimo-Ladysmith	896.558	68.592	13.07	794.571	71.697	11.08	-11.4%	4.5%	- 1.99		
69	Qualicum	277.169	25.6	10.83	271.509	27	10.06	-2.0%	5.5%	- 0.77		
70	Alberni	272.3757	38.00001	7.17	249.036	32.001	7.78	-8.6%	-15.8%	0.61		
71	Comox Valley	515.311	50.35	10.23	472.747	53.001	8.92	-8.3%	5.3%	- 1.31		
72	Campbell River	380.671	37.6	10.12	333.493	33	10.11	-12.4%	-12.2%	- 0.02		
73	Kamloops/Thompson	903.38	71	12.72	813.692	65	12.52	-9.9%	-8.5%	- 0.21		
74	Gold Trail	144.4289	18	8.02	116.45	14	8.32	-19.4%	-22.2%	0.29		
75	Mission	397.615	33.865	11.74	376.378	42	8.96	-5.3%	24.0%	- 2.78		
78	Fraser-Cascade	140.232	16	8.76	126.9499	16	7.93	-9.5%	0.0%	- 0.83		
79	Cowichan Valley	559.76	49.9	11.22	483.55	48.857	9.90	-13.6%	-2.1%	- 1.32		
81	Fort Nelson	73.2055	7.033	10.41	60.261	9	6.70	-17.7%	28.0%	- 3.71		
82	Coast Mountains	393.726	37	10.64	337.1619	39	8.65	-14.4%	5.4%	- 2.00		
83	North Okanagan-Shuswap	442.27	42	10.53	391.6	42.45	9.22	-11.5%	1.1%	- 1.31		
84	Vancouver Island West	51.17	5	10.23	38.1	5.52	6.90	-25.5%	10.4%	- 3.33		
85	Vancouver Island North	143.76	21	6.85	99.95	15	6.66	-30.5%	-28.6%	- 0.18		
87	Stikine	26	4	6.50	24	4	6.00	-7.7%	0.0%	- 0.50		
91	Nechako Lakes	263.488	24.2	10.89	273.232	31.8	8.59	3.7%	31.4%	- 2.30		
92	Nisga'a	46	5	9.20	46	7	6.57	0.0%	40.0%	- 2.63		
93	Conseil scolaire francophone	183.671	21	8.75	279.1855	34	8.21	52.0%	61.9%	- 0.53		
	Provincial Total	33275.44	2668.43201	12.47	31416.8021	2673.04	11.75	-5.6%	0.2%	- 0.72		

Source: Ministry of Education Form 1530 staffing data

BC student/educator ratio—highest in Canada



Data source*: Statistics Canada. (July 2008). Summary Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 1999/2000 to 2005/2006, p. 30.

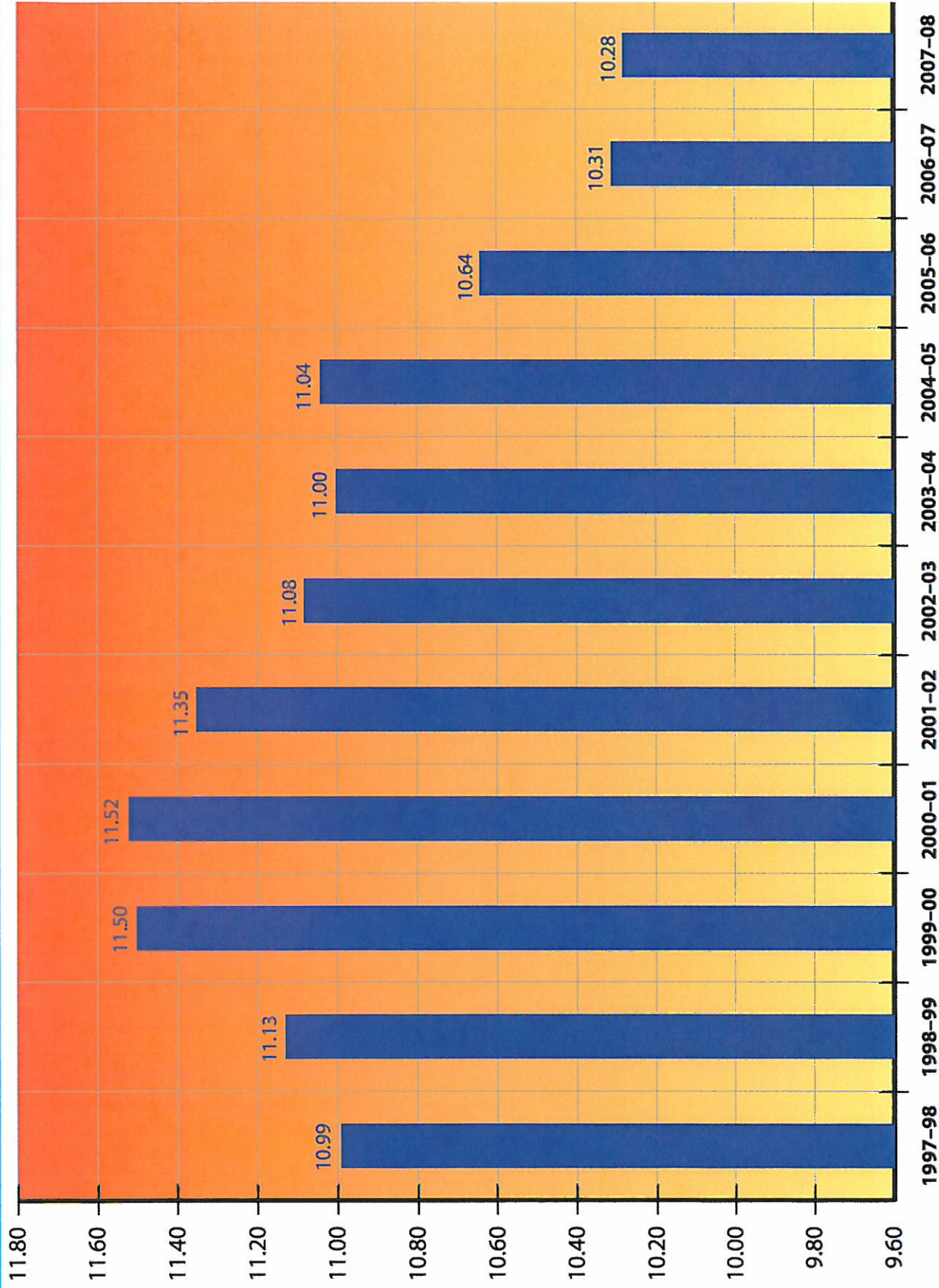
Fewer teachers; more administrators and others

	Teachers FTE	Administrative Officers FTE	Other professionals* FTE
2001–02	33,275.44	2,668.43	1,562.61
2007–08	31,298.78	2,677.17	1,627.79
Change	- 1,976.66	+ 8.74	+ 65.18

*Other professionals include Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, Secretary-Treasurers, Assistant Secretary-Treasurers, Trustees, and any other board employee who is excluded from a union agreement.

Data source*: Ministry for Education Form 1530 Data April 2008. See BCTF Research Report. Change in FTE teachers, administrative officers, other professionals, education assistants and clerical positions: 2006-2007 to 2007-2008.

Teacher/administrator ratio—the past 10 years



Data source*: Ministry of Education. Summary of Key Information: 2006-2007, p 44. Teacher Statistics: 2003-2004 to 2007-2008, p. 3 & 5.

Loss of specialist teachers

Specialty program	Loss of FTE specialist teachers (01-02 to 07-08)
Special education	- 604.97
English as a Second Language	- 224.43
Library services	- 191.83
Counselling	- 75.12
Aboriginal education	- 15.01

Data source*: Ministry of Education. Form 1530 staffing data, April 2008. See BCTF Research Report. Changes in Specialist Teachers and Student Enrolment: 2001-2002 to 2007-2008, 2008.