

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE:

**A REPORT ON REPLACEMENT
TEACHERS IN THE SURREY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

(JUNE, 2005)

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1. REASON FOR THE REPORT

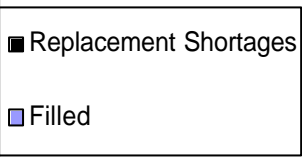
This report results from the increase in teacher replacement shortages which have increased significantly over the past three years:

Percentage of Teacher Absences That Are Replaced

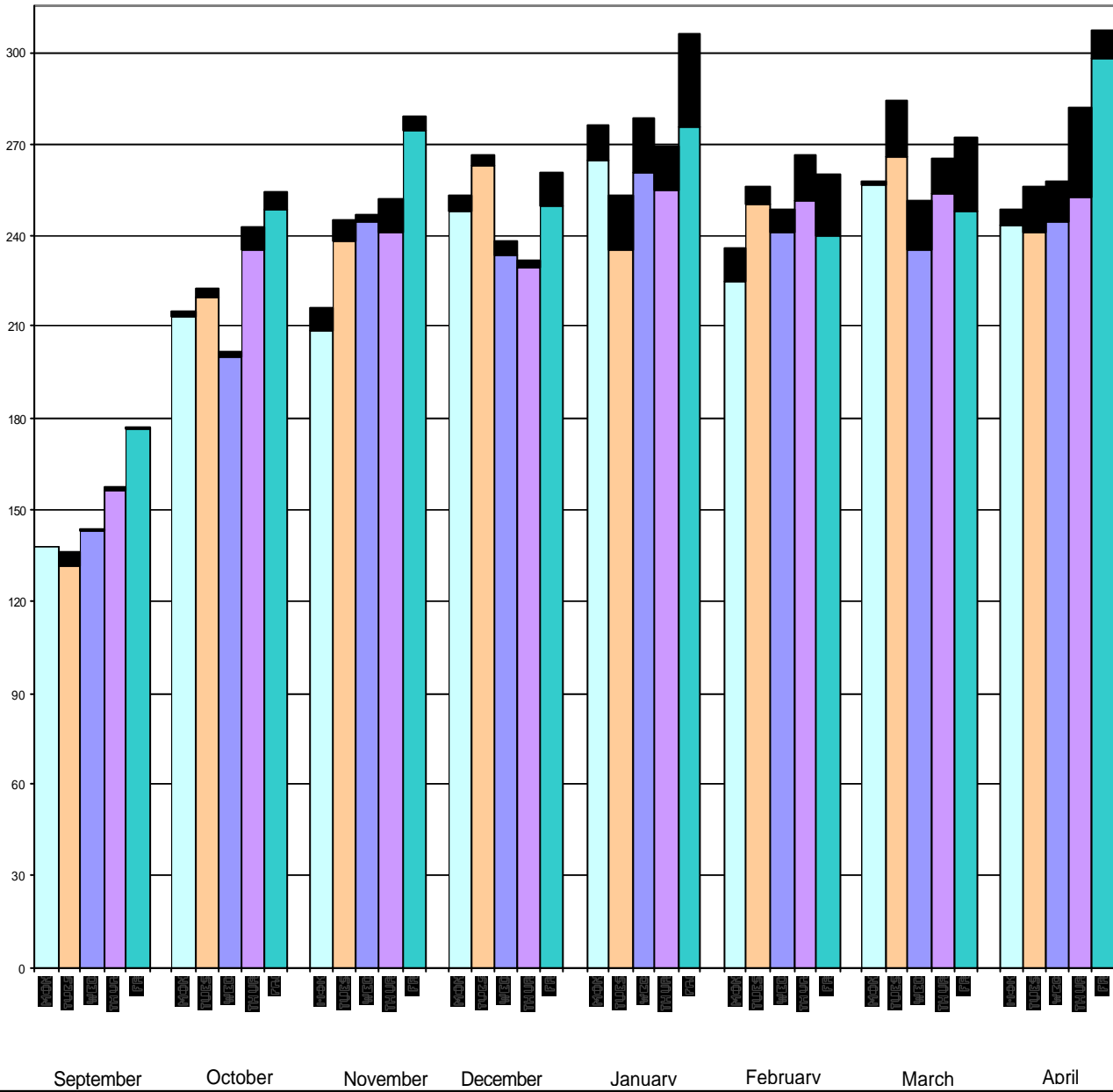
<u>School Year</u>	<u># of Teacher Absences</u>	<u>Replacement Shortage Percent</u>
2000/01	53,278	4.0
2001/02	56,056	2.1
2002/03	55,585	0.6
2003/04	54,859	1.5
2004/05 ¹	49,999	4.6

Graph 1, which follows, illustrates the averagedemand for and shortage of teacher replacements for the different days of the week, on a monthly basis, for the period September 2004 through to April 2005.

¹ For the 2004/05 school year up to April 2005



Graph 1 Demand For and Shortage of Teacher Replacements Sept 7/04-Apr 19/05



Graph 1 reflects, in part, a common experience, namely, that replacement teacher shortages increase progressively during the school year and then decline again in May and June. It has always been district experience that replacement demand is generally greatest on Fridays and that shortages occur less frequently on Mondays than on other days of the week.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF REPLACEMENT TEACHERS

The replacement of absent teachers is an important human resources function. Published research in North America indicates that, on average, public school students will have received instruction from replacement teachers for periods equivalent to between one and two school years during their kindergarten to grade 12 schooling.

3. TEACHER REPLACEMENT PROCEDURES

In Surrey, the replacement of absent teachers is accomplished mainly through the services of teachers-on-call (TOCs) or regular part-time teachers who take on additional work. If, however, there is an insufficient number of these teachers, then the replacement of classroom teachers is accomplished through internal reassignment. For example, in secondary schools regular teachers would most likely become the replacements during the periods when they would otherwise be doing preparatory work away from their own classes. In elementary schools, it is more likely that a non-enrolling teacher such as a Learner Support Teacher (LST) will be asked to be the replacement teacher. This can hinder the delivery of programs, such as LST, when this occurs too frequently.

The Surrey School District does not attempt to replace all teachers on the first day of absence. For example, in some non-enrolling assignments, such as counseling, a replacement would not be sufficiently familiar with the individual needs of the students on a one or two day replacement basis. By not expending replacement funds in these situations, monies can be used elsewhere for a greater educational pay-back.

4. THE COMPONENTS OF THE STUDY

Senior management, human resources personnel, principals and vice principals, the Surrey Teachers' Association, teachers, and parents are troubled when there is a TOC shortage even though that has been the experience in British Columbia for more than twenty years. In order to better address this chronic problem, the Human Resources Department has undertaken an extensive study in an effort to make improvements. More specifically, the Human Resources Department has:

- i. collected, reviewed and analyzed an extensive amount of data related to the district's experience in terms of replacement teacher demand, supply and shortages;
- ii. engaged in discussions of different degrees with assistant superintendents, principals and vice principals, the Surrey Teachers' Association and with personnel from other school district Human Resources Departments in order to gather views, input and suggestions regarding replacement challenges, practices and experiences;
- iii. communicated with a sampling of fifty (50) teachers-on-call about why they have declined offers to work and inquired as to what commitment, if required by the school district, would be acceptable to them personally, and
- iv. commissioned, with the support and participation of the Surrey Teachers' Association, an extensive research project² to gather data that could be used to improve and strengthen the relationship between TOCs and the Surrey School District.

5. REVIEW OF EXPERIENCES AND RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT TEACHER REPLACEMENTS

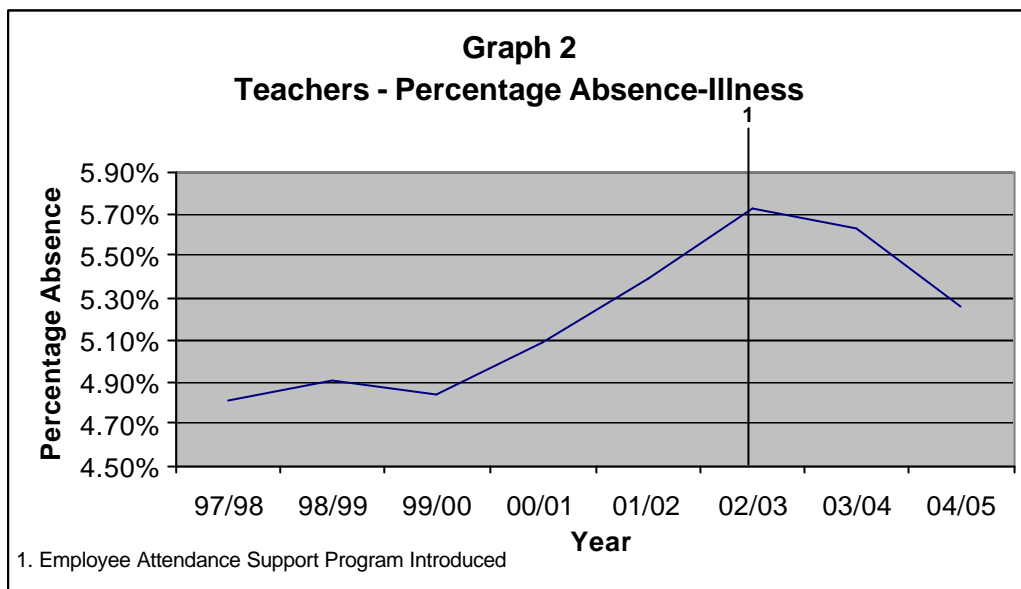
Prior to this study, there were two commonly held views as to what should be done in response to replacement shortages:

- i) increase the daily amount of money paid to teachers-on-call working on short assignments, and
- ii) hire more teachers-on-call.

This study indicates, however, that executing these strategies would not likely be a sufficient solution to the district's shortage of replacements challenge.

Some have postulated that replacement shortages are due to an increase in the amount of illness of teachers. That, however, is not supported by an analysis of the data. Subsequent to the introduction of the Employee Attendance Support Program in the 2002/03 school year, teacher absences on a percentage basis due to illness have declined in a meaningful way. (See Graph 2)

² Directed Studies Project, May 2005, Yvonne Groothedde, Kevin Williamson and Jo-Ann Wang



In fact, the number of teacher absences for all reasons has not changed significantly subsequent to 2001/02 even though the number of additional contract teachers with regular positions has increased by 82 FTEs since the 2000/2001 school year.

Total Teacher Absences (All Types)

School Year

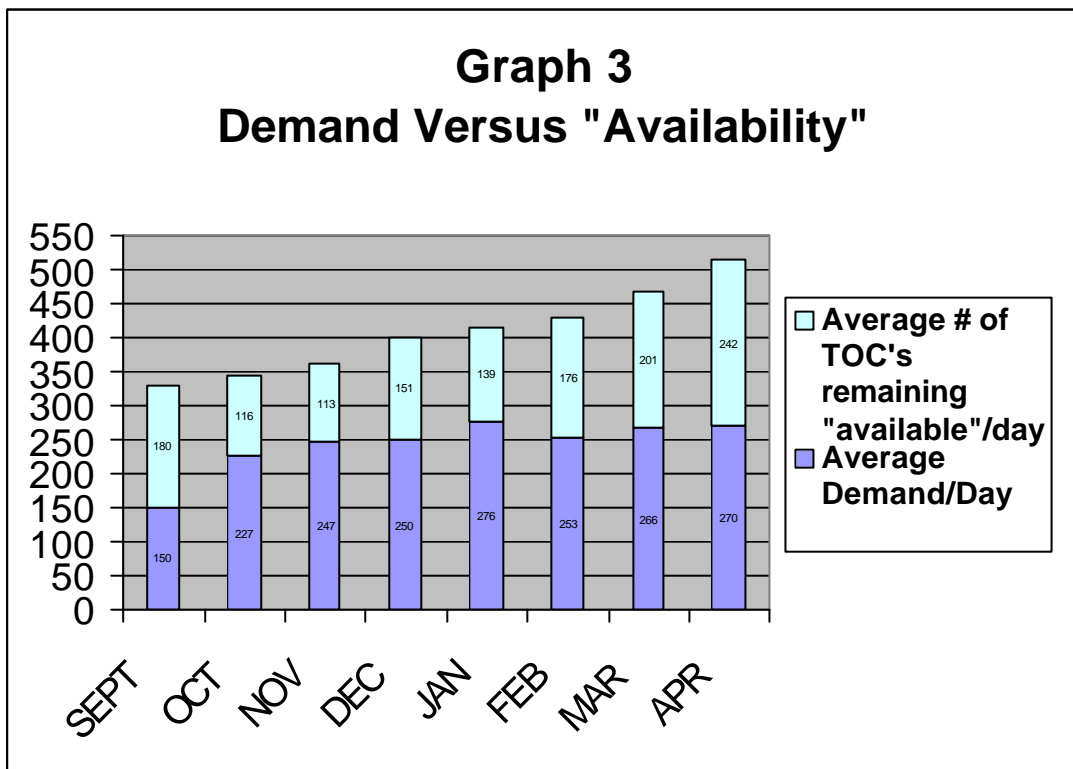
2000/01	53,278 days
2001/02	56,056 days
2002/03	55,585 days
2003/04	54,859 days
2004/05	49,999 days (to May 19, 2005)

Every day the Surrey Human Resources Department assigns a different group of replacement teachers in numbers, on average, that would be equivalent to the number of teachers needed to fully staff eighteen elementary schools with 250 students.

The Surrey School District currently employs 969 TOCs but not all of them are regularly “active”. Some of these TOCs are on maternity leave, away from the district for personal reasons, only accept replacement requests for

a specified teacher(s) or only accept few or no assignments over the course of the year. After adjusting for this group, the number of regularly “active” TOCs is 699. The daily demand for TOCs, however, is generally far less. The daily TOC demand generally ranges from 225 to 300 (average daily demand is 245 TOCs).

From a pure numbers perspective then, there are more than enough TOCs employed (i.e. supply) in Surrey to meet Surrey’s normal TOC demand if the TOCs were to accept the work. This is confirmed by Graph 3.



Unfortunately, despite the large number of TOCs employed by Surrey and their declared availability there are still replacement shortages. (Please refer back to Graph 1)

Not all of the “active” TOCs are available to be called to work every day of the week. An examination by the day of the week of the current number of TOCs available indicates that an average of 519 TOCS are available each day of the week. Again, there are still more TOCs indicating availability each day of the week than are needed by the school district, however, shortages still occur.

At the present time, TOCs are permitted to choose when they are and are not available to receive calls for work. They are also permitted to then decline an offer to work on a particular day for which they had previously indicated general availability. Some TOCs may accept work from two or three school districts. Most of Surrey’s TOCs (69%) generally work only in Surrey³. This is a greater percentage than had been generally understood.

The Human Resources Department conducted a special survey of a sample of 50 Surrey TOCs who had declined offers to work. It was learned that the amount paid to a TOC in Surrey was not the reason most frequently given by TOCs for declining an offer of work. The reason most commonly given was that the TOC had decided to work in another school district. The survey results are as follows:

Reasons TOCs Decline Work

Survey Question 1: Listed below are some reasons why TOCs might decline work when contacted by our dispatch. Please indicate how frequently you have declined TOC work in Surrey for each of the reasons:

	Never	Sometimes	Frequently
Working in another district	10	12	28
Illness	26	4	0
Not a preferred assignment	19	27	4
Received the call too late	19	25	6
I was already working enough	36	9	5
Surrey’s TOC rate too low	37	6	7
Personal Reasons	18	28	4

The survey also attempted to learn how TOCs would react if there was an employment requirement or expectation that the TOC must be available to work, if called, a minimum of seven (7) days or in the alternative a minimum of twelve (12) days in the month. In response, 80% indicated they would accept an employment requirement or expectation of the need to work a minimum of 7 days a month but only 44% would accept a 12 day minimum requirement.

³ Directed Studies Project, a survey of 131 Surrey TOCs indicated that 69% worked only in Surrey

Response to Required Commitment Levels

Survey Question 2: If you, as a TOC, were required to accept a minimum number of days callout each month, would you remain as a TOC in our district?

<u>Requirement</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>% Yes</u>
A minimum of 7 days	40	7	3	80
A minimum of 12 days	22	25	3	44

Given the above, it is felt necessary that Surrey i) introduce an employment expectation that TOCs meet specified minimum employment commitment levels and/or ii) explore incentives, in terms of call-out preference, professional development and other opportunities, to promote TOCs making a commitment to work at least a minimum number of days of work per month as established by the Surrey School District.

It is anticipated that the introduction of a minimum employment commitment could result in some TOCs leaving the district.

RECOMMENDATION #1

That minimum levels of commitments be established in terms of the number of days to be worked by TOCs when called out and/or that call-out preferences, professional development and other opportunities be introduced to the extent it is practical, as an incentive for TOCs who work at least the minimum number of days per month.

There is a need to respect and benefit from the representation role of the Surrey Teachers' Association (STA) with regard to TOCs. The STA feels strongly that there needs to be replacements for all regular teacher absences and this is seen as a high priority.

RECOMMENDATION #2

That prior to the introduction of any changes arising from recommendations contained in this report, Human Resources staff meet with STA representatives to discuss and review any proposed changes and agree on a mutually agreeable plan, if possible.

It is not being suggested that the above two recommendations will eliminate all replacement shortages. For example, there will likely continue to be replacement shortages when there are "spikes" in the demand due to widespread illness which depletes the ranks of both

regular teachers and available replacement TOCs. There are also occasions during the year when there are other “spikes” in the demand for TOCs such as during report-card writing periods, some Fridays and on other occasions. Demand “spikes” that are for short durations are difficult to fill. TOCs are not likely to make a commitment to be available all year if they are only called for work a few days a year.

The TOC daily rate does not appear to be a key decision-making factor for TOCs deciding whether “to work or not to work today”. It was, however, the second most frequently mentioned contributor to the strength of the relationship between a TOC and the Surrey School District.⁴ The daily rate that Surrey TOCs receive for assignments of three days or less is the lowest in the Lower Mainland.

The determination of what to pay TOCs is not within the legal capacity of the Surrey School District or the STA. It resides with the B.C. Public School Employers’ Association (BCPSEA) and the B.C. Teachers’ Federation (BCTF). The pay for TOCs working on short term assignments in school districts in the Lower Mainland is as follows:

District	Category 4	Category 5	Difference to Surrey
Coquitlam	179.58	179.58	+15.5%
Burnaby	172.41	172.41	+10.9%
Langley	166.00	166.00	+6.7%
North Vancouver	162.00	162.00	+4.2%
Delta	160.25	160.25	+3.0%
West Vancouver	159.56	159.56	+2.6%
Richmond	159.43	159.43	+2.5%
Vancouver	156.10	156.10	+0.3%
Surrey	155.51	155.51	---

Almost all TOCs are paid either category 4 or 5.

Of course, the rate of pay for three or fewer days worked in an assignment, if increased enough, would at some point become the key “to work or not to work” factor. What would that rate of pay have to be? We don’t know. We understand that a neighbouring school district that pays

⁴ Directed Studies Project, in response to an open-ended question about how the school district could strengthen its relationship with TOCs, 20% indicated “improve compensation” and it was the second most frequently mentioned factor.

15% more than Surrey has far less difficulty getting TOCs to work. Is it because of the quantum of the rate of pay or is it simply because that school district pays more than any other school district? We don't have the data to answer this. Maybe the answer is due to other reasons or for a combination of reasons.

There is no public policy or employment reason that we are aware of to support different rates of pay for TOCs in the Lower Mainland. Surrey's long standing hope for a BCPSEA-BCTF agreement on a common TOC rate has not been realized. With the provincial government's "0, 0, 0%" bargaining mandate over the next three years, there is little reason to believe that a common TOC rate will be realized in the near future.

Compensation plans are best when they closely align the interests of employees with the employing organizations. Surrey TOCs would like to be paid more than at present. They are currently paid the lowest rates in the Lower Mainland. Meanwhile, the Surrey School District would like greater assurance that TOCs will accept a greater number of calls to work. As a result, the conclusion reached is that there is a need to alter significantly the way the Surrey School District pays a TOC who gives a sufficient commitment to work every month. By paying an additional monthly lump sum to those teachers who work an established minimum number of days per month, the interests of TOCs and the school district would be closely aligned.

RECOMMENDATION #3

That BCPSEA be asked to negotiate or allow the Surrey School District to negotiate, a mid-contract change with the BCTF/STA to establish a mutually agreeable compensation plan that would pay a monthly lump sum to TOCs who commit to and who work pre-determined minimum levels of work per month.

Principal and Vice Principal representatives and district management staff have been of one voice in expressing the view that the district should not lower standards as a means to address replacement teacher shortages. This is because the hiring and assignment of TOCs can impact Surrey's students over the long term.

While it is important to reduce the number of teacher shortages, it is also important that replacement teachers possess the qualifications and experience needed to successfully fulfill the educational needs required by the particular assignments.

This is especially true when the educational program would be compromised because the replacement teacher does not have the needed training and/or experience to teach a specialty subject. The two areas of greatest concern are French Immersion and Technology Education. If the replacement teacher cannot speak French or “fire up the equipment”, then the intended educational program cannot be delivered in a meaningful way.

Five “snapshot” weeks during the current school year were studied to determine what percentage of teacher replacement jobs were filled by teachers qualified to teach French Immersion and Technology Education.

**Percentage of Absences Filled by Specialist Teachers with Subject
Qualifications –
French Immersion and Technology Education**

Subject	Week	Number of Jobs	Percentage Filled by “Qualified” Specialist Replacement Teachers
Primary French Immersion	Oct. 4-8	6	83.4
	Nov. 15-19	10	40.0
	Jan. 10-14	8	37.5
	Feb. 14-18	8	50.0
	Apr. 11-15	14	64.3
Intermediate French Immersion	Oct. 4-8	13	53.9
	Nov. 15-19	20	60.0
	Jan. 10-14	19	47.4
	Feb. 14-18	17	64.7
	Apr. 11-15	17	58.8
Secondary French Immersion	Oct. 4-8	4	53.9
	Nov. 15-19	7	60.0
	Jan. 10-14	5	47.4
	Feb. 14-18	7	64.7
	Apr. 11-15	12	58.8
Technology Education	Oct. 4-8	16	75.0
	Nov. 15-19	13	57.1
	Jan. 10-14	11	60.0
	Feb. 14-18	15	58.8
	Apr. 11-15	19	63.2

Unfortunately, there is not an abundance of qualified and suitable French Immersion and Technology Education teachers available and willing to be TOCs. Qualified and suitable TOC French Immersion and Technology Education teachers are in high demand by school districts. They are frequently hired quickly to regular contract teacher positions. (We have hired such persons as TOCs but before they begin to work, they have already been hired to work on a contractual basis elsewhere.) It is difficult to recruit and retain such teachers without being able to give an assurance of regular work. It should be noted that the Surrey School District does not hire TOCs or contract teachers simply because of their paper qualifications. They must also be the most suitable, among competing applicants, for employment in Surrey.

RECOMMENDATION #4

That, effective immediately, Priority TOC contract positions be offered , to the extent needed and possible, to French Immersion and Technology Education replacement teachers to better ensure TOC availability and to assist with recruitment.

The above recommendation, while helpful, will not likely be enough. These teachers prefer having their own classes. Some other school districts are able to make these teachers specific offers in terms of the specific classes/schools where they will work. Surrey cannot do this early enough at the present time because of its internal contractual posting and transfer procedures.

RECOMMENDATION #5

That discussions take place with the STA in an effort to achieve a mutual agreement that continuing contract French Immersion and Technology Education internal vacancies be posted earlier than Round One vacancies so that specific employment offers can be made to prospective new teachers to the same degree as other Lower Mainland school districts.

Data was also collected with regard to the percentage of appropriately qualified replacement teachers for other selected subject areas:

**Percentage of Absences Filled by Teacher with Subject
Qualifications – Other Subjects**

Subject	Week	# of Jobs	Percentage Filled by “Qualified” Subject Replacement Teachers
Biology 11/12	Oct. 4-8	8	97.5
	Nov. 15-19	14	78.6
	Jan. 10-14	10	70.0
	Feb. 14-18	6	100
	Apr. 11-15	5	80
Chemistry 11/12	Oct. 4-8	5	40.0
	Nov. 15-19	10	100
	Jan. 10-14	7	85.7
	Feb. 14-18	8	87.5
	Apr. 11-15	3	66.7
Drama	Oct. 4-8	8	12.5
	Nov. 15-19	11	45.5
	Jan. 10-14	13	30.8
	Feb. 14-18	11	36.4
	Apr. 11-15	16	25.0
English 11/12 (including English Literature)	Oct. 4-8	25	80.0
	Nov. 15-19	22	86.4
	Jan. 10-14	31	80.7
	Feb. 14-18	36	69.4
	Apr. 11-15	30	53.4
Home Economics	Oct. 4-8	16	81.25
	Nov. 15-19	14	85.7
	Jan. 10-14	18	77.8
	Feb. 14-18	12	91.6
	Apr. 11-15	19	73.7
Math 11/12	Oct. 4-8	13	84.6
	Nov. 15-19	9	100
	Jan. 10-14	8	62.5
	Feb. 14-18	10	80.0
	Apr. 11-15	4	66.7
Physics 11/12	Oct. 4-8	2	50
	Nov. 15-19	6	50
	Jan. 10-14	7	71.4
	Feb. 14-18	4	50
	Apr. 11-15	2	50
Spanish	Oct. 4-8	7	42.8
	Nov. 15-19	8	87.5
	Jan. 10-14	8	60.0
	Feb. 14-18	4	75.0
	Apr. 11-15	3	100

TOCs are considered in Surrey to possess the needed qualifications and experience if they meet either of the following qualification levels:

“A” Qualifications Level

TOC who has **both** successful training and classroom teaching experience within area/grade: Degree and/or Diploma completed, **and** either of the following:

- successful extended (final) practicum experience, **or**
- minimum three consecutive months’ full-time teaching experience in an accredited public school (Canada, U.S., U.K.)

“B” Qualification Level

TOC who has successful long term classroom experience and training within area/grade: University Coursework (minimum 3 FTE classes senior level), **and** either of the following:

- successful extended (final) practicum experience, **or**
- minimum four consecutive weeks teaching experience in an accredited public school (Canada, U.S., U.K.)

The number of “A” and “B” qualified TOCs available to Surrey for these specialty assignments will be monitored in the future more closely on an on-going basis and, all other things being equal, preference will be given even more frequently to the hiring of suitable TOCs who possess the qualifications and experience needed for specialty assignments. It is recommended that when the absences of teachers in these specialty areas cannot be adequately met by call-out, then an appropriate number of continuing contract positions (Priority TOCs) be created and filled. There will then be greater certainty as to the on-going availability of such TOCs to Surrey on a daily basis. This, of course, would have a budgetary impact.

RECOMMENDATION #6

That when recruiting TOCs, greater preference be given, all other things being reasonably equal, to suitable applicants who have needed qualifications and/or experience that are in short supply.

RECOMMENDATION #7

That when the demand for targeted specialty TOC teachers cannot be adequately met by TOCs through call out procedures, contract Priority TOCs be hired to ensure a better TOC response in those areas in Surrey.

RECOMMENDATION #8

- a) **That retired teachers be eligible to be hired as TOCs for specialty areas when there is an insufficient supply of suitably qualified specialist teachers.**
- b) **That the hiring decisions involving retired specialty teachers be based on the relative suitability of applicants, the district's need for such teachers and the individual's willingness to commit to work when called.**

We note that the school district has on recent occasions used retired specialist teachers to meet needs in the following areas:

- i) Counselling
- ii) Home Economics
- iii) Technology Education
- iv) Senior Mathematics
- v) Senior Physics
- vi) Senior Drama
- vii) Library

The replacement shortage data shared so far in this report deals with the current school year. It should not be viewed as being representative of the past or predictive of the future. For example, during the 2002/03 school year there had been a significant number of regular contract teachers who were laid off throughout the province. Many became TOCs. Surrey TOCs during that period were calling and asking for more work. There were virtually no replacement shortages in Surrey that year. In 2005/06, however, replacement shortages are likely to be more challenging than this year. Significant changes are needed. This is because a number of school districts, Surrey included, are in the process of hiring more regular contract teachers than in recent years. This will likely reduce the supply of TOCs available in the Lower Mainland.

Are there a sufficient number of TOCs in the Lower Mainland to meet the demand of all Lower Mainland school districts? We are not aware of anyone who is able to sufficiently answer this question. The answer cannot be found by counting the number of TOCs on each school district's list because many TOCs are on lists of more than one school district. In our respectful view, more definitive information is needed because of the valuable contribution made by TOCs. It is recommended, therefore, that the Ministry of Education be requested to fund a study involving all willing Lower Mainland school districts to determine the demand for and supply of TOCs, in total and for specialty areas, in the Lower Mainland.

RECOMMENDATION #9

That the Ministry of Education be requested to fund a study to ascertain the total supply of TOCs, in total and for specialty areas.

6. STRENGTHENING SURREY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH TOCS

Replacement teacher shortages can be reduced by strengthening the relationship that TOCs have with the Surrey School District. Work decisions by TOCs, like all other employees, are influenced by how they feel about their work and their work environment. As such, a strong positive relationship between the Surrey School District and TOCs is helpful to the recruitment and retention of Surrey's TOCs. It also influences how often TOCs agree to work on a daily basis in Surrey.

The Directed Studies Project by Groothedde, Williamson and Wong has provided valuable insight about Surrey's TOCs in terms of what they value and what measures could be taken by the school district to strengthen its relationship with them. In addition, a review of data that had been collected has also identified ways that could assist TOCs to provide better service to students.

The Surrey Teachers' Association was requested to assist and support the Directed Studies Project. It agreed to do so and for this, we extend our special thanks to the STA.

Groothedde, Williamson and Wong found that generally, TOCs have a favourable view of the Surrey School District. For example, Surrey was identified by TOCs as being their first choice for contract employment (55% agree and 20% agree somewhat). The hiring process was seen by TOCs as being positive (46% agree and 31% agree somewhat). The school district's automated dispatch system and Human Resources dispatch personnel were very much appreciated. TOCs found the Surrey School District to be a rewarding place to work (36% agree and 40% agree somewhat). TOCs believe that Surrey has a strong commitment to excellence in education (33% agree and 47% agree somewhat).

There is still room, however, for much improvement. The data pointed to a number of areas that should receive the school district's attention. This includes areas identified below where there is an apparent disconnect between the feelings held by TOCs about aspects of their work and the perception of regular teachers.:

A. DAY PLAN

TOC STATEMENT

An easy to follow day plan is always left for me

TOC RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)

Agree	Agree Somewhat
10	46

TEACHER STATEMENT

*I always leave a day plan for the TOC
I take steps to ensure that TOCs who
replace me will be able to clearly
understand what is expected of them.*

TEACHER RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)

Agree	Agree Somewhat
95	3
95	5

B. LUNCH ROOMS

TOC STATEMENT

*The lunchroom has an atmosphere
that is friendly and inviting*

TOC RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)

Agree	Agree Somewhat
6	32

TEACHER STATEMENT

*The lunchroom atmosphere in my school
is friendly and inviting to TOCs*

TEACHER RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)

Agree	Agree Somewhat
38	40

C. FEEDBACK

TOC STATEMENT

*I usually receive constructive feedback
on my performance in the classroom*

TOC RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)

Agree	Agree Somewhat
5	12

TEACHER STATEMENT

*I provide constructive feedback to TOCs
who replace me*

TEACHER RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)

Agree	Agree Somewhat
11	24

D. VALUED

TOC STATEMENT	TOC RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)	
	Agree	Agree Somewhat
<i>I am treated as valuable and integral to the functioning of the Surrey School District</i>	16	41

TEACHER STATEMENT	TEACHER RESPONSE (PERCENTAGE)	
	Agree	Agree Somewhat
<i>TOCs in my school are treated as valuable and integral to the functioning of the Surrey School District.</i>	52	36

It is clear from this that the school district should undertake a number of initiatives in these areas to strengthen the relationship between TOCs and the school district. Clearly, a sharing of the views of TOCs with teachers, principals and others would be a good first step. In addition, a number of action plans could be developed.

The Directed Studies Report did collect data from principals but it was included as part of the data collected from clerical staff such that the responses by only principals were not ascertainable).

There were other statements in the study where the responses by TOCs identified specific issues requiring attention:

E. OTHER ASPECTS

STATEMENTS	RESPONSES BY PERCENTAGE	
	Agree	Somewhat Agree
<i>When I encounter an unexpected problem in a classroom, I can easily find assistance from other school personnel</i>	25	47
<i>I am given a seating plan for students</i>	84	
<i>I am given a note about neighbouring/ buddy teachers available</i>	76	

RECOMMENDATION #10

That a review take place of district practices and establish, as appropriate, district standards and expectations with regard to TOC support so as to strengthen the school district's relationship with TOCs and to enhance TOC instructional services to the school district.

RECOMMENDATION #11

That a strengthening of the relationship with TOCs be pursued through discussions at least once a year at:

- i. a district principals' meeting**
- ii. area principals' meetings,**
- iii. vice principals' meetings,**
- iv. a staff meeting at each school, and**
- v. a meeting with the STA aimed at making improvements in the relationship and enhancing the understanding of teachers and others in the district about TOC issues.**

The feeling held by TOCs about the lack of constructive feedback on their performance in the classroom warrants specific action. Principals like to be in classes taught by TOCs but given the short period of time that TOCs are in a school, it is difficult for this to be assured. In addition, there is often no reliable way for the classroom teacher to give feedback to the TOC after the teacher has returned from an absence because the TOC is likely working elsewhere in the district. Since many TOCs eventually become regular contract teachers who work in Surrey for twenty or more years, an investment in improving their instruction while a TOC in Surrey is especially desirable.

RECOMMENDATION #12

That a new District Principal position be created with the responsibility of supplementing the classroom supervision of TOCs and the enhancement of their instruction.

It is proposed that the District Principal be in classrooms taught by TOCs on a regular basis. The District Principal would spend time assisting TOCs needing support. The District Principal's visits would also be a helpful decision-making factor as to relative suitability when hiring TOCs to regular teacher contracts. The District Principal would become well attuned to TOC views, be able to review the effectiveness of school practices and recommend changes to better strengthen the relationship between the Surrey School District and TOCs. It is

estimated that over the course of a school year more than 100 of Surrey's TOCs could be visited and supported.

Many employers provide orientation programs for new employees. An ongoing orientation program would be a valuable tool in strengthening the relationship between the school district and TOCs. It would help them better understand the expectations that the school district has for TOCs.

RECOMMENDATION #13

That funds be made available so that in-service can be made available to some TOCs and so that an on-going orientation program can be provided to TOCs and other newly hired teachers, with pay.

The areas of concern specifically identified above are referenced in this report because they point to opportunities where improvement is possible. It should be emphasized that these concerns do not reflect the overall view held by TOCs working in Surrey. As noted earlier, the authors of the Directed Studies Project found that almost 80% of TOCs had a favourable overall impression of Surrey and less than 5% had an unfavourable impression.

There were also some comments to the effect that the hiring of contract teachers should be determined by the "seniority" of TOCs (TOCs do not have automatic seniority hiring rights for contract vacancies). It has been the experience of the Human Resources Department that this is a view commonly held by TOCs who have been in the district for some time without being selected for a contract vacancy. Conversely, newly hired TOCs often prefer that contract hiring decisions be based on the relative qualifications, experience and suitability of candidates, absent significant seniority consideration.

The Directed Studies Project also asked TOCs a number of open-ended questions. A review of the answers has identified other opportunities. TOCs indicated that the district should:

- i. provide TOCs with a better understanding of how contract teacher hiring decisions are made, and
- ii. shorten the period of time between the receipt of a TOC application and the conclusion of the process.

A communication plan will be developed to better explain to TOCs the basis for contract hiring decisions.

7. TOC RECRUITMENT AND TIMELINES

The amount of time that passes between the receipt of an application for employment as a TOC and the hiring and dispatching of successful applicants is longer than desired. In most cases it is reasonable given the school district's operational needs and scarce resources. The current hiring processes including associated timelines (under normal conditions) are as follows:

PHASE	ACTIVITY	DURATION - GENERALLY
I	Application Review	3 – 4 weeks
II	Reference Checks	2 – 3 weeks
III	Interview	1 – 4 weeks
IV	Final Review and Determination	1 – 5 days
V	Criminal Record Checks	1 – 2 weeks *
VI	Documentation	1 – 5 days

* Could take up to 4 weeks if Criminal Record Check done in Vancouver.

During the current school year, the Surrey School District received approximately 1,250 applications from teachers for employment. Most applications are unsolicited. They arrive throughout the year but there are times when the number of applications received peak considerably. Peak times include December, Spring (when teachers graduate), May and June.

Most of the applications received are extensive in that they may include the applicant's work history, education, transcripts, practicum reports, teacher reports and letters of reference. All 1,250 applications are carefully examined and evaluated relative to the quality of applications that the district has received in the past and is expecting to receive. The selection process is focused on hiring those applicants who are considered to be best for Surrey. Because the number of applications exceeds the number of teaching opportunities by a considerable amount, more than 800 applicants were not able to be hired by Surrey this year.

The Application Review phase generally takes between three and four weeks to review an application. Sometimes the timeline is extended because needed information was not submitted with the initial application. During peak periods it can also take a longer period of time. Of course, when there is a special applicant, an urgency or a need in the district that is difficult to meet, this process would be expedited as much as possible on a priority basis.

Those applicants that are progressed beyond the Application Review phase then have their references checked. The Reference Check phase normally takes two to three weeks. The Human Resources Department normally requires three reference checks. Telephone interviews must accommodate the schedule and availability of references. This takes time. The reference interview is very important and it is reasonably detailed. Reference checks reflect the applicant's past behaviour and can be more predictable of future success than can interviews of applicants and letters of reference.

The next phase for applicants who are progressed is the Interview phase. The Human Resources Department has introduced a new practice of having six "interview days" during the year. During each interview day, there are approximately twenty (20) pairs of principals/vice principals who each interview three or so applicants. Using more than one interviewer is consistent with recruitment/selection "best practice". In addition to the interview days, Human Resources personnel do some interviewing in the periods between the interview days especially when there are urgent needs to be met.

The results of the interviews, including notes and comments, are then reviewed at the Final Review and Determination phase by Human Resources personnel. The hire/no hire decisions are usually made within one to five days following the interview day.

The quality control selection guideline is that, on average, offers of employment should not be greater than eight of every ten candidates interviewed. Of course, there are exceptions to this.

The safety and well-being of students and staff is a paramount concern of the school district. The Human Resources Department requires a criminal record check for all new teachers unless one has been done for an applicant within the previous three months. It normally takes between one and two weeks to receive the results (Vancouver Police Department checks have taken up to one month).

As soon as the criminal record checks have been received by the Human Resources Department, they are reviewed and, if acceptable, the teacher is offered employment. This normally takes between one and five days. Documentation of the new TOC is then done in the Human Resources Department normally within a further one to five days. The teacher then commences work when needed.

Very few people realize the length of time it takes before decisions are made. A better communication plan aimed at addressing this is in progress by the Human Resources Department.

Consideration has been given as to what changes could be made because continual improvement is always sought. The Surrey School District could add additional human resources staff but that may not be an efficient use of funds. Presently, when there is an urgent recruitment need, work assignments within the Human Resources Department are adjusted to meet the immediate need. The current process timelines have not resulted in many applicants turning down offers of employment because of the passage of time although applicants would definitely prefer a quicker process. The current timelines would be of greater concern if quicker hiring processes would reduce replacement shortages but, as we have seen, there is no strong correlation between the two. It is felt that the number of interview days should be increased. Future plans are for monthly interview days except during September, December and March. This would result in some principals/vice principals being absent from their schools more often. Consideration needs to be given to the impact on the schools where the principal/vice principal is regularly absent doing interviews.

RECOMMENDATION #14

That the Human Resources Department be provided with funds so that it may allocate TOC days to schools where the principals or vice principals are regularly absent in order to interview teacher applications.

The Human Resources Department could increase its capacity to interview applicants between “interview days” by using retired principals/vice principals hired on special short-term contracts. If this is felt to be appropriate, a recommendation to that effect will follow at that time.

The current teacher recruitment capacity in Surrey may become insufficient in the future. Approximately thirty-three (33) percent of Surrey’s contract teachers are over 50 years of age. These individuals will retire in the near future and need to be replaced. In addition, more teachers will be required due to the projected increase in the number of students attending Surrey’s schools. As a result, the school district’s teacher recruitment capacity needs to be monitored on a regular basis.

7. **SUMMARY & CONCLUSION**

Replacement teachers play an important part in the education of Surrey’s students. Over their thirteen years of schooling, students are estimated to have been educated by replacement teachers in an amount equivalent to at

least one full school year. The number of TOCs working throughout Surrey on an average day approximates that which would be needed to fully staff eighteen (18) elementary schools with 250 students.

Despite considerable effort, historically there has been an inability to provide the number of replacement teachers wanted each school day.

To date, the strategic response of hiring more teachers-on-call (TOCs) has been insufficient. This is because TOCs are not required to work a minimum number of days of work. Recommended changes in this regard are some of the most important identified in this report.

The view held by some that the reason for replacement shortages is the low rate of pay in Surrey, for assignments of three days or less, was not supported by the data from two different studies. In any event, the negotiation of TOC rates of pay resides exclusively with BCPSEA and the BCTF. There is little, if any, reason to believe that a common TOC rate will be successfully negotiated.

A new approach to TOC compensation in Surrey is recommended. In order to align the interests of the Surrey School District and TOCs, the recommendation is made that TOCs who make a commitment to and who do work a minimum number of days of work each month should be paid an additional lump sum and/or receive other incentives. The agreement of BCPSEA and the BCTF/STA would be necessary before increased pay could result.

The replacement of absent specialist teachers requires special approaches especially when there is a shortage of qualified and suitable TOCs in the Lower Mainland. In response, recommendations include the use, as needed, of Priority TOC contracts, retired teachers, changes in internal vacancy posting procedures and preferential TOC hiring, all other things being reasonably equal.

Work decisions by TOCs, and other employees, are influenced by how they feel about their work and their work environment. A 2005 Directed Studies Project by Groothedde, Williamson and Wong provided valuable insight into TOC issues that could be addressed so as to positively strengthen the relationship between the Surrey School District and TOCs. Action Plan recommendations are made that would improve TOC retention and help TOCs be more effective teachers.

This report and its recommendations are offered with the hope they will help Surrey's students and staff in a positive way. A listing of all recommendations is attached at Appendix A.

8. **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many people have made contributions which found expression in this report in many different ways. Any shortcomings in this report, of course, reside solely with me. My thanks to all who made contributions and especially to:

- i. Human Resources Personnel: Alan Jones, Ed Youngberg, Mary Stewart, Debbie Anderson, Betty Paul, Sherri Muscardin, Michel Lemieux, Joanne Rowen Kyle Uno and Gurdeep Sappal;
- ii. BCIT and Directed Studies Project: Yvonne Groothedde, Kevin Williamson and Jo-Ann Wong
- iii. Assistant Superintendents Pat Haslop and Rick Fabbro;
- iv. Principals Barbara MacDonald and Carolyn Oram;
- v. Surrey Teachers' Association: John Wadge and Patti Turner, and
- vi. BCPSEA: Stephanie Tassin

Associate Superintendent, Human Resources
School District #36 (Surrey)

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION #1

That minimum levels of commitments be established in terms of the number of days to be worked by TOCs when called out and/or that call-out preferences, professional development and other opportunities be introduced to the extent it is practical, as an incentive for TOCs who work at least the minimum number of days per month.

RECOMMENDATION #2

That prior to the introduction of any changes arising from recommendations contained in this report, Human Resources staff meet with STA representatives to discuss and review any proposed changes and agree on a mutually agreeable plan, if possible.

RECOMMENDATION #3

That BCPSEA be asked to negotiate or allow the Surrey School District to negotiate, a mid-contract change with the BCTF/STA to establish a mutually agreeable compensation plan that would pay a monthly lump sum to TOCs who commit to and who work pre-determined minimum levels of work per month.

RECOMMENDATION #4

That, effective immediately, Priority TOC contract positions be offered , to the extent needed and possible , to French Immersion and Technology Education replacement teachers to better ensure TOC availability and to assist with recruitment.

RECOMMENDATION #5

That discussions take place with the STA in an effort to achieve a mutual agreement that continuing contract French Immersion and Technology Education internal vacancies be posted earlier than Round One vacancies so that specific employment offers can be made to prospective new teachers to the same degree as other Lower Mainland school districts.

RECOMMENDATION #6

That when recruiting TOCs, greater preference be given, all other things being reasonably equal, to suitable applicants who have needed qualifications and/or experience that are in short supply.

RECOMMENDATION #7

That when the demand for targeted specialty TOC teachers cannot be adequately met by TOCs through call out procedures, contract Priority TOCs be hired to ensure a better TOC response in those areas in Surrey.

RECOMMENDATION #8

- a) That retired teachers be eligible to be hired as TOCs for specialty areas when there is an insufficient supply of suitably qualified specialist teachers.**
- b) That the hiring decisions involving retired specialty teachers be based on the relative suitability of applicants, the district's need for such teachers and the individual's willingness to commit to work when called.**

RECOMMENDATION #9

That the Ministry of Education be requested to fund a study to ascertain the total supply of TOCs, in total and for specialty areas, in the Lower Mainland.

RECOMMENDATION #10

That a review take place of district practices and establish, as appropriate, district standards and expectations with regard to TOC support so as to strengthen the school district's relationship with TOCs and to enhance TOC instructional services to the school district.

RECOMMENDATION #11

That a strengthening of the relationship with TOCs be pursued through discussions at least once a year at:

- vi. a district principals' meeting**
- vii. area principals' meetings,**
- viii. vice principals' meetings,**
- ix. a staff meeting at each school, and**
- x. a meeting with the STA aimed at making improvements in the relationship and enhancing the understanding of teachers and others in the district about TOC issues.**

RECOMMENDATION #12

That a new District Principal position be created with the responsibility of supplementing the classroom supervision of TOCs and the enhancement of their instruction.

RECOMMENDATION #13

That funds be made available so that in-service can be provided to some TOCs and so that an on-going orientation program can be provided to TOCs and other newly hired teachers, with pay.

RECOMMENDATION #14

That the Human Resources Department be provided with funds so that it may allocate TOC days to schools where the principals or vice principals are regularly absent in order to interview teacher applications.