

## **Update on facts about high school class sizes, enrolments and budgets**

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Media Relations  
403-819-2317

mediarelations@cbe.ab.ca

The Calgary Board of Education (CBE) has not shied away from stating that 2013-14 was a tough budget year, with a \$62-million shortfall as a result of the provincial budget released last March. Decisions about how to manage this challenging budget reality were filtered through our values. With students at the forefront of all decisions, the 2013-2014 operating budget directed as much funding as possible to classrooms.

Determining how to best allocate resources is a complex endeavor, one that we take very seriously both at the system level and at the school level.

There has been specific interest this fall in CBE enrolment, staffing levels, school budgets and high school class sizes.

### **Enrolment**

On Sept. 30 each year, Alberta school boards calculate their enrolment for submission to Alberta Education. This year CBE enrolment was 110,763 – up 3,631 (3.4 per cent) from 107,132 on Sept. 30, 2012.

While overall CBE enrolment increased by 3.4 per cent, high school enrolment increased by only 1.3 per cent from 25,918 to 26,270. Some high schools saw enrolment decreases due to changing school demographics (e.g. the opening of Robert Thirsk High School).

By far the largest jump in enrolment was in kindergarten, up 8.3 per cent. Grades 1 to 3 increased by 6.2 per cent; Grades 4 to 6 by 5.7 per cent; and Grades 7 to 9 by .5 per cent.

For more information, see [enrolment data](#).

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**Calgary Board  
of Education**

## Staffing

In the face of a tough provincial budget, staffing in schools has been affected. However, with increased enrolment, the overall result is that we have 34 more teachers in schools than we had last year. In total, based on Sept. 30 numbers, the CBE has budgeted for 5,772 full-time equivalent Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) members which is up from last year's count of 5,738.

## Budgets

It has been inaccurately reported that the funds allocated to high schools this year decreased by as much as 11 per cent over the previous year. In fact, the budget allocation provided to high schools at the system level decreased by 4.5 per cent on average as a response to the reduced provincial budget. During the budget process, the decision was made to direct provincial funds for class size to students in kindergarten to Grade 3 (Division 1), a decision in keeping with CBE values, current research, and the expectations of Alberta Education.

High schools are allocated budgets from the overall CBE system budget provided by the province. Principals then make decisions at the school level about how to allocate their funds on behalf of their students.

Many factors contribute to school budget allocations. Schools are primarily funded based on their enrolment. If enrolment decreases, money allocated to schools decreases. Fewer students result in fewer teachers. If the student profile changes, the money allocated to schools may also change. Therefore, if some high schools experienced a larger budget cut than 4.5 per cent, that was because their enrolment decreased or their overall student profile changed.

Factors school principals consider when staffing include the following:

- enrolment levels
- the student profile and student learning needs
- the amount of time each teacher instructs students in classrooms
- how many support staff are involved with students
- how many option courses are offered
- demands of particular courses (e.g. low numbers in a course due to safety requirements)
- input from the school community.

For more budget information, see [2013-14 budget](#) and [Budgets and Financial Statements](#).

## Class Size

Principals' work is complex as they make decisions around class size and staffing. Making decisions on behalf of hundreds of students is never easy. Principals make these decisions with each student in mind.

To get an accurate and full account of high school class sizes, high school principals provided the average class size and the largest class size for each of their schools as of Sept. 30, 2013. The following chart shows their responses.

School	Average Class Size	Largest Class Size
Alternative	12	23
Bowness	28	43*
Centennial	31	46*
Central Memorial	27	75*
Chinook	27	35
Crescent Heights	32	46*
Dr. E.P. Scarlett	32	76*
Ernest Manning	30	44*
Forest Lawn	26	43*
Henry Wise Wood	29	71*
Jack James	23	31
James Fowler	27	48*
John G. Diefenbaker	31	56*
Juno Beach	16	29
Lester B. Pearson	29	40*
Lord Beaverbrook	29	54*
National Sport School	24	27
Queen Elizabeth	28	41*
Robert Thirsk	28	44*
Sir Winston Churchill	30	37
Western Canada	36	43*
William Aberhart	34	47*

\*The very question of class sizes brings to mind a picture of students sitting in desks with a teacher at the front of the room. The focus on personalized learning enables a different image. When you consider the numbers in the above chart, the numbers marked with an asterisk may appear high. In fact, these numbers work because of the type of learning that students are engaged in: concert band or instrumental music; various online learning opportunities; and work experience opportunities where students are learning off campus in various work sites; etc.

Student learning is at the heart of everyone's work at the CBE. CBE students continue to achieve outstanding results as measured against provincial standards.