

Terms:

BCPSEA (BC Public School Employers' Association): the collective bargaining agent of the Province of British Columbia for public schools.

BCTF (BC Teachers' Federation): the collective bargaining agent in BC for school district teachers' unions.

Restored language: collective bargaining language from 2002 that was removed from collective bargaining by the Provincial Government and has now been restored as a result of a Supreme Court of Canada ruling in November 2016.

MOA (Memorandum of Agreement): an agreement reached in March 2017 between BCPSEA, BCTF and Provincial Government regarding how to reinstate the restored language.

Ratios: ratios refer to the number of specialist teachers needed as a result of the number of students and number of students with special needs in a school and across the school district.

Low incidence special needs designations: students with special needs that are considered Dependent Handicapped, Severe Handicapped or Severe Behaviour. They are considered 'low incidence' because there is a relatively low number or incidence of these students in the larger school population. Students with low incidence designations typically have quite complex needs.

What does 'restored language' mean?

In 2002, the Province of British Columbia introduced Bills 27 and 28. Under these bills, certain BCPSEA–BCTF Provincial Collective Agreement provisions were removed from the collective bargaining process. The removal of language was extensive and included many provisions that defined class size and class composition. On Nov. 10, 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada issued a decision regarding the deletion of these provisions, ruling that it was unconstitutional to remove bargaining rights regarding class size and class composition. The Supreme Court of Canada ordered that the collective agreement language that was in place in 2002 prior to Bills 27 and 28 be restored and that bargaining of class size and class composition be reinstated. The restored language must be in place for the 2017/2018 school year.

How does the restored 2002 collective agreement language differ from the most recent (2014) collective agreement language?

Each school district had different collective agreement language in 2002, so each school district is restoring different language. In the North Vancouver School District (NVSD), here are the changes:

Current 2014 language		Newly restored 2002 language	
Class size		Class size	
K	22	K	20
K-1	22	K-1	20
1-3	24	1-3	22
1-3 split	24	1-3 split	22
1-3 multi-age	24	1-3 multi-age	22
3-4 split	24	3-4 split	23
4-7	30	4-7	29
4-7 split	30	4-7 split	27
8-10	30	8-10	30
11-12	30	11-12	30
Secondary English	30	Secondary English	28
ELL	15*	ELL	15
LAC groups (secondary)	15*	LAC groups (secondary)	12
Special Education (Funct. 3)	15*	Special Education (Funct. 3)	10

*Note: *No specific class size; however, the classes were generally kept at smaller sizes. There are also specialty classes that will have different class size, such as: Band/Music, Mountainside Secondary classes, Shops (depending on facility size), etc.*

Class composition	Class composition
No specific limits	“No more than three (3) students with special needs shall be integrated into a single regular classroom. Only one (1) of these may be from a low incidence category or from Category 1.17 (Severe Behaviour).”

What do the new class sizes mean for my child at my school?

Overall, there are additional teaching resources in our schools – which is great. New teacher positions will be coming into the NVSD system, predominantly classroom teachers (total number will be confirmed in the Fall). NVSD enrolment is not increasing, but more teachers are needed because the restored class size language means that classes will be smaller so there will be more classes overall.

What does the new class composition language mean for my child at my school?

All students within NVSD will continue to receive inclusive and supportive education to meet their individual needs, enabling each and every student to succeed.

The provincial MOA reinforces this commitment. It states:

“All students are entitled to equitable access to learning, achievement and the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of their education. The Provincial Parties are committed to providing all students with special needs with an inclusive learning environment which provides an opportunity for meaningful participation and the promotion of interaction with others. The implementation of this Memorandum of Agreement shall not result in any student being denied access to a school, educational program, course, or inclusive learning environment unless this decision is based on an assessment of the student’s individual needs and abilities.”

As part of the restored class composition language, ‘ratios’ have also been restored. Why is this significant to NVSD?

While the enrolment in NVSD has declined overall by approximately 3,000 students since 2002 (from 18,000 to 15,000), the number of students with low incidence special needs designations has increased substantially. This is due to a number of factors, including better understanding of special needs, expansion of what is considered to be a special need, and expanded understanding of the Autism spectrum. There are minimum specialist teacher ratios that the district must meet in: Library, English Language Learning, Counselling and Special Education.

Is the NVSD philosophy regarding inclusion and diversity going to change?

No, the philosophy of NVSD will not change regarding inclusion and diversity. We are committed to providing all children of all abilities with quality educational programs.

Will the restored class composition language mean that my child with special needs will not be able to go to our neighbourhood school?

The restored class composition language limits the number of students with special needs designations that can be in a classroom. This may affect how students are grouped in classrooms. However, all students with special needs will receive an inclusive education and will not be denied access to a school, program or course as a result of their special needs.

The new class size limits and composition language means more classes, so more classroom spaces are needed for the additional classes. Do schools have the extra classroom spaces? If not, where will the additional spaces come from?

The need for additional classroom spaces and the types of spaces available vary by school. It depends on the number of students enrolled at each grade level at each school, and the building layouts. Some schools can easily accommodate new classrooms, while others require using existing spaces differently to create new classroom spaces. There are various ways of creating new classroom spaces. Options include reclaiming or reorganizing existing space currently used for other purposes (such as art, computer and multipurpose rooms), using unused space, or converting space into classrooms (such as activity space and multipurpose rooms).

Does this mean that my school will lose specialty rooms, such as music and Learning Assistance Centre (LAC), or that programs will be eliminated?

NVSD is committed to upholding its current educational programs and continuing to support students via varied programs and services geared at meeting the unique needs of our students. Rooms/space may need to be used differently, but no programs will be eliminated. LAC and Music may be delivered in new spaces, but the programming and functioning will continue.

Does this mean that my school will lose its daycare?

Each lease is being reviewed on a case-by-case basis depending on the district/school need. NVSD is working towards honouring all leases that are currently in place. However, in the future, as leases expire they might not be renewed. This will depend on the classroom needs of the particular school.

Does this mean that my school will get new portables?

NVSD has submitted to the Ministry of Education an application for three portables. However, we understand that it takes time to get portables in place and we do not anticipate receiving any new portables for the 2017/2018 school year. In the future, portables are a potential option.

Where does the funding come from for new portables and classroom spaces, and for supplying these spaces with equipment?

The funding for new portables and classroom spaces, and for supplying these spaces with equipment comes from the Ministry of Education.

After maximizing current space, will there be enough room for all students?

Across the North Vancouver School District as a whole, there is enough space for all students. The amount of space available in a specific school typically depends on the demographics of the neighbourhood within which the school is located. Some areas have more school-aged children living in them than others. For years, several elementary schools have only been able to take students living within their catchment area and have not had room for students from outside of the catchment. For this coming school year, additional schools will also experience limitations regarding the students they are able to accept. Many schools will only have room for in-catchment students who applied before the priority placement application deadlines.

Have all students been placed into schools for September 2017?

The process for placing students for the 2017/2018 school year has been delayed as a result of school districts receiving late direction from BCPSEA, BCTF and Provincial Government (in March 2017 via the MOA, which is very late in the application and placement process). As a result, as of May 1, 2017 not all students have been placed for the 2017/2018 school year. NVSD is working hard to place all students as soon as possible and parents/guardians are being contacted directly by NVSD regarding the placement of their child(ren).

What if the restored language Collective Agreement requirements cannot be met?

There are remedy options available if the restored Collective Agreement requirements cannot be met. The remedy options agreed to by the BCTF, BCPSEA and Provincial Government are:

- Additional preparation time for the affected teacher;
- Additional non-enrolling staffing added to the school specifically to work with the affected teachers' class;
- Additional enrolling staffing to co-teach with the affected teacher;
- Other remedies that the local parties agreed would be appropriate.

Note: the provincially agreed to remedies are focused on providing resources back into the school environment.