



**Ministry of Education
Knowledge Management & Accountability Division**

2015/16 Special Education Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

2015/16 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap)

Background

The Ministry of Education funds boards of education based on the boards' reported enrolment as of September 30th each year and supplemental Special Needs classifications in September and February. The boards report students with special needs to the Ministry on *Form 1701: Student Data Collection* (Form 1701).

In the 2015/16 school year, school boards reported 26,633 students enrolled in the low incidence supplemental special education funding categories at September 2015. School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) reported 360 students in the supplemental special education funding categories as of September 30, 2015. For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) reported seven student claims in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), one student claim in the Deafblind Category (Code B), 41 student claims in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 74 student claims in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), seven student claims in the Visual Impairment Category (Code E), 16 student claims in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 102 student claims in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 112 student claims in the Intensive Behavior Intervention/Serious Mental Illness Category (Code H).

The Ministry of Education annually conducts Special Education enrolment audits, in selected school districts, to verify reported enrolment on Form 1701. School districts are selected for audit based on a variety of factors, including the length of time since their last audit, the district's incidence levels compared to the provincial incidence levels, and changes in enrolment.

Purpose

The purpose of the Special Education enrolment audit is to provide assurance to the Ministry of Education and boards of education that school districts are complying with the instructions contained in [*Form 1701: Student Data Collection, Completion Instructions for Public Schools*](#) and Ministry policies are being followed. The audit also provides assurance that the students reported are receiving the service and have been placed in the appropriate special education category, as per the [*Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines \(September 2013\)*](#).

Description of the Audit Process

A Special Education enrolment audit was conducted in School District No. 83 (North Okanagan-Shuswap) during the week of March 7, 2016.

An entry meeting was held on March 7, 2016 with the Superintendent, Director of Student Learning and District Administrator Student Services. Daily meetings with the Director of

Student Learning and District Administrator Student Services were held to present preliminary findings and to seek clarification related to the contents of files.

Prior to the file reviews, the auditors interviewed District staff to enquire about the District's policies, procedures and programs. The auditors were provided with an overview of how the District is organized to support students with special needs. The Director of Learning Services and the District Administrator Student Services discussed the challenges of allocating resources in a district with their geographic layout. The challenges of obtaining outside agency and resource support for students and families in three interior Health and Ministry of Children and Family Development regions to provide consistent service were discussed. Information about their e-file system was shared and the benefits were discussed. The School District does not use BCeSIS or MyEdBC and have developed their own data system. The auditors were given a brief overview of this system but were provided with paper files to conduct the audit. Ensuring school staff have the required training to provide students with special needs support is a priority for District staff. The staff shared the process they undertook to prepare for the audit, what was learned during the pre-audit organization, and the plans proposed for change.

A sample of seven student files reported in the Physically Dependent category (Code A), one student file in the Deafblind (Code B), 20 student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 74 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), five student files in Visual Impairment (Code E), five student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), 50 student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 112 student files in Intensive Behavior Interventions/Serious Mental Illness (Code H) special needs categories were reviewed and evaluated to determine if the students in these categories were accurately reported on Form 1701.

The file review process did not encounter issues requiring school visits. Meeting daily with the Director Learning Services and District Administrator Student Services enabled the audit team to keep the District staff apprised of the audit progress.

An exit meeting was held with the Superintendent, Director Learning Services and District Administrator Student Services on Friday March 11, 2016. The auditors reviewed the purpose of the audit and the audit criteria, explained the audit reporting process, reported their findings, clarified any outstanding issues, discussed reclassifications for the 2015/16 school year, and expressed appreciation for the assistance provided.

Observations

There were no recommendations for student reclassification in Code A, Code B, Code C, Code D, Code E, Code F and Code G.

Of the 112 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code H:

- 1 student was recommended for reclassification to Code Q
- 4 students were recommended for reclassification to Regular

The auditors found that:

- The student files were comprehensive, well organized and the evidence needed to support the criteria was being met was available to the auditors.
- The documentation was current, dated and readily available.
- The diagnostic information supported the category criteria in which the student was claimed.
- The IEPs were very comprehensive with all criteria areas evident. The methods for measuring progress were well documented and very relevant to the goals and specific objectives. The IEP format developed by the District was used consistently in the schools.
- Evidence of the support students were receiving was readily available on the IEP as well as on support staff schedules found in student files.
- The services students were receiving corresponded appropriately with the category in which they were claimed.
- The educational program being provided for students reflected the needs outlined in various assessments and reports found in the student file.
- There was consistent use throughout the District of the Instructional Support Planning Tool. This document provided useful information to support the category claim.
- There were a number of forms developed by the District that were found consistently in the student files. These include: Student Activity Reports, District Screening Referral Form, Category Change Form, Counsellor Contact Summary, Interministerial Case Planning, Nursing Support Services – Individual Care Plan, and Individual Behavior Plan.
- There was evidence in the student files that the District reviewed student designations and made changes as needed.
- There was one school where the information on the IEP regarding goals and objectives were not aligned with the other information in the student file. The Instructional Support Planning Tool was much more specific and reflective of the strengths and needs of the student and the goals and objectives developed to address the needs.
- There were five students claimed in the Intensive Behaviour Interventions or Serious Mental Illness category (Code H) who did not have evidence in the student file to meet criteria for placement in the Intensive Behavior/Serious Mental Illness category.
 - One student claim did not have evidence to support the criteria needed for a placement in Code H. There was evidence in the student file to support a placement in Code Q.
 - One student had left the District shortly after the 1701 Fall Data Collection claim. Although there were norm referenced assessments from 2009, there was no evidence of a current IEP, or additional special education services being provided to support a claim for the 2015/16 school year.
 - One student attended school briefly in September then enrolled full time in the District's Distributed Learning (DL) program. It was verified by District staff that the District does not provide support services to students enrolled in the DL program. There was a Functional Behavioral Assessment from 2015 in the student file but no current IEP or evidence of special education services to support a claim for the 2015/16 school year.
 - One student previously claimed as Code H and for the past year was enrolled in the District's DL program. There was no evidence the student was provided with a current IEP or any additional special education services as per the District's practise for students enrolled in DL.

- One student claim was verified by the District as reported in error. There was evidence of a mental health assessment from 2010 but no current IEP or evidence of additional services being provided to align with the category claimed.

Recommendations:

The auditors recommend that:

- The District report student claims in Code H only if they meet the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for that category. There must be evidence in the student file of a behavioural or mental health assessment as well as evidence of the impact the student's behaviour has on learning. There must be an IEP in place dated after September 30th of the previous school year; the students must be receiving additional services; and, there is evidence of coordinated planning across agencies and community.
- The District ensure the IEP goals and objectives are written accurately to reflect the needs of the students as identified by assessments and documents in the student file.
- The District encourage schools to continue the consistent use of forms developed by the District.
- The District ensure processes are in place for declassifying students when they no longer meet category placement.
- The District report only student claims in each category when there is evidence to verify criteria has been met and that a plan for the delivery of appropriate special education services are in evidence at the time of the required claim.
- The District ensure that Form 1701 reporting is verified prior to submission and that student files are updated and reviewed regularly to ensure the students meet the criteria in the category in which they are claimed for the reported school year.

Auditors' Comments

The auditors wish to express their appreciation to the District staff for their cooperation and hospitality during the audit.