



Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools

Serving the Regional Communities of Beaverlodge, Grande Prairie, Fairview, Sexsmith, & Spirit River
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Class Size Information Survey 2009-2010

General Comments

The Board of Trustees continues to reasonably meet Alberta Education's guidelines for the Overall Class Size Initiative. The Board of Trustees also recognizes that that guideline for high school is not the best environment for students and teachers if an optimal learning environment is the goal. Lower class sizes, coupled with a change in instruction provides teachers with opportunities to use a variety of assessment strategies, differentiate instruction, deliver the curriculum objectives, and spend more quality time with students.

A Summary of the Accomplishments

District Administration, in consultation with school principals, allocates teachers to specific grades. In 2009-2010, 1.07 FTE was allocated for each classroom. The 0.07 FTE is an allocation for teacher preparation time and collaborative time.

In the two of four divisions (K to 3 and 4 to 6), the overall class size declined. In two divisions (7 to 9 and 10 to 12) the overall class sizes increased marginally. **The Commission on Learning's 2009-2010 targets are as follows**

Grades preK– 3	17:1	Grades 4 to 6	23:1
Grades 7 to 9	25:1	Grades 10-12	27:1

Allocation of Staff and Class Composition

In allocating teachers to achieve the Learning Commission's recommendations and doing what is best for kids, administration considered class composition when setting class size. Generally a class with special needs students, students whose first language is not English, and at-risk students should be smaller than the average class size. Classes may also be smaller in cases where there are safety considerations such as traditional trades and CTS classes. Schools are required to submit profiles to administration to assist with the allocation of staff.

Research and Recommendations

There is a wealth of research at the K to 3 level that indicates that a reduction in class size and a focus on differentiated instruction will significantly improve student achievement. The Commission found that there were statistically significant differences among the three class types on all achievement measures and in all subject areas in every year of the experiment (K - 3). On average, students in small classes had superior academic performance to students in larger classes.

The Commission examined many practical studies including Project STAR, and the Commission members noted that no significant differences were found between classes with teacher aides and regular classes in any year of the study. The small-class advantage was found for both boys and girls. The benefits were substantially greater for minority students or students attending inner-city schools in each year of the study. Students who had been in small classes exhibited superior engagement behaviours in grade 4 including more effort spent on learning activities, more initiative, and less disruptive or inattentive withdrawn behaviour. The problems teachers encounter in teaching and managing classes were not reduced when a teaching assistant was present. In Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools, Teaching Assistants are allocated for Students with Severe Needs, English

as a Second Language, high Kindergarten class sizes, and for Early Literacy (grades K-2).

Further research needs to be done to determine if achievement is increasing in each grade level in the core subjects, specifically Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies as a result of the Initiative. It may take three to four years for the effects of the Initiative to appear. The Commission could not find any clear research that suggests class size beyond Grades 4-12 has a significant impact. However, an examination of best practices at the Grades 4-12 level may benefit students and staff.

Future Challenges and Summary

2009-2010 Grande Prairie and District Catholic Schools has met all of Alberta Education's Class Size targets from K to 12. One of the challenges will be to find qualified teachers to meet the ongoing needs in the upcoming years. Also, strategies will need to be provided to teachers because more multigraded classrooms will emerge as the overall class size of 17:1 is achieved.

In summary, administration is pleased with the initial positive outcomes that have resulted from the Class Size Initiative and administration looks forward to improved parent/ student/ teacher satisfaction and student achievement as a result of the Initiative.

Core Subjects: Jurisdiction

	K to 3			4 to 6			7 to 9			10 to 12		
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Ecole St. Gerard Catholic School	21.3	18.0	17.6	21.8	21.8	21.6	22.3	22.2	21.3			
Holy Cross Catholic School	17.8	19.6	20.1	20.6	19.9	21.1	21.2	19.6	24.4			
Kateri Mission Catholic School	17.8	18.6	17.2	20.6	21.8	18.1	23.0	19.7	19.8			
Mother Teresa School			20.0			21.8			21.3			
St. Clement Catholic School	16.0	14.4	12.3	17.2	16.2	18.7	23.5	17.6	23.0			
St. Joseph Catholic High School							23.1	26.8	24.2	22.4	23.9	26.1
St. Mary Catholic School	14.5	12.4	13.0	17.5	20.1	18.0	14.3	12.5	13.5			
St. Mary's Catholic School	17.7	18.3	16.0	15.7	14.7	17.3	23.0	11.5	14.5			
St. Patrick Catholic School	16.8	17.0	14.1	18.2	18.8	18.3	14.8	12.0	16.7			
St. Thomas More Catholic School	19.8	21.5	18.0	23.3	20.0	19.3	22.7	22.5	19.2	21.3	19.8	17.0
Ste. Marie Catholic School	15.4	12.8	14.4	18.0	21.3	16.3	13.5	13.5	17.0			
Total for Jurisdiction 4130	17.9	17.3	16.5	19.7	19.8	19.5	20.5	18.7	20.6	22.3	23.4	25.2

All Subjects: Jurisdiction

	K to 3			4 to 6			7 to 9			10 to 12		
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Ecole St. Gerard Catholic School	21.3	18.0	17.6	21.8	21.8	21.6	22.3	22.2	21.3			
Holy Cross Catholic School	17.8	19.7	20.0	20.3	19.9	20.4	20.9	18.5	23.7			
Kateri Mission Catholic School	17.8	18.6	17.2	20.2	21.8	18.3	21.1	19.3	18.5			
Mother Teresa School			20.2			21.8			21.6			
St. Clement Catholic School	16.0	14.4	12.4	16.9	16.2	18.3	23.1	17.6	22.9			
St. Joseph Catholic High School				17.3	21.7	19.0	23.6	25.3	24.4	23.2	23.1	24.6
St. Mary Catholic School	14.6	12.5	13.1	17.5	21.2	18.0	14.2	12.5	13.5			
St. Mary's Catholic School	17.5	18.1	15.9	15.7	14.7	17.3	23.0	15.3	14.5			
St. Patrick Catholic School	16.8	17.0	14.2	16.7	16.6	15.2	15.0	13.0	14.3			
St. Thomas More Catholic School	19.8	21.5	18.1	23.3	20.0	19.3	22.7	22.3	18.8	20.3	17.9	15.9
Ste. Marie Catholic School	15.4	12.8	14.5	18.0	21.3	16.3	13.5	13.5	17.0			
Total for Jurisdiction 4130	17.9	17.3	16.6	19.2	19.5	18.9	20.3	19.0	20.1	22.9	22.5	23.8

Note: K to 3 class sizes actually reflect PreK-3 class sizes.

"We will provide a quality Catholic education which meets the needs of each student and inspires all to live life to their full potential, as caring and competent citizens and Apostles of Christ"