



# Report on Education

from the Deputy Minister of Education

February 10, 2006

## IN THE NEWS

### \$46M OF STRIKE SAVINGS INVESTED IN LEARNING RESOURCES

- ▶ VICTORIA – Schools and districts throughout the province used savings from the illegal teachers' job action to buy \$46 million in new textbooks, computer technology and learning resources, Education Minister Shirley Bond. . .

### REPORT SHOWS PROGRESS ON CLASS SIZES

- ▶ VANCOUVER – The first-ever report on class sizes in B.C. public schools shows that nearly nine out of 10 classrooms have 30 or fewer students, and that more than half of all classrooms have 26 or fewer students, . . .

### MT. BOUCHERIE SECONDARY GETS BIGGER - AND BETTER

- ▶ KELOWNA – The Province has approved a \$7.14-million addition and upgrade to Mount Boucherie senior secondary school in the Central Okanagan school district, Okanagan-Westside MLA Rick Thorpe announced.

## FACTS ABOUT B.C. CLASSES

### Class Size

- ▶ Total number of classes in report: 67,499
- ▶ Classes with 20 or fewer students: 14,853 – 22 per cent of all classes
- ▶ Classes with 30 or fewer students: 58,246 – 86 per cent of all classes
- ▶ Classes with 32 or fewer students: 64,590 – 96 per cent of all classes
- ▶ Fifty-nine of 60 districts have an average Grade 8-12 class size of fewer than 27 students.

### Special Education

- ▶ Classes with no students with special needs: 22,534 – 33 per cent of all classes
- ▶ Classes with five or fewer students with special needs: 63,901 – 95 per cent of all classes
- ▶ District with the most classes with more than five students with special needs: SD 39 (Vancouver) with 370 classes
- ▶ District with the most classes with no students with special needs: SD 39 (Vancouver) with 2,978 classes

### Students with English as a Second Language/Dialect

- ▶ Classes with no students with English as a second language: 37,139 – 55 per cent of all classes
- ▶ Classes with five or fewer students with English as a second language: 60,878 – 90 per cent of all classes
- ▶ District with the most classes with more than five ESL students: SD 39 (Vancouver) with 1,750 classes
- ▶ District with the most classes with no ESL students: SD 39 (Vancouver) with 3,024 classes

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## Notes from the Deputy

This is the first in a number of weekly communications I intend to send to superintendents and principals to keep you informed of important provincial matters. These messages include public information that you should feel comfortable in sharing and making widely known. You may wish to share this with staff, parents and students as appropriate. This is my effort to involve you to as great an extent as possible in the important work we all do in improving the learning and achievement of all of our students. I am very proud of your accomplishments in helping BC's public schools be among the best in the world. Our provincial achievement results are envied all over the world.

Each of these communications will highlight particular themes. On Thursday, Class Size and Composition reports were released by the Minister and have been made public on our website. You can view these reports for any school or district by clicking on **[www.bced.gov.bc.ca/roundtable/](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/roundtable/)**. Go to the school profile and you will find data on each school, each district and the province. Presented here are some interesting highlights about the data.

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Interesting facts, aren't they? However, the class size report does not tell us, what is the right class size for student learning? You and I know that sometimes a class of 36 can be the right size and a class of 24 the wrong size because of the nature of the students, the age of the students, the nature of the subject and many other variables. That is why the work you do is so important in organizing your schools to provide the best learning circumstances possible for all your students. That is why class size and class composition is such an important subject that defies easy answers.

Here is another way to look at service levels for students in British Columbia. We measure a variable called the ESR (Educator Student Ratio). This measure tells us how many students there are for each professional educator in the province – that includes enrolling and non-enrolling teachers, principals and vice principals, other professionals and district staff persons with teaching certificates. It does not include teacher assistants or other support staff.

In the school year 2004/05 the ESR for British Columbia was 17.4. With the \$150,000,000 increased funding this year school boards hired about 600 new teachers and the ESR was reduced to 16.9. Then, following the illegal strike an additional 550 teachers were hired, consistent with Mr. Vince Ready's recommendations. The ESR has fallen to 15.9 - the lowest in the history of the province. Over 1,100 more teachers are in schools today compared to last year at this time and our ESR is lower than it has ever been in the history of the province. Let's take advantage of this rich teaching resource to make a difference in the learning of all students.

*(Look forward to the next E-Letter that will take an in depth look at demographic shifts in our province and outline some challenges and opportunities these shifts provide.)*

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