





# Results of the 2017 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey

**T**his report summarizes results from the *2017 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey*, foregrounding teacher perspectives on the process of curriculum change across the province in four key areas: (1) levels of support for the curricular model/framework, (2) the relationship between change and perceptions of autonomy and workload, (3) teacher involvement in structures related to change and opportunities for professional development and learning, and (4) the ongoing process of implementation. The results illustrate that, while “implementation” is important, the direction of curriculum change is inseparable from teachers’ perspectives on the curricular model, the perceived impact of change on teacher autonomy and workload, and opportunities for involvement in and learning about curricular changes. The report proposes three key conditions necessary for teacher-led curriculum change across the province.



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## Executive summary

The 2017 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey aimed to develop a deeper understanding of the state of curriculum change across the province and shape the British Columbia Teachers' Federation's priorities for supporting members in relation to curriculum change. The survey report highlights teacher perspectives in four key areas:

**Curricular model:** The model for BC's redesigned curriculum has been designed around a number of key conceptual elements (core competencies, a Know-Do-Understand model, literacy and numeracy foundations, inquiry and question-based approaches, ICT-enabled learning environments, integrating Aboriginal perspectives). Teachers are at different places in relation to their readiness to implement these key elements, and have different opinions as to the appropriateness of some of these elements in their classrooms. There is an immediate need for adequate and accessible resources and in-service time to support these elements.

**Teacher autonomy and workload:** During this intensified period of curriculum change, teachers are asserting their professional autonomy to exercise their judgement and act on it in the classroom, working to meet the diverse needs of students in their care. However, substantial change, with minimal time and support, has resulted in a significantly increased workload for many teachers. This is taking its toll.

**Involvement, professional development, and learning:** Teachers have been involved in a range of formal structures related to curriculum change, but have mixed feelings as to whether they have had a meaningful voice in shaping the process of curriculum change to date. This can lead to frustration with both the process and the curriculum. Teachers have also participated in a range of professional development activities. These activities have contributed to an increased workload and many teachers perceive that these activities have had little or no impact on their preparedness for implementing the redesigned curriculum.

**Curriculum implementation:** Teachers are at different stages in the process of curriculum implementation, and are divided as to what extent they feel supportive of the redesigned curriculum. Besides creating space for teachers to engage with the curriculum in the context of their right to diverse pedagogical practices and decisions, there is an urgent need for instructional materials and clear and

helpful guidelines in relation to assessment and reporting. Teachers also feel that classroom and learning conditions are impacting on their ability to successfully implement the redesigned curriculum.

The survey results illustrate what is urgently needed is a shift from whether *teachers* are (“correctly”) implementing the curriculum, to whether the *curriculum* is providing space for the multiple knowledges, experiences, and needs that make up teaching and learning in BC. This requires three curricular conditions: (1) time and space for curriculum as an ongoing conversation, (2) educational systems and structures that support curricular demands, and (3) a flexible, adapted, and fully resourced implementation process.

## Context: Curriculum change in British Columbia

British Columbia is in an intensified period of curriculum change that is taking place on an unprecedented scale. Initiated by the provincial Ministry of Education under then Minister of Education George Abbott in the fall of 2010, revisions have been undertaken since 2013 by teams of teachers that were appointed by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF), the Federation of Independent School Associations BC (FISA), and the First Nations Schools Association. Teachers began implementing finalized versions of the K–9 curriculum in September 2016. The 10–12 curriculum is in draft form and is optional for 2017–18. The 11–12 curriculum will also be optional for the 2018–19 school year.

Throughout this process, the BCTF has actively gathered feedback related to the redesigned curriculum. While members have diverse perspectives and experiences, feedback has consistently highlighted shared concerns. It has also exposed a crucial gap in understanding the process of curriculum change from teachers' perspectives. To address this gap, the BCTF Research Department is leading a multi-year research conversation on teacher-led curriculum change in BC.

The process of curriculum change is about policy *and* practice. For example, while the province mandates a curricular framework, it is the right of teachers to make pedagogical choices in response to the learning needs of students as well as specific learning and working conditions.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the revision of the curriculum at all grade levels and all subjects (a first for this province), is only one of many educational initiatives that were initiated by then Minister Abbott. These include: reviewing and/or changing graduation requirements, the Provincial Student Assessment Program, and reporting regulations; encouraging technology use in classrooms; implementing a new electronic student database system; and heavily promoting particular pedagogical approaches which, while not new, were outside of the ministry's usual scope of responsibilities. This has led to substantial confusion among teachers and the broader public (e.g. public messaging about "curriculum change" that was really about "pedagogical change"). This confusion, and related challenges, have been exacerbated by the change over between different ministers of education and deputy ministers since 2010, each of whom have had a different approach and understanding of the curriculum change process.

We understand **curriculum** as a contested, relational, and situated practice (Chambers, 2012; Kanu, 2012; Pinar, 2015). **Curriculum change**, in turn, refers to both explicit and implicit shifts within a historical moment as to what is taught (e.g. curricular content) as well as how teaching happens (e.g. increasing reliance on technologies).

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=5638>

The complexity of these issues means that the question of whether curriculum change is “working” cannot be reduced to discrete measures such as graduation rates. These measures are important but they fail to position curriculum change within the historical, political, social, and economic context. This includes crucial factors such as: teacher involvement in curricular change processes (e.g. Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2017), teacher autonomy in selecting instructional and assessment approaches and tools (e.g. Erss, Kalmus, & Autio, 2016; Parker, 2015), and how teachers understand key principles such as personalisation (e.g. BCTF, 1968; Ehrcke, 2013), inclusive education (e.g. DeRoche, 2013), and meaningful engagement with Aboriginal ways of knowing (e.g. Donald, 2009; Kanu, 2011).

## The BCTF curriculum change and implementation survey

The BCTF Research Department, working with the Professional and Social Issues Division (PSID), conducted a survey of BCTF members from August 22 to October 2, 2017. The aim of the survey was to develop a deeper understanding of the state of curriculum change across the province and shape the Federation's priorities for supporting members in relation to curriculum change. The survey objectives and questionnaire were developed by the Research Department in consultation with PSID and advisory groups of BCTF members, such as the Professional Issues Advisory Committee (PIAC). The survey also drew on previous BCTF research and member feedback related to the redesigned BC curriculum (BCTF, 2014, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

Sampling was done by census of all active BCTF members. The survey was conducted in two phases: Phase 1 ran from August 22 to September 1 and was targeted at provincial and/or local leaders. The survey was extended to all members in Phase 2 (September 18 to October 2).<sup>2</sup> Potential participants received an email with the survey description and a link to the SimpleSurvey platform.<sup>3</sup> There were 2,344 respondents. Respondents could skip questions, which means that some results are based on smaller groups of respondents within the survey. All responses were anonymous and confidential, and participants' IP addresses or other identifying details were not collected or made available to the researchers, the BCTF, or any other persons or organizations. The online survey results are stored on a Canadian server. Comments were coded using MaxQDA, a qualitative data analysis software.

### Survey participants come from 57 districts,<sup>4</sup> the largest percentage of participants are from:

- SD 36 Surrey (16%)
- SD 39 Vancouver (12%)
- SD 41 Burnaby (4%)
- SD 43 Coquitlam (4%)
- SD 35 Langley (4%)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> 36,672 teachers (580 in Phase 1; 36,092 in Phase 2). This excludes teachers who are retired.

<sup>3</sup> <https://simplesurvey.com/>

<sup>4</sup> There were no respondents from Central Coast, Vancouver Island West, or Stikine.

<sup>5</sup> Percentages in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number, unless the percentage is less than one (1). Because of rounding, some results might not add up to 100%.

**Participants are classroom teachers (80%) and/or hold positions such as:**

- specialist teachers (15%)
- elective or special area teacher (8%)
- teachers teaching on call (5%)
- district co-ordinators or district helping teachers (2%)
- local union officers (2%)

**87% of participants have taught Kindergarten to Grade 9 in the past year. All subject areas are represented with the most participants teaching:**

- English Language Arts (64%)
- Social Studies (64%)
- Mathematics (62%)
- Science (61%)
- Arts Education (53%)

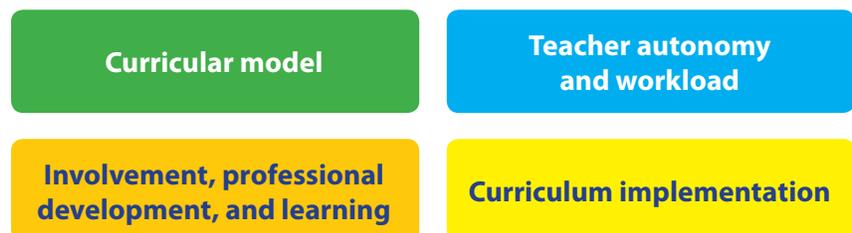
**43% of participants have taught Grades 10 to 12 in the past year. All subject areas are represented with the most participants from:**

- English Language Arts (32%)
- Social Studies (30%)
- Science (24%)
- Mathematics (22%)
- Applied Skills (14%)

**The majority of participants have between 11 to 20 (37%) or 21 to 30 (29%) years of teaching experience.**

This report summarizes results in four key areas. These areas are based on the view that “the implementation of the curricula be viewed as an ongoing, long-term process, rather than an event” (BCTF, BC Ministry of Education, BCSSA, & BCPVPA, n.d.). The results illustrate that, while “implementation” is important, the direction of curriculum change is inseparable from teachers’ perspectives on the curricular model, the perceived impact of change on teacher autonomy and workload, and opportunities for involvement in and learning about curricular changes.

**Results: Four Key Areas**



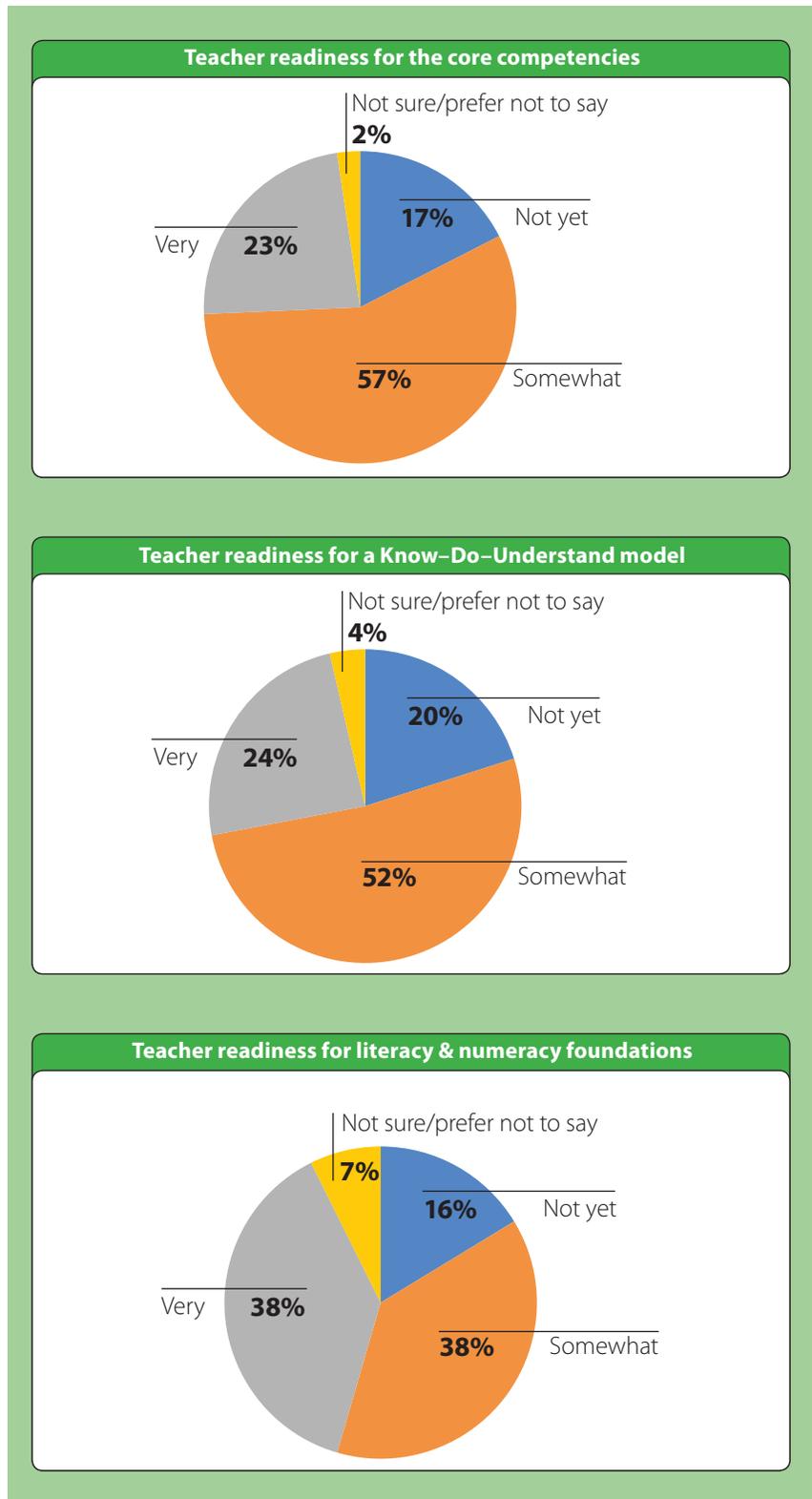
## Curricular model

BC's curriculum has been redesigned to be "learner-centered and flexible and maintain a focus on literacy and numeracy, while supporting deeper learning through concept-based and competency-driven approaches" (BC Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 1). This set of questions asked teachers to reflect on their level of support for and/or readiness to implement key conceptual elements of the redesigned curriculum.

### Key features

According to the Ministry's introduction document (BC Ministry of Education, 2015), the redesigned curriculum has been structured around three key features: core competencies, a Know-Do-Understand model, and numeracy and literacy foundations. Broadly, the majority of teachers feel ready to implement these elements of the curricular model. However, a significant percentage do not feel ready or prepared for these elements.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Note: Because of rounding (to the nearest whole number), some percentages may not add up to 100.



## Inquiry and question-based approach

The redesigned curriculum promotes an “inquiry and question-based approach” to teaching and learning. A majority of teachers agree or strongly agree that they are ready to incorporate this approach into their teaching (61%), that this approach is relevant and appropriate to the grades and/or subject areas they teach (69%), that this approach has a positive impact on their pedagogical practice and decisions (66%), and that this approach has positive impacts on student learning (70%). However, at least one in five teachers disagree or strongly disagree with each of these statements.

Broadly, while many teachers support an inquiry approach, there is the perception that other approaches may sometimes be more appropriate, dependent on the subject, grade-level, or particular student needs.

“ One model, inquiry learning, is one strategy. It should not be the only method. ”

“ There is too much emphasis on inquiry rather than practical foundational skills. ”

“ I am not convinced that inquiry is appropriate for all students. I feel this approach is being forced on us, and the result may be devastating. ”

The approach itself requires time and resources, which are often lacking.

“ Implementing the inquiry process is extremely difficult at the high school level. It requires technology and other resources in the classroom, which in turn requires funding. I would love to have the resources to start having the students engage in the inquiry process but unfortunately this is not a reality at this time. ”

“ In order to implement inquiry based activities resources are needed; especially with access to technology and grade-level texts. ”

“ The types of hands on learning and inquiry activities... call for increased prep time if people are really going to do these activities in a meaningful way. ”

“ It requires a lot of time to help [students] find resources that are accessible to them (e.g., at their reading and understanding level). ”

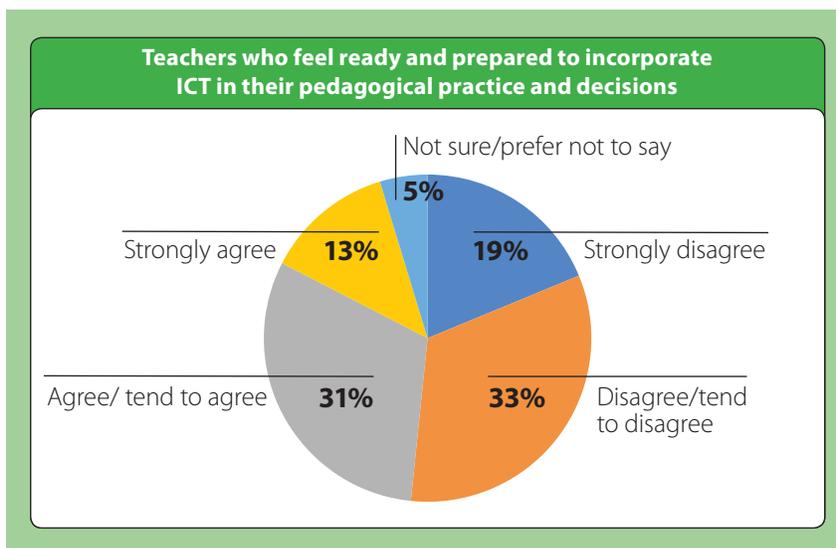
There is also a need for funded in-service opportunities for teachers to explore the approach in the context of their own practice.

“ I love the idea of teaching through inquiry and assessing abilities rather than content but have no practical knowledge of how to do that. ”

“ I’ve been to several workshops on inquiry based learning but I still don’t understand how to manage it. It’s not the questions that I ask but the participation factor. How to manage such disparate behaviours while also guiding the learning? ”

## ICT enabled learning environments

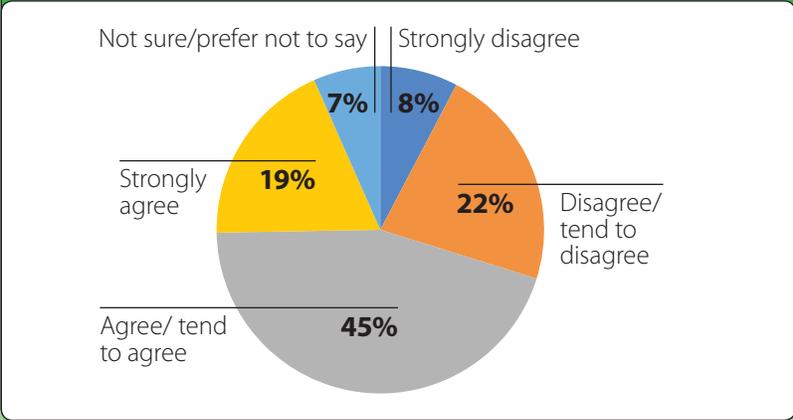
The Ministry of Education states that the redesigned curriculum is based on “Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled learning environments.” Teachers are divided as to the impact and appropriateness of these environments.



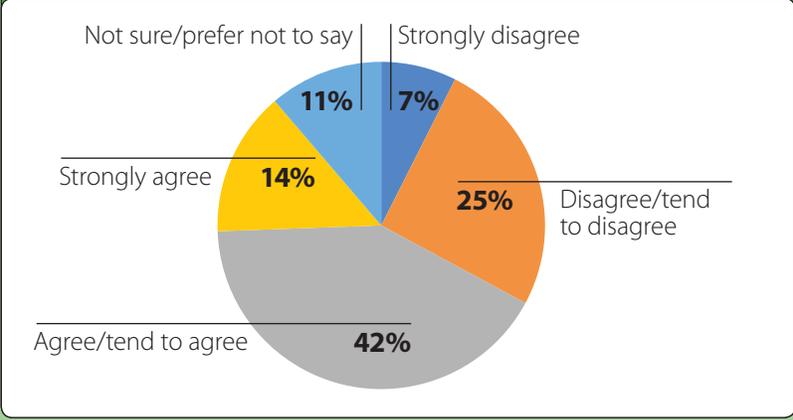
“I feel that all teachers would benefit from more training on how to use technology in the classroom.”

“The heavy focus on information technology and increased use of screen-time as a key part of the new curriculum can be in conflict with other important opportunities the curriculum offers, such as place-based learning.”

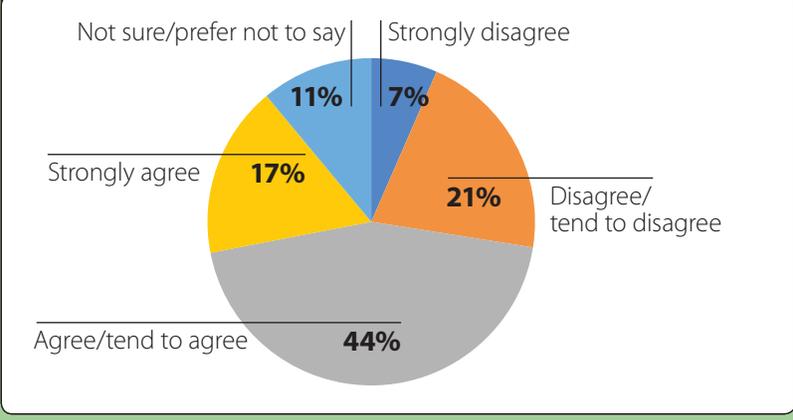
**Teachers who feel that ICT enabled learning is relevant and appropriate for the grades and/or subject areas they teach**



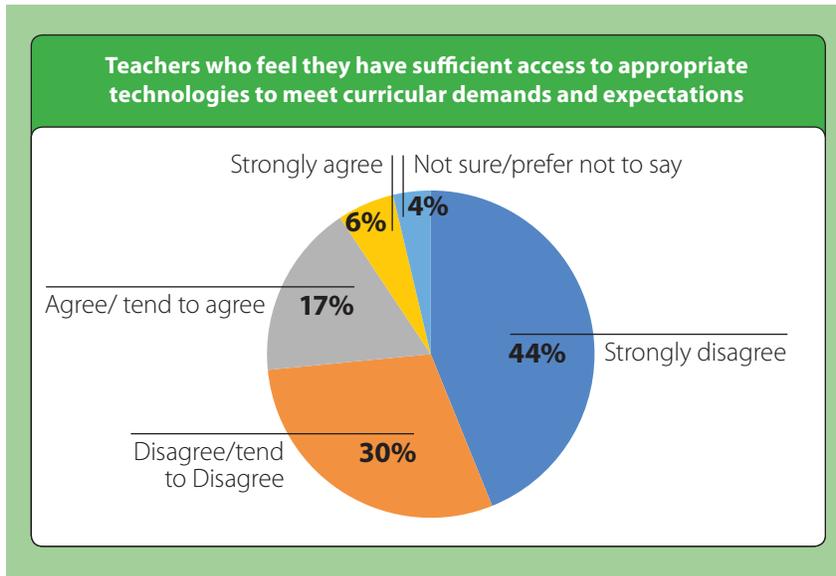
**Teachers who feel that ICT enabled learning environments have positive impacts on their pedagogical practice and decisions**



**Teachers who feel that ICT enabled learning environments have positive impacts on student learning**



Teachers describe access to technology that is appropriate to meet curricular demands as “inadequate,” “not readily available” and “poor.” For teachers to use technology as a potential tool within their pedagogical practice, there is an immediate need for devices, infrastructure, and technical support.



“Access to technology is still very low and not funded.”

“I feel there is a lack of access to technology (broken laptops, bad Wi-Fi, not enough computers, high demand) to implement the curriculum.”

“If the government wants 21st century learning, then a budget for that technology has to adequately address the need.”

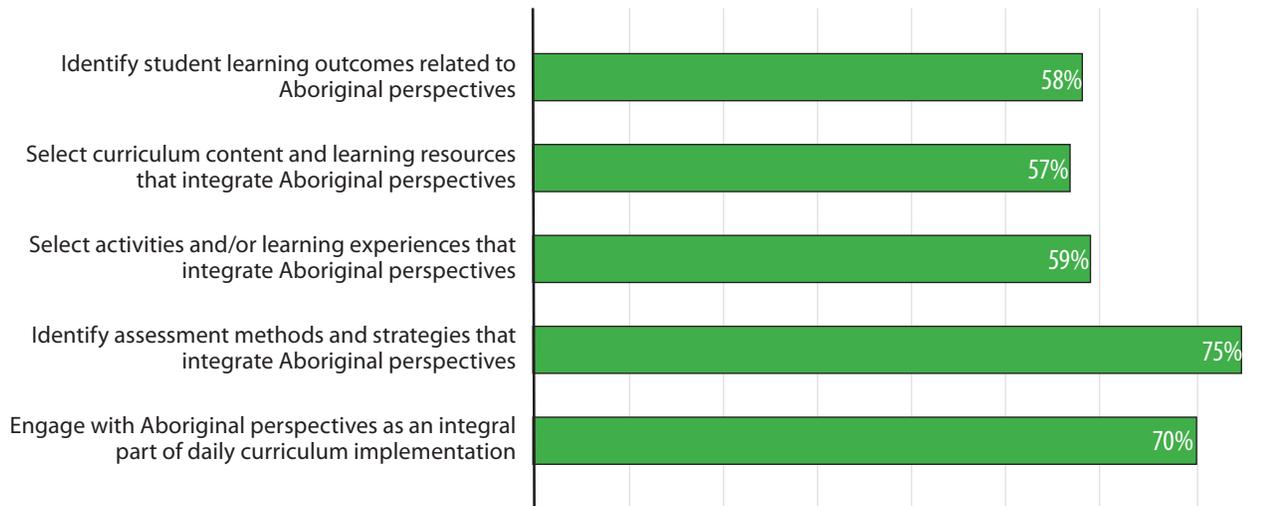
## Integrating Aboriginal perspectives

Another key aspect of the redesigned curriculum is the focus on integrating Aboriginal perspectives. Most teachers (81%) know whose traditional lands they are on. However, more than three out of four either do not know or are uncertain as to local protocols regarding accessing (79%) and/or using and interpreting Aboriginal knowledges (85%).

“ I feel that this area should be handled with sensitivity and respect. We need to ensure our resources are well-vetted and we need time to establish First Nations liaisons in our community. One-day workshops will not cut it in this area. If we are serious about reconciliation then we have to be serious in our approach to implementation. ”

Following Kanu (2011), Aboriginal perspectives “refers to curriculum materials, instructional methods/styles, and interaction patterns that Aboriginal peoples see as accurately reflecting their experiences, histories, cultures, traditional knowledges, standpoints, and values” (p. 30). Integration, in turn, can be explored as a “layering” at five “teaching moments” within curriculum planning and implementation. Over half of teachers do not feel ready or prepared to integrate Aboriginal perspectives across these five moments.

**% of teachers who do not feel ready and prepared to integrate Aboriginal perspectives across five moments of curriculum implementation**



Approximately 3 out of 4 teachers (76%) say that they do not have sufficient access to the necessary instructional materials needed to integrate Aboriginal perspectives in the classroom.

“ Resources are available through Ab Ed but they are not easily accessible and it is challenging to coordinate with the school’s Aboriginal resource teachers. ”

“ We have been given nothing. We are expected to research and find our own instructional materials and use our own money in doing so. ”

“ This is a hugely important area and most teachers I know are scared to not do it justice and lack resources that are appropriate. ”

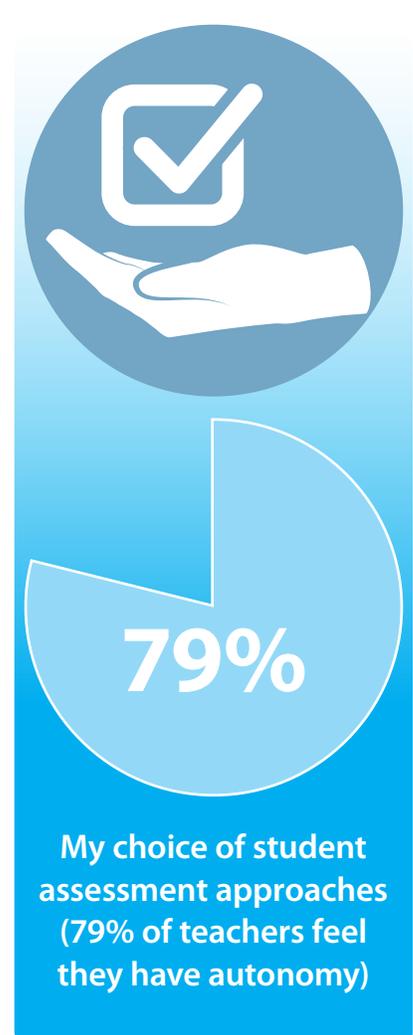
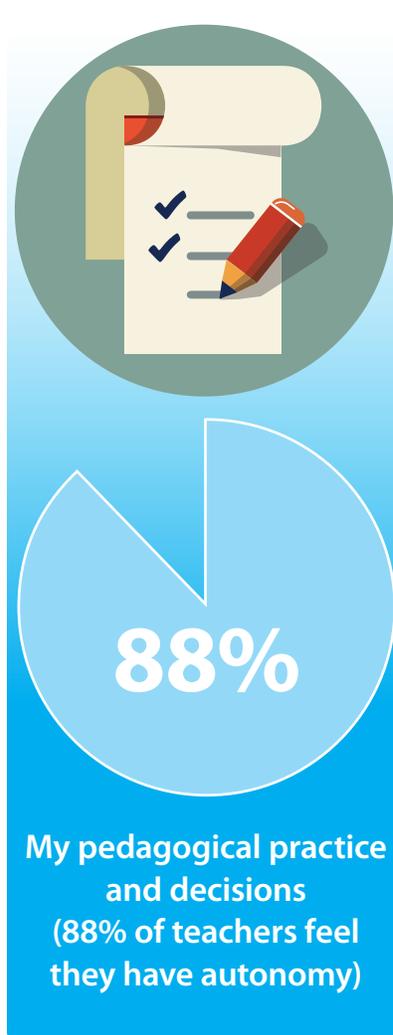
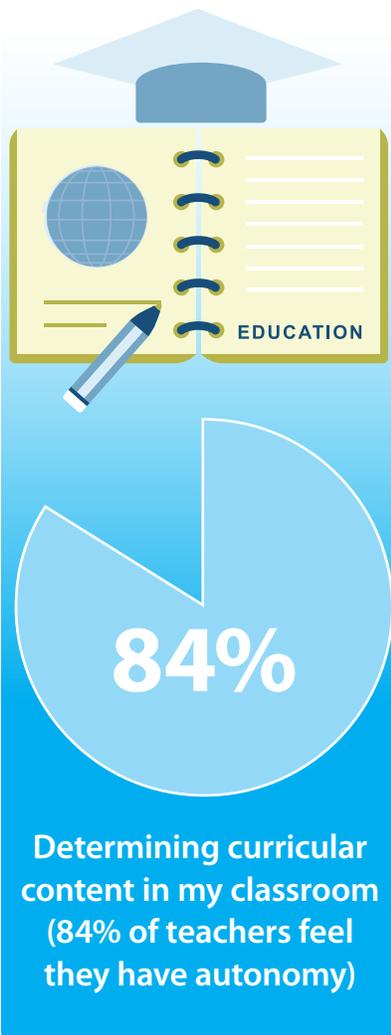
“ I am not sure where to start and where to find information. ”

## Teacher autonomy and workload

Teacher autonomy refers to a teacher's right to use their professional judgement to meet the diverse needs of all students in their classroom. During an intensified period of curriculum change, there are potential opportunities as well as risks for teacher autonomy. There are also significant potential impacts on teacher workload. These questions asked teachers to reflect on the extent to which they can exercise their professional autonomy in relation to the process of curriculum change, and the extent to which the redesigned curriculum has impacted their workload.

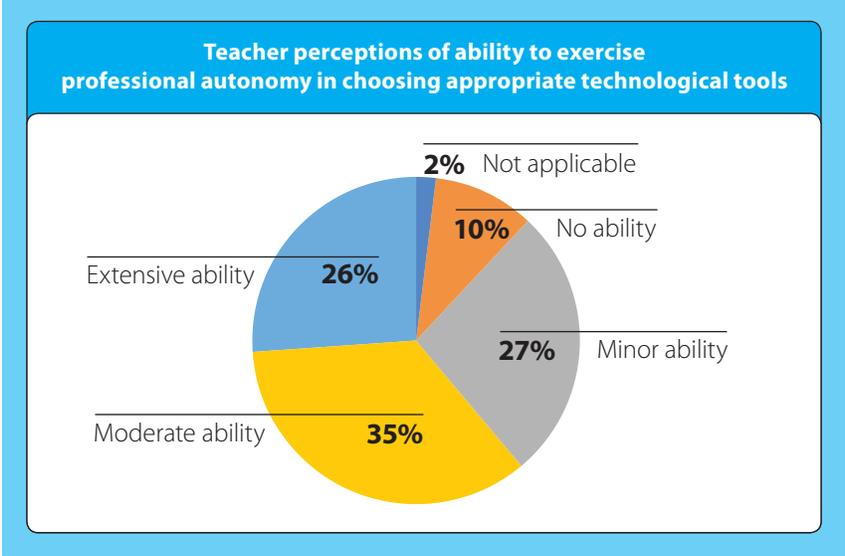
### Teacher autonomy

Teachers feel they have moderate or extensive professional autonomy in several aspects of their professional practice.



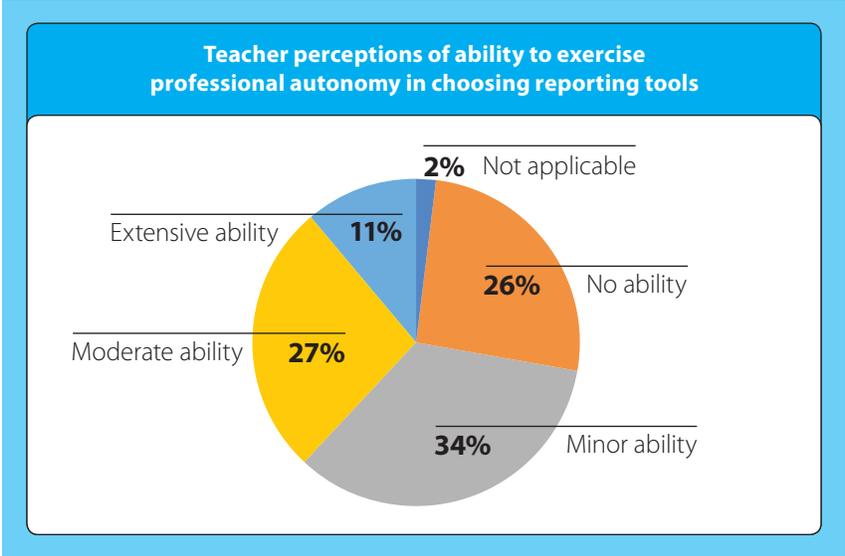
Teachers are divided in relation to how much autonomy they feel they have in choosing appropriate technological tools.

“We are having issues with our district taking away autonomy in our technology selection and implementation.”



Teachers feel they have the least autonomy in relation to choosing reporting tools.

The 2017 BCTF Digital Reporting Tools Survey found that only half of teachers have in-service training on tools they are asked to use. 85% had no or inadequate training on privacy issues related to these tools.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> See: <http://bctf.ca/uploadedFiles/Public/PublicationsResearchReports/2017TC01/2017-TC-01.pdf>

Teachers have diverse views as to how the curriculum has impacted their autonomy, with some teachers finding increased autonomy within the curricular framework.

“ I feel I have increased teacher autonomy and choices of teaching methods as well as approaches to school-relevant subject matter as a result of the new curriculum. ”

However, other teachers identify significant challenges to autonomy. These challenges are exacerbated by confusing messaging related to curriculum change, and in particular the conflation of curriculum change with pedagogical change. For example, many in-service days related to curriculum change focused on “personalized learning,” which is a pedagogical approach not curriculum per se.

“ Being able to exercise my professional autonomy in these areas is not a reflection of ministry direction or district support, but rather a result of my 25 years plus of teaching experience. ”

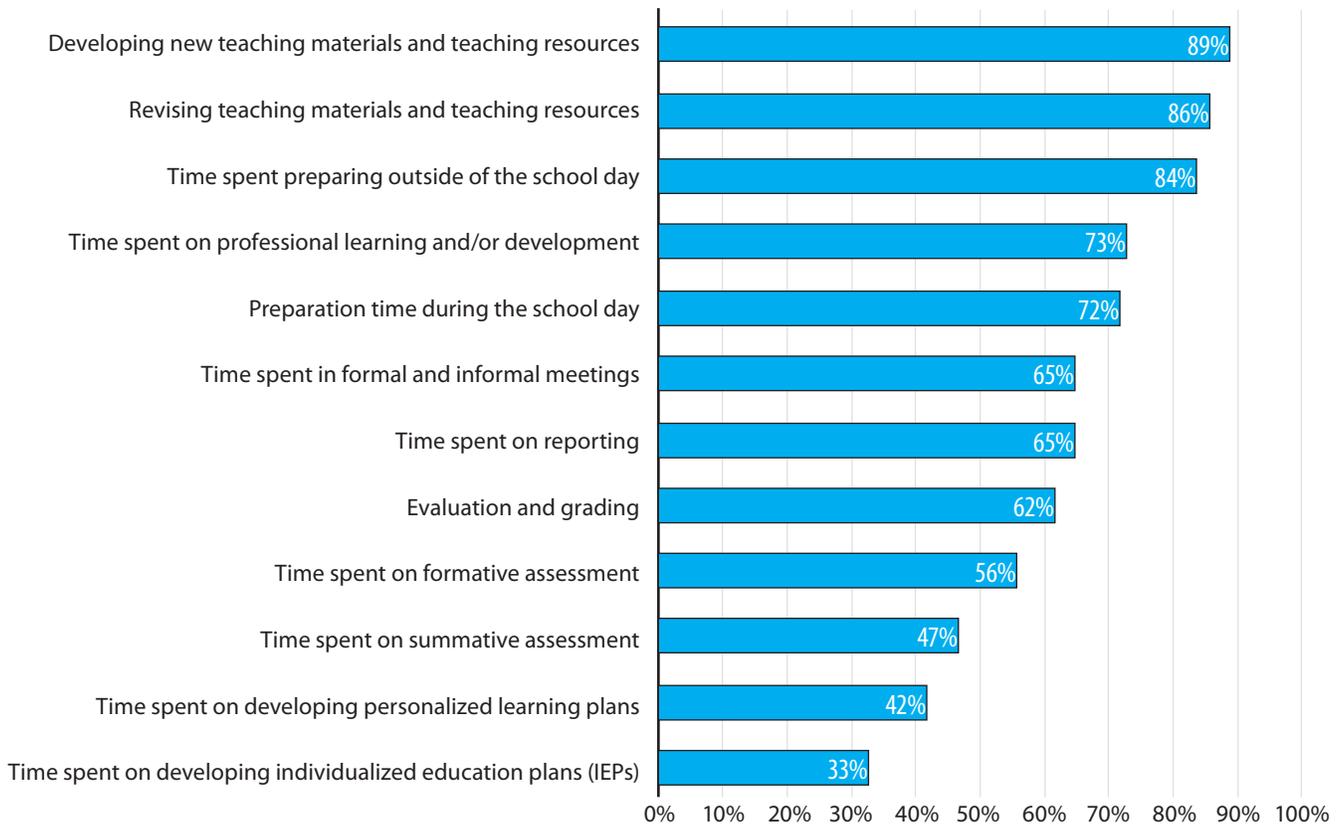
“ The revised curriculum has increased workload drastically and negatively impacted teacher autonomy. We are seeking to individualize the education experience for students, but this is not the case for teachers. We are being told the ‘right way’ to implement and what specific techniques we should and should not be using. The new curriculum is negatively affecting teacher health and well-being and driving good teachers away from the profession. ”

“ I should also mention the explicit intent of the District to implement new teaching and assessment practice by all teachers—rarely, but often enough stated aloud in unguarded moments. Where will anyone find professional autonomy five years from now? ”

## Workload

Many teachers report that the redesigned curriculum has moderately or significantly increased their workload in multiple areas.

**% of teachers who say their workload has moderately or significantly increased in key areas because of curriculum change**



Teachers have spent a substantial amount of personal time and money finding and creating instructional materials.

**“The new curriculum has been a tremendous increase in workload!”**

“ My workload has increased because I was given an outline for the curriculum and was told to go and find the resources and the lesson plans myself. ”

“ I spent an unacceptable amount of time last school year. It was the hardest year in my entire teaching career, even more time consuming than my first year teaching. Changing every curricular area at the same time with absolutely zero resources being provided put a burden on teachers that in my opinion almost broke them. It took what should have been an exciting time—to a workload that was so onerous that a balanced work-home life was impossible.”

- “ Most new curriculum materials (textbooks, pages from the Internet) are not available in French. Therefore, I need to translate it to give to my students. ”
- “ It’s frustrating because we spend so much of our own money on teaching materials and then the topics change and we aren’t provided with new books and lesson materials so we start spending our own money again and time making things. ”
- “ I have never, in 28 years of teaching, had to research so much to meet the needs of my students on a weekly basis. ”

This increase in workload has been exacerbated by a change to reporting and assessment procedures.

- “ This is new! New takes longer. And we aren’t assessing with tests. Those assessments take longer to make, longer to mark. Without any exemplars to gauge by, teachers are creating their own, often assessing the same piece multiple times in order to make consistent assessments. ”
- “ Time spent on reporting has increased CONSIDERABLY!!! It’s ridiculous how much time report card writing is taking not to mention the increased time required to do one-on-one assessments/self-assessments with Kindergarten students. ”

Increases to workload are an effect of the scale of the change, coupled with a lack of resources and uncertainty as to the implementation process.

- “ Throwing an entirely new curriculum and an entirely new reporting process at the same time has caused an incredible amount of stress and a huge increase in workload. ”
- “ When you completely overhaul every single aspect of someone’s career at one time it is going to have a resounding effect. Time spent gathering new resources, time attending seminars and district opportunities, time spent creating new rubrics and assessments, time spent collaborating with colleagues. Everything requires time. This is less time spent with family, less time spent on self-care. A teacher who is not at their best socially and emotionally cannot provide the best for their students. ”

Some teachers are experiencing “burnout,” and are “exhausted physically, mentally, and financially.”



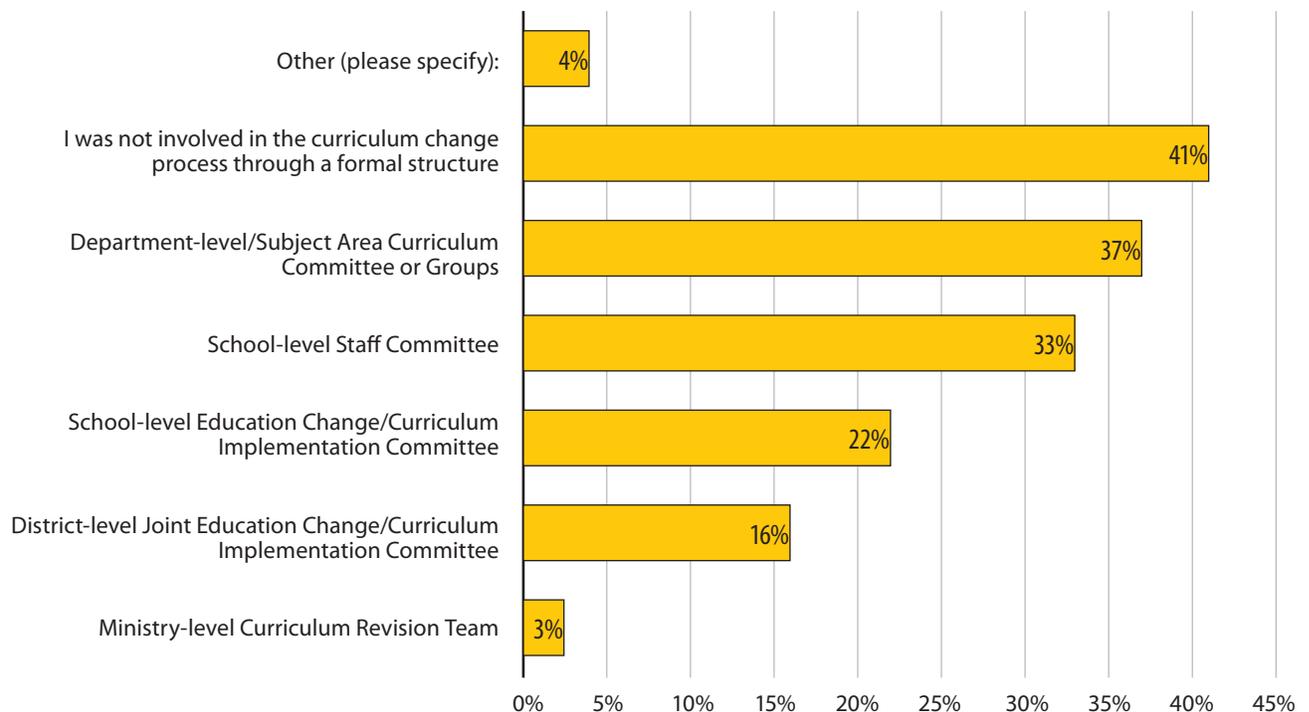
## Involvement, professional development, and learning

There are several formal structures that have aimed to actively engage teachers in curriculum change processes. There have also been professional development opportunities specifically related to the redesigned curriculum. These questions (1) asked teachers to identify structures in which they had been involved and reflect on the extent to which they feel they had a meaningful voice within those structures and (2) reflect on their experiences over the past three years with professional development and learning activities specifically related to the redesigned curriculum.

### Involvement in formal structures related to curriculum change

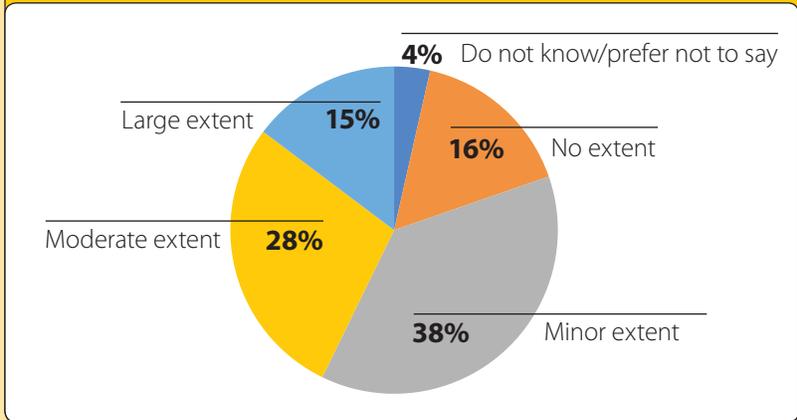
Approximately three out of five teachers have participated in formal structures related to curriculum change.

**% of teachers who have participated in formal structures related to curriculum change**

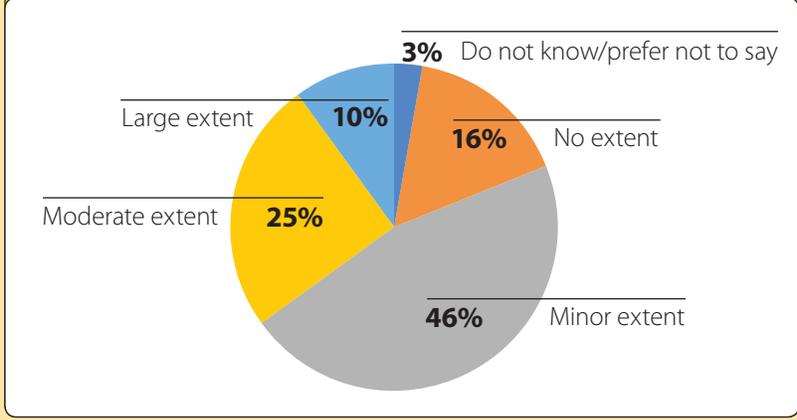


Participants in these structures are divided as to whether they feel they have had a meaningful voice in shaping the process of curriculum change to date.

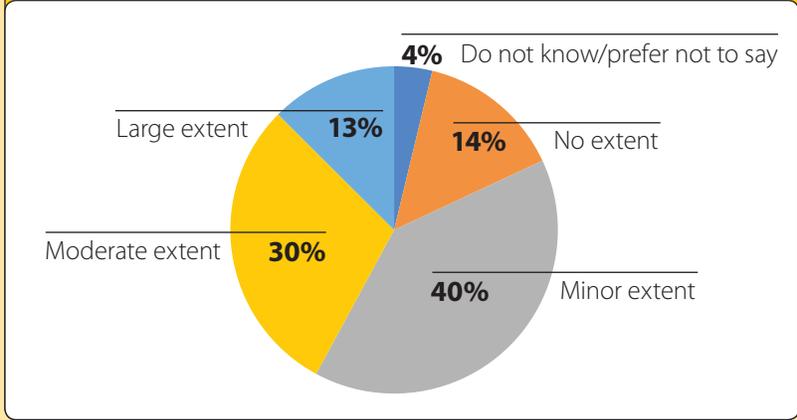
**Teacher perceptions of having a meaningful voice on a Department-level/Subject Area Curriculum Committee or Groups**

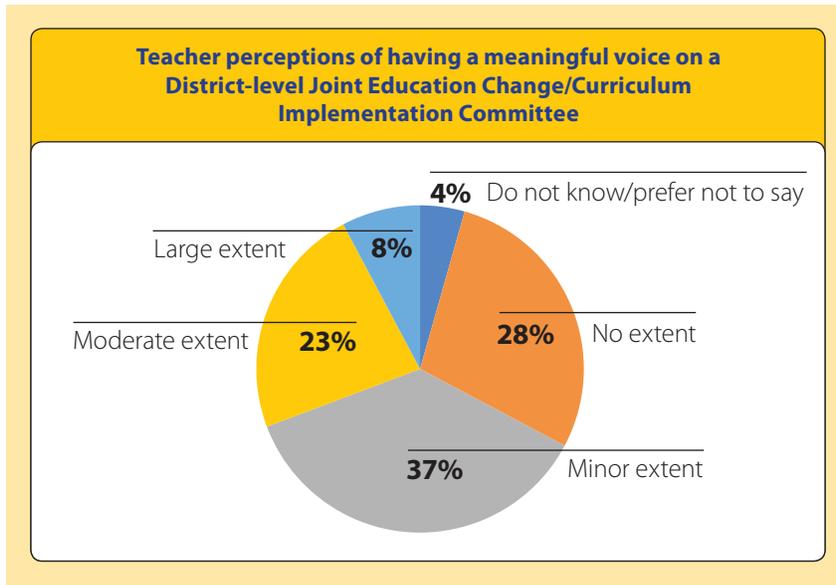


**Teacher perceptions of having a meaningful voice on a School-level Staff Committee**



**Teacher perceptions of having a meaningful voice on a School-level Education Change/Curriculum Implementation Committee**





Participating, but feeling like participation has been superficial or tokenistic, can lead to frustration with both the process and the resulting curriculum.

“ This did not feel as though we were a part of the process. It felt like we were merely reacting or trying to negotiate the changes. ”

“ I am not sure that the spirit of collaboration has been mutual. ”

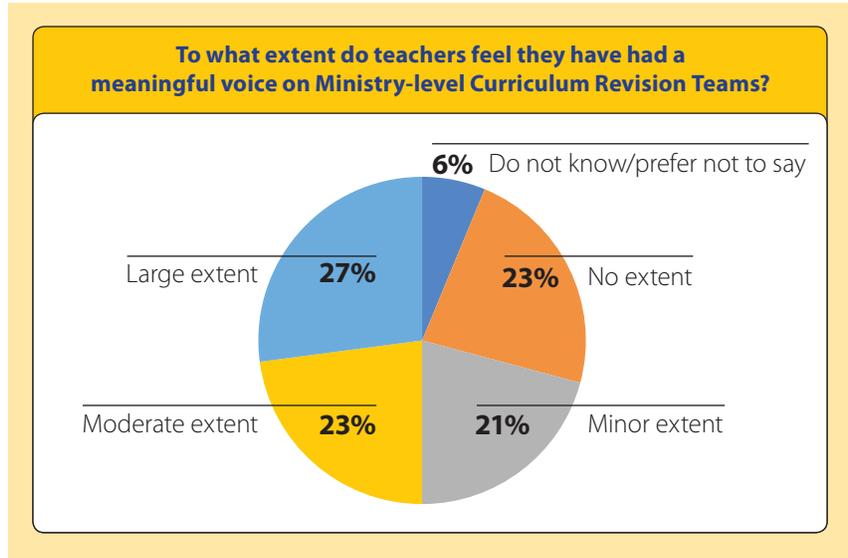
“ It has felt-top down. Teachers are told what will happen by admin, and when we raise questions, they don't know much and have to go back to the district or ministry for clarification. We need to slow down the process. ”

“ None of these will help teach my class tomorrow! ”

“ It has doubled my work load—was on every committee available to be a strong voice for teachers but it made no difference since the powers at large did their own thing anyways. I was heard, but no action was taken to reduce teacher work load. Next year I am not volunteering on any educational change committee since I am not wasting my time any more. ”

Since 2013, teams of teachers have worked collaboratively, with Ministry of Education staff facilitating, to revise BC's K–12 curriculum. Teachers who were appointed by the BCTF to these teams also have divided views as to how much of a meaningful voice they had in the process.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> As of November 2017, the K–9 teams have produced curriculum that was finalized for the 2016–17 school year, whereas the 10–12 teams continue to meet with the aim of curriculum implementation in 2018–19 (for Grade 10) and 2019–20 (for Grades 11–12).



There have also been a variety of mechanisms whereby teachers can provide feedback on draft curriculum.<sup>9</sup> Members of the Provincial Curriculum Revision Teams have indicated that this feedback represented very diverse and often polarized views as to the direction of curriculum change.<sup>10</sup> Besides making revisions challenging, the diversity of viewpoints can lead to frustration for teachers who feel that their suggestions were not followed, particularly if there is not a clear and transparent process for acknowledging and responding to feedback.

“ I made written submission to the Ministry and the union but got no reply. ”

“ I would like to know that the feedback we have been giving the Ministry is actually being considered. ”

“ Our department wrote an eloquent letter to the Ministry when they requested feedback. We spent weeks writing our thoughts and concerns and we were never given any feedback or response of what happened with our feedback. ”

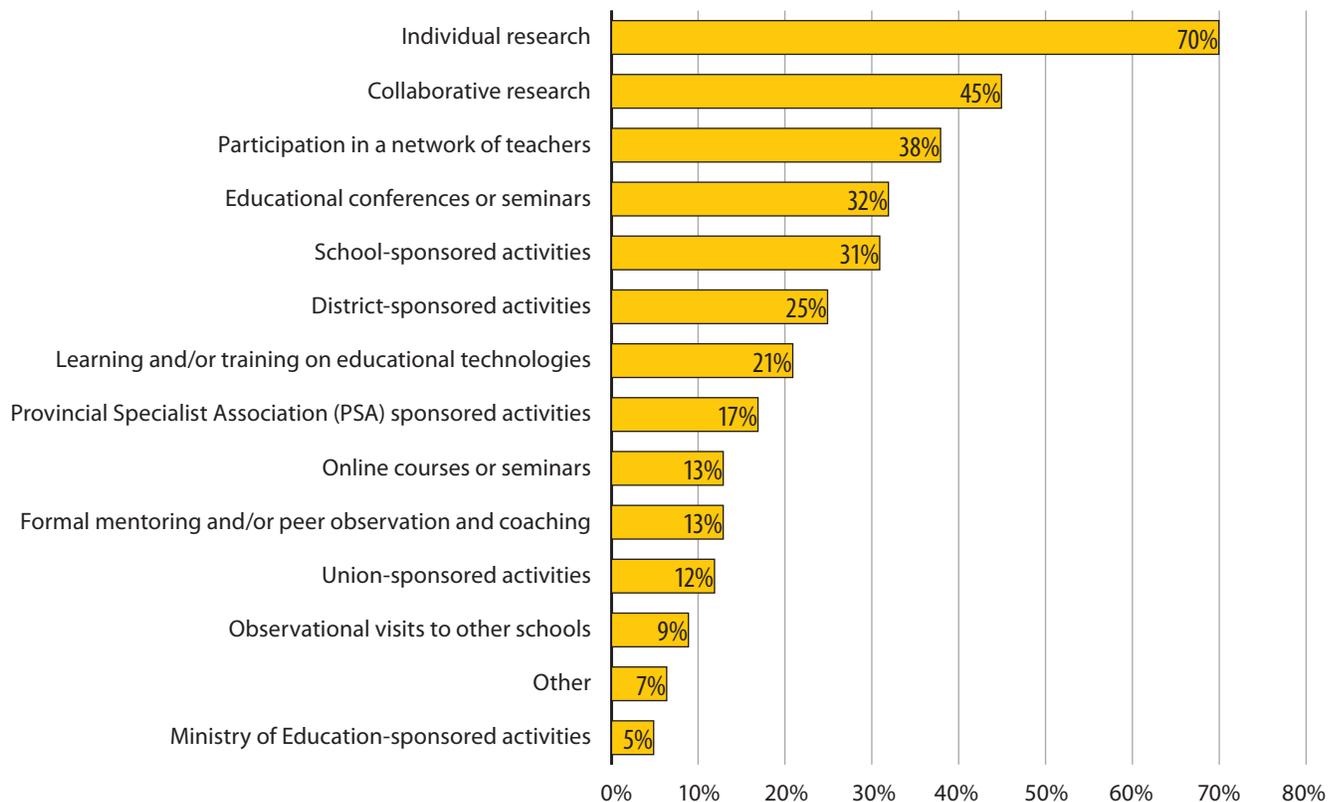
<sup>9</sup> As a part of this survey, teachers provided many subject-specific comments. These unedited comments were collated in October 2017 and sent directly to BCTF members on Provincial Curriculum Development Teams that are currently meeting to revise the draft 10–12 curriculum.

<sup>10</sup> In a related project, BCTF research has been conducting semi-structured interviews with members of the Provincial Curriculum Development Teams. The purpose of these interviews is to explore teachers’ experiences navigating potentially diverse expectations in relation to curricular approach, form, and content within the teams. A report will be available in early 2018.

## Professional development and learning

Teachers have participated in a range of professional development and learning opportunities specifically related to the redesigned curriculum. While these activities can be seen to have increased teacher workload (see previous section), many teachers perceive that these activities had little or no impact on their preparedness for implementing the redesigned curriculum.

**% of teachers who feel that a professional development activity had a large or moderate impact on their preparedness for implementing the redesigned curriculum**



The most common professional development activity was individual research, with 92% of teachers indicating they conducted research specifically related to the redesigned curriculum over the past three years. However, individual research can require significant time and money.

“ [Teachers are] being expected to figure it out largely on our own time and expense. ”

“ Individual research (time to research) impact has been high but definitely not enough time to feel remotely competent in understanding the new curriculum in my subject areas. ”

Some teachers have found this time in the context of teacher education programs or graduate studies, and view these programs as key opportunities to reflect on practice and engage in discussion and debate related to curricular change with colleagues.

“ My most valuable time has been in researching, reading, and dialoguing with colleagues who are keen to make meaningful changes. More than anything, implementing the new curriculum has been about growing in my own understandings/values and about developing a better understanding of decolonizing education. These have been supported almost exclusively through personal work and my Master’s program. ”

“ The greatest impact on my teaching practice and learning about the new curriculum was a graduate studies course I took. We were exposed to Aboriginal instruction in a powerful way, inquiry, and some assessment practices. The greatest impact was the ability to examine our practice and learn from each other the struggles and new approaches we could take. ”

Teachers express frustration with professional development and learning opportunities that are perceived as superficial, unclear, or top-down.

“ Endless meetings...jargon-filled discussion...nobody to clearly identify a goal and a process and a possible assessment strategy. ”

“ The single day pro-d sessions are not useful to improve my learning or implementation of new curriculum. ”

“ The activities were not ever specific enough to be helpful. ”

“ We have these tiny meetings [related to assessment and curriculum implementation] for a few hours during Pro-D days that are months apart and generally raise more questions for me rather than giving me insight and understanding or practical knowledge on how to do this. ”

“ We’ve had new curriculum [in-service days] but they are sort of useless when the curriculum is still in draft form and we don’t want to waste time creating stuff that could disappear. ”

Certain groups of teachers feel that they have not had access to existing opportunities.

“ As a [teacher teaching on call, TTOC] I have felt left out of the curriculum implementation. I graduated just before the implementation began. While I was in my practicum, I used the old curriculum. Now I have been left out of the new curriculum workshops. I feel that I am playing catch up on my own and am at a major disadvantage. ”

“ I teach in a community in [a rural area]. There is very little opportunity to attend professional development with the new curriculum. It is incredibly costly to travel for the opportunities provided elsewhere. ”

“ I work part time and so far all the curriculum implementation days in [my district] have been on days I do not work. ”



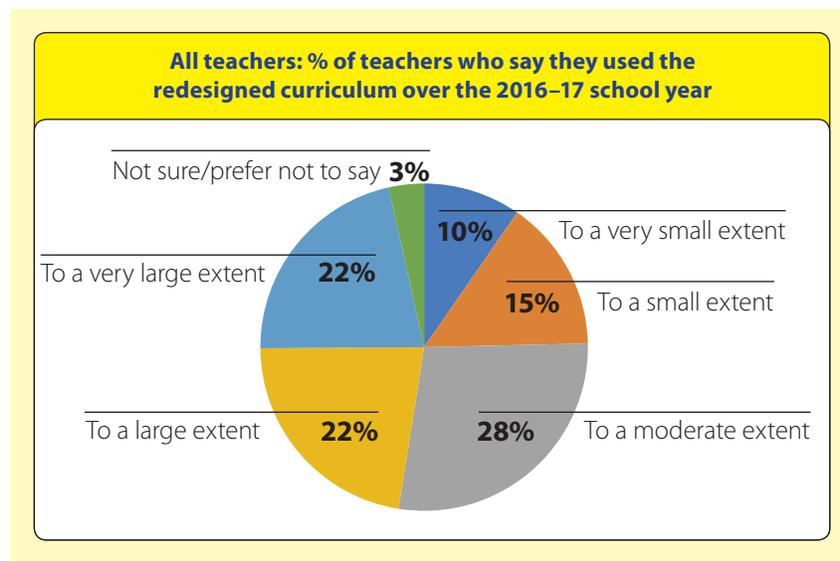
## Curriculum implementation

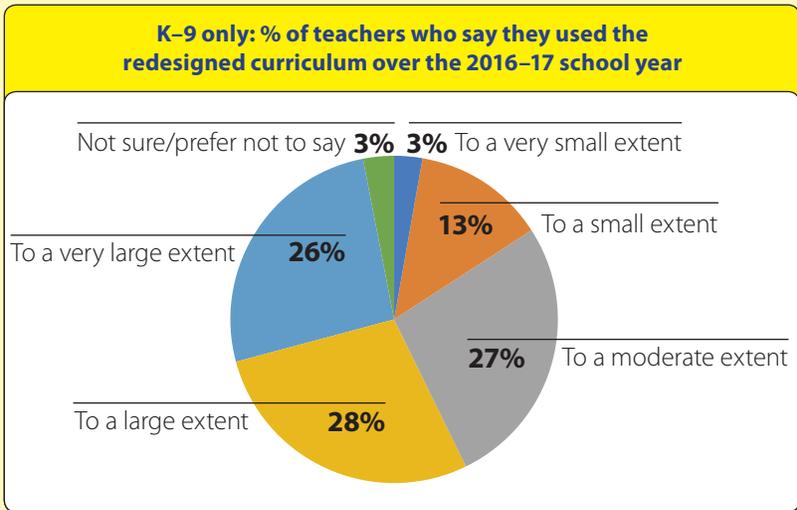
Curriculum implementation is an ongoing process. This set of questions asked teachers to reflect on the process of curriculum implementation within their classroom(s) and school(s) over the past (2016–17) school year.

### Implementation in classrooms and schools

The 2016–17 school year was the first year of implementation for the K–9 curriculum, while the 10–12 curriculum remains in draft form. All education partners recognize that, even if the K–9 curriculum was mandated for the 2016–17 school year, the process of curriculum implementation takes time and should be an “ongoing process built around reflective practice supported by all learning partners” (BCTF et al., n.d.). This includes reflection on how teachers navigate curriculum change while upholding their right to use their professional judgement in relation to their pedagogical practice and decisions.

Overall, slightly less than half of teachers say that they used the redesigned curriculum to a large or very large extent in their classrooms. This number increases to just over half for teachers who only teach K–9. The perception among teachers is that their colleagues have used the curriculum to a lesser extent than themselves.



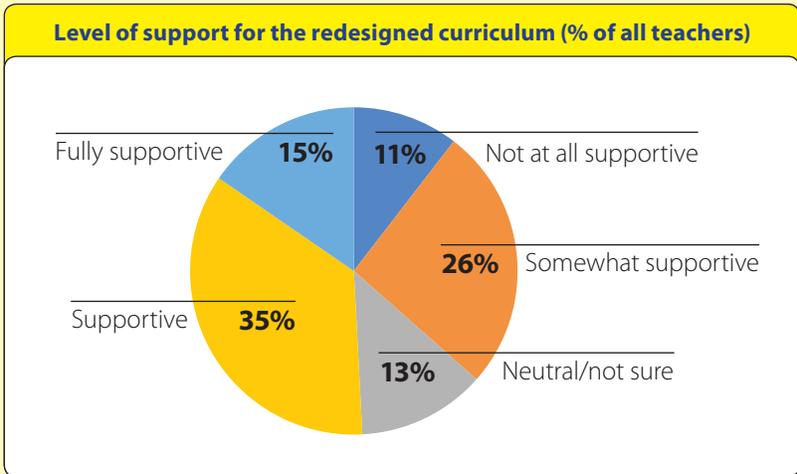


A curriculum that “seems to create dichotomy due to philosophical differences.”

### Perceptions of support

Teachers are divided as to what extent they feel supportive of the redesigned curriculum, with a significant percentage reporting negative or mixed feelings.

For teachers of K-9 only: 55% say they are supportive or fully supportive of the redesigned curriculum.



Teacher comments illustrate a stark divide between those who support and those who are critical of the direction of curriculum change.

Teachers explain their support in terms of an alignment of their personal “philosophy of education” with the curriculum, perceiving that the curriculum is based on “best practice” or “sound educational

philosophy,” and appreciating approaches such as “flexibility” and “student-centered learning.”

“ For educators who already had a professional practice in line with the methods/philosophies of the new curriculum, the change was not dramatic or stressful. Rather, it has been a relief to have official backing/support. ”

At the same time, almost all supportive comments were qualified by a recognition of multiple challenges to implementation. These include: a lack of instructional materials, inadequate time for learning and collaboration, the need for professional development opportunities, lack of access to technology, unclear and or misaligned direction on assessment and reporting, and a rushed and frustrating implementation process.

“ I am 100% on board with the new curriculum. I am finding it very time consuming and difficult to get up-to-date resources, and often have to spend a lot of additional time searching for current resources. ”

“ First off, I completely support this new curriculum change. It was overdue. Next, unless there is a radical turnaround in the way that this is being rolled out, very little will actually change in the next few years. ”

“ I believe the time given for curriculum implementation has been completely inadequate, more time must be given so that teachers can collaboratively work on the changes. Also, the lack of information to answer teachers question around why the curriculum changes were made in the first place. There is good research behind the changes but as this information has not been shared most teachers do not know what it is. ”

“ I like the redesigned curriculum but feel like we need to determine how we are going to be reporting before we can fully understand it and fully implement it. It is contradictory to be teaching the new curriculum and reporting the old way. It is very frustrating that this has yet to be sorted out. Until then, I don’t think anyone in our district can begin to really implement the redesigned curriculum. ”

“ As a new teacher, I enjoy the new curriculum in that I am able to more freely choose how I want the students learning experience to proceed, however the lack of provided

materials or examples is very challenging. This increases prep time, frustration and creates a lack of confidence as a new teacher. ”

“ In general, I am in favour of the new curriculum BUT not the implementation process and time frame. ”

Teachers who are not supportive of the redesigned curriculum expressed strong anger, frustration, and stress. Broadly there were three major reasons given for their lack of support: (1) disagreeing with, or not knowing, the purpose of the change, (2) feeling that research does not support the changes, and (3) perceiving that the change has resulted in a less academically rigorous curriculum.

“ It has created a lot of extra work for the teachers, and I don’t see the benefits of the new curriculum. ”

“ I believe the current changes are nothing more than political posturing and experimenting. ”

“ Primary teachers have been doing many of the things that are in the new curriculum. I find it is just new words and has increased our time on deciphering what it all means. ”

“ There has been so much made of change change change rather than what improves students’ ability to deal with life (and education) after school. All these changes seem to do is justify people’s salaries who do not directly teach kids. ”

“ The change is too aggressive and not supported by most of the current peer reviewed educational research. ”

“ I feel like this is the ‘Year 2000’ all over again.<sup>11</sup> There is a lack of emphasis on basics and too much on ‘extras’. It was implemented too quickly and with no support with either guidelines, materials, or any real planning time. ”

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<sup>11</sup> The “Year 2000” refers to an attempt, in the late 1980s, to make a systematic change in the structure, curriculum, and teaching practice in BC schools. The “Year 2000” program was cancelled after three years, with only the primary program implemented, following substantial challenges to implementation and support for the process. During those three years, a total of \$482 million was spent implementing the program. However, as a series of BCTF reports entitled *Teaching in the 1990s* illustrate, there were critical tensions between different approaches to teaching practice, as well as how those approaches aligned with the reality of elementary and secondary school structures. See: <https://bctf.ca/publications/ResearchReports.aspx?id=5552>.

“ I am concerned over a loss of ‘common knowledge.’ ”

“ I am very concerned about the move away from the direct teaching of core literacy and numeracy skills in the early grades—as well as on the effort to remove letter grades from reports. We’ve tried this before (in the Year 2000 Initiative) and it failed badly. I believe that many at-risk kids will be negatively impacted by a lot of these changes. ”

Teachers perceive the level of support for the redesigned curriculum to be highest among school administrators and the school district. Teachers expressed the most uncertainty in relation to parents’ views on the redesigned curriculum.

“ [T]here are many [parents] who are supportive, some who are not supportive, and many who are just unaware of the curriculum. ”

“ Not enough parent education has been done. ”

“ Parents really don’t seem to understand. All familiarity is gone and that leaves them feeling uncertain. ”

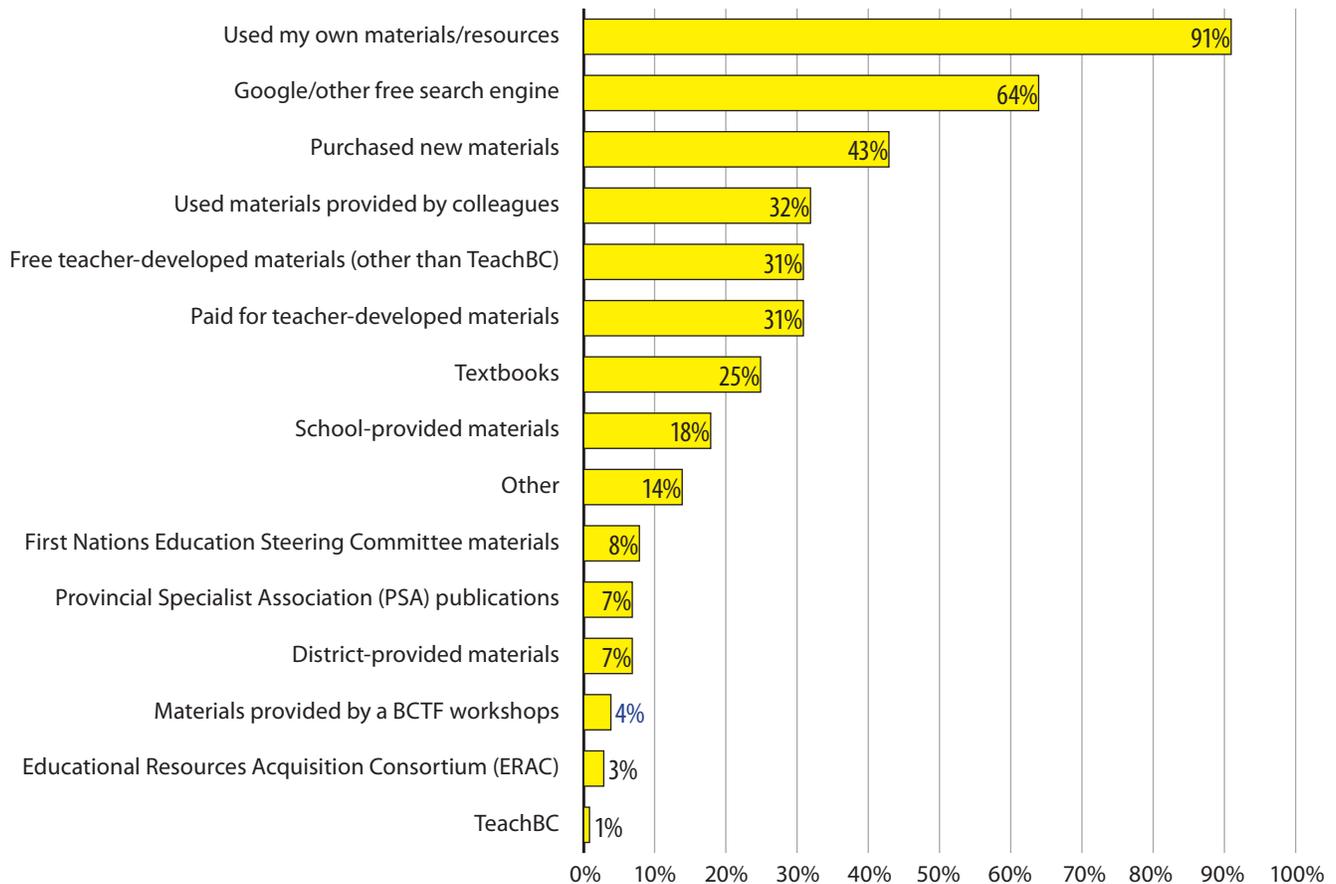
Since 2013, curriculum implementation has taken place in challenging circumstances, such as the underfunding of public education, job action in 2014, and the 2002 stripping of key teaching and learning conditions. Although there was a historic Supreme Court of Canada ruling in 2016 in favor of teachers’ ability to negotiate key teaching and learning conditions, and a change in government in 2017, these circumstances can continue to negatively impact curriculum change.

“ The past 15 years of underfunding have made all of us very cynical and frankly, overworked. Having a curriculum change at the end of these long 15 years has been difficult as we are all very TIRED. More support was needed immediately and the school districts were out of money. It was an insult to teachers to be given a new curriculum that was a one-page description online without a good reason to change the curriculum. We were all horrified. ”

## Instructional materials

Teachers currently access instructional materials from a range of sources, most often using their own materials or materials found through Google or other search engines.

**Where are the teachers accessing resources?  
% of teachers who access resources often or very often**



On average, teachers feel that 43% of their instructional materials have changed. There is an urgent need for materials for implementation.

*“ My biggest challenge is that if you want me to teach it, there should be resources available. I already put so much time in planning, reporting, and getting the class ready each day, I do not have time to search for resources. ”*

“ I feel many teachers are spending hours searching for information on the internet. After finding some material it has to be adapted for students as most of the materials I have found are too difficult for my students. We have not received money to purchase materials. ”

On average teachers rate their access to necessary instructional materials as a **4** on scale of 0 to 10. The lack of accessible, fully funded resources impacts on working and learning conditions.

“ I just want to note that I spent hundreds of hours developing content and instructional materials this year. I work part time and spent most of my days off working on school materials. ”

“ Teachers are burnt out because we had to do it all ourselves. Which means some teachers still use the old curriculum. ”

“ Please look at this list [of where teachers access resources] and ask yourself how big this job has become. I love curriculum development, but am overwhelmed by trying to integrate what I’m guessing I’m supposed to do with the needs in my classroom. ”

## Assessment and reporting

A large majority of teachers feel that there have not been clear or helpful guidelines in relation to student assessment (71%), student self-assessment of the core competencies (74%) or student reporting (76%).

Teacher’s frustration in this area was evident, with many comments related to (1) increased workload, (2) the lack of user-friendly technical tools and support, and (3) the need for clear reporting and assessment guidelines aligned with the redesigned curriculum.

“ We have a choice between two different reporting tools, both of which are an incredible amount of work. Neither option is a reasonable amount of work. ”

“ I find current reporting practices in our district and province to be highly restrictive. I am interested in trying Fresh Grade, for example, but have limited access to the technology needed. Also, our district says if we do Fresh Grade we still have to do three normal written report cards. I consider that altogether too much work! ”

- “ In our district we must use the expected reporting tool and are allowed to use additional ones too. Double the work! ”
- “ MyEdBC’s gradebook is cumbersome and not intuitive. ”
- “ Reporting procedures have not caught up with the curriculum changes. ”
- “ It seems like there has been a great deal of information provided about how assessment ‘should’ look within the new curriculum but I don’t feel that our current methods for reporting support this new vision...No one has ever given any concrete examples of how to make these changes a reality. ”
- “ There is a lot of confusion surrounding assessment. Why don’t we have a strong assessment policy design for the new curriculum? It should have been ready before the implementation. It is really difficult to assess new curriculum with old goals. ”

There are also multiple questions related to the new literacy and numeracy assessments, graduation requirements, and the impact curriculum change will have on admission to post-secondary institutions.

- “ The literacy assessment that is replacing the provincial exam for English 12 is causing huge anxiety for teachers. How are we supposed to prepare the students when we haven’t even seen the exam? ”
- “ There is still a lot of vagueness when it comes to the curriculum changes and graduation requirements, so it’s challenging to commit fully. ”
- “ There also seems to be a lack of information about [how] new assessment methods may be received and used by the Universities when it comes to admissions. ”
- “ The lack of clarity in terms of post-secondary application and graduation assessment is unsettling for students, parents and teachers. ”

## Physical and health education

One curricular area that has been combined is physical and health education. Health-related components of the curriculum that were formerly contained in Health & Career Education K–8, Health & Career Education 8/9, and Planning 10 were merged into what was previously known as Physical Education. The decision to restructure the curriculum in this manner was made by the Ministry of Education prior to Provincial Curriculum Development Teams being involved. This restructuring has reframed the context of health-related content. It also means that, especially at the secondary school level, hundreds of teachers around the province have now inherited topics that they do not have previous training or experience with (including sexual health, for which there has been chronically few professional learning supports available in most school districts).

Of the teachers that currently teach physical education and/or careers, a majority (70%) feel ready and prepared to teach health-related topics. However, a quarter (25%) of these teachers disagree or strongly disagree that they are ready and prepared to teach health-related topics.

“ I have taught Planning 10 in the past and so feel comfortable with the topics but MANY teachers are feeling completely unnerved and unprepared to teach the new health-related topics. ”

Furthermore, approximately half of these teachers (49%) say they do not have sufficient access to materials on health-related topics, and three out of five (62%) say they do not have sufficient access to in-service training.

“ Access to instructional materials is due to personal research/ accessing online resources, not resources available to implement the new curriculum by government. ”

“ No materials or resources in French for French immersion. ”

“ Teachers have not been provided in a timely manner the materials needed, the time to explore them, and the time to collaborate with colleagues in this regard. With schedules overflowing, it is challenging to take on so much change so quickly. ”

## Learning conditions

Teachers also feel that classroom learning conditions are impacting on their ability to successfully implement the redesigned curriculum.



77%

77% of teachers feel that **class size** has a large or moderate impact on their ability to implement the redesigned curriculum

81%

81% of teachers feel that **class composition** has a large or moderate impact on their ability to implement the redesigned curriculum

85%

85% of teachers feel that **the diversity of student needs** in the classroom has a large or moderate impact on their ability to implement the redesigned curriculum

Impacts include increased workload as teachers make ongoing pedagogical decisions to meet the needs of all students.

“ Classroom composition dramatically effects workload! ”

“ I feel my class composition and the limited support for behavior has a significant impact on my ability to teach any curriculum. ”

“ Teachers also need much more support in designing classroom materials for such diverse sets of learners in our classrooms and how to successfully manage the wide range of needs of our students. ”

There is also concern that the redesigned curriculum may not meet the needs of specific groups of students.

“ Curriculum isn’t designed for struggling students, or students with special needs. ”

“ I feel like it is just a way of getting around providing support and services to those who have high needs, as everyone is supposed to be individualized. ”



## Living change: Three conditions to foster a teacher-led process

The key question at the heart of any moment of curriculum change is deceptively simple: **“what knowledge is of most worth?”** (Pinar, 2015, p. 32). This question is fundamentally about the aims of public education. Its answer depends on a multitude of factors such as how knowledge is conceptualized, what the role of the school is seen to be, and who is seen to decide these issues.

“What knowledge is of most worth?” (Pinar, 2015, p. 32).

Even as curriculum change attempts to answer this question (to be designed and implemented), it is crucial to recognize that curriculum is *always* a site of ongoing tension, debate, and contestation. Furthermore, teachers are *already* engaging this question in their daily practice. Consider, for example, current debates as to what content should or should not be included in the curriculum. Is it about “skills,” “competencies,” or “big ideas”? What grade level should certain content be taught at? What is the “core” knowledge within a discipline?

While it is easy to get hung-up on these questions, what is urgently needed is a shift from whether *teachers* are (“correctly”) implementing the curriculum, to whether the *curriculum* is providing space for the multiple knowledges, experiences, and needs that make up teaching and learning in BC. Drawing on the results of the *2017 BCTF Curriculum Change and Implementation Survey*, we propose three key curricular conditions to foster a teacher-led process.

### Curricular condition 1: Time and space for curriculum as an ongoing conversation

The direction of curriculum change will be determined by how teachers are invited into the conversation. Asking for “buy-in,” for example, demands that teachers fit their pedagogical practice and decisions into a set curricular model, whether or not that model resonates with their own philosophies of education, teaching experience, or the needs of students in their classrooms. This can, as seen in the comments left by participants in this survey, lead to frustration, anger, and resistance.

Engaging curriculum as an ongoing conversation, in contrast, would invite teachers to work together to discuss and debate questions such as:

- How do you answer the question “what knowledge is of most worth”? Where do you find your answer reflected in the curriculum? How do you work with parts of the curriculum that you feel are in conflict with your answer?

- What are the points of convergence and potential tension between the curriculum and your pedagogical practice and decisions? How do you engage these to best meet the needs of diverse students in your classroom and school community?

### **Curricular condition 2: Educational systems and structures that support curricular demands**

Teaching and learning conditions *are* curricular conditions. In other words, they will fundamentally determine the direction that curriculum change takes.

Teacher perspectives in this survey point to the importance of:

- Well-resourced schools and classrooms that meet the demands of the curriculum (e.g. flexible learning spaces, accessible and reliable technology, adequate instructional materials, and supports).
- Reasonable class size and composition, and explicit attention to the impact of the diversity of student needs on curriculum implementation.
- Adequate staffing and support to meet the needs of all students and teachers.
- Fully funded, equitable, and accessible technological infrastructure, devices and support for all students and schools.
- Clear and reasonable assessment and reporting systems that are aligned with curriculum.
- Respect for teacher's autonomy to make professional judgements in relation to curriculum as to what works best for them and their students.
- Explicit attention to how the structure of schooling for both K–9 and 10–12 (e.g. timetables, graduation requirements) shape the direction of curriculum change.

### **Curricular condition 3: A flexible, adaptable, and fully-resourced implementation process**

Curriculum change is a process, and the results from this survey illustrate that teachers are at different points in this process. There needs to be a clearly differentiated curriculum implementation plan that addresses communication for different groups, school cultures, and teachers at different points in the process of implementation. There also needs to be a clear delineation between curriculum change and other changes.

While it is the mandate of the Ministry of Education to set the provincial curriculum, it is teachers who determine appropriate pedagogical approaches, using their professional judgement to meet the needs of all students in their classroom.

A curriculum implementation plan should include:

- A clear system for development and distribution of instructional materials. These are fully funded resources in French and English that are accessible in a range of formats (e.g. online, print, consumable) and reflect the importance of all curricular areas.
- Ongoing individual and collaborative time for curriculum planning and resource development (including digital resources).
- Support for the infusion of Aboriginal content and ways of knowing as an ongoing journey for teachers. This includes localized curriculum and in-service and professional development activities.
- Accurate, up-to-date, and inclusive in-service and teaching resources to support the move of health-related content into physical and health education.
- A well-thought out and planned strategy for inclusion and equity across all curricular areas and grades.



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