



**Ministry of Education
Resource Management Division**

2010/11 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 38 (Richmond)

RICHMOND VIRTUAL SCHOOL

2010/11 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 38 (Richmond)

Background

Distributed Learning programs are alternatives to regular classroom-based instruction for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12. They can be delivered using paper-based, on-line and web-based courses, instructional software, face-to-face learning, or any combination of delivery methods. Communication with students can take place face-to-face, either in person or through the use of interactive technology, or via email, telephone and/or paper.

The Resource Management Division annually conducts Distributed Learning Enrolment audits, in selected school districts, to verify enrolment reported on Form 1701. School districts are selected for audit based on a variety of factors, including the length of time since their last audit, enrolment size, and changes in enrolment.

Beginning in the 2009/10 school year, funding recoveries were expanded to include FTEs outside of the sample where the auditors can make a clear link between the audit findings in the sample and those FTEs outside the sample.

Purpose

The purpose of the Distributed Learning Enrolment audit is to provide assurance to the Ministry of Education and boards of education that Ministry policy, legislation and directions are being followed. The audits are based on *Form 1701: Student Data Collection, Completion Instructions for Public Schools*, current Distributed Learning Agreements, and related Ministry policies.

Description of the Audit Process

A segment of the students reported in the 2010/11 school year were selected for review. On May 9, 2011 an entry meeting was held with the Superintendent, Director of Instruction-Technology and Communication Services, the District Administrator of Learning Services, and the Curriculum Coordinator of Distributed Learning to review the purpose of the audit and the criteria for funding as outlined in the Form 1701 Instructions.

Following the entry meeting, a second meeting took place where the staff provided an in-service session related to the database that was developed for use by the audit team. In attendance were the District Administrator of Learning Services, the Curriculum Coordinator of Distributed Learning, and the Coordinator of Distributed Learning and BCeSIS.

The audit team worked out of the Board office in Richmond. The office for the Richmond Virtual School is at Palmer Secondary. The audit team reviewed student learning plans, substantive assignments, instructional related communication, course plans, withdrawals, and student registration documents. The auditors sought documentation to determine that the courses claimed met the active criteria by the activation submission date and other related Ministry directives.

Throughout the audit there were ongoing discussions with DL staff to ensure the audit team members had an understanding of all aspects of the program. All recommended adjustments were discussed with the staff during the course of the audit, providing them with every opportunity to locate the necessary documentation.

An exit meeting was held on May 13, 2011 with the Superintendent, Director of Instruction-Technology and Communication Services, the District Administration of Learning Services Principal, the Curriculum Coordinator of Distributed Learning and the Coordinator of Distributed Learning and BCeSIS. At the exit meeting the lead auditor presented the preliminary results and clarified any outstanding issues.

Prior to the audit visit, the auditors undertook a verification of the school-assigned teachers' status with the B.C. College of Teachers.

Description of the Program

The 2010/11 school year marks the fourth year of operation of the Richmond Virtual School. In 2010/11 the Richmond Virtual School offered 31 Grade 10 to 12 courses taught by 35 teachers to over 1,200 students. The Program uses a hybrid model. Courses are taught by Richmond teachers as part of their teaching responsibilities through eight of the ten secondary schools in the District. There is one full-time and two part-time teachers whose only teaching responsibilities consist of instructing online for Richmond Virtual School. Each course has a face-to-face component that varies from course to course. Technologies to deliver the Program include video, Elluminate, real time audio, chats and blogs.

Currently there are 40 students, in the Program, that reside outside the Richmond School District and Elluminate web conferencing is used for contact purposes. All formal evaluation is done in person under the supervision of a teacher. For students outside the district, teachers at the local school act as invigilators.

The administrative structure of the Richmond Virtual School includes the Director of Instructor, Technology and Communication Services and a District Administrator of Learning Services. Teacher support for the Program is provided full time by a Curriculum Coordinator of Distributed Learning and part time by a Coordinator of Distributed Learning and BCeSIS. There is also one full time support staff.

Observations

The auditors found that:

- All members of the teaching staff of the Richmond Virtual School are members of the B.C. College of Teachers.
- The teachers lead the educational programs of their students.
- The teachers communicate with students in a variety of ways to support their learning.
- The teachers evaluate and assess their students on an on-going basis and for all progress reports and interim reports.
- Although there is no District policy to ensure that learning resources used at the Richmond Virtual School comply with the *School Act* and related Ministry directives, the practice is to

align the selection of resources with the prescribed resources in the Ministry IRPs.

- The school is conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles.
- There is no financial reimbursement to learners or their parents.
- The school follows the Distributed Learning-BC Residency Policy.
- The school follows the District's policy and procedures for 'ordinarily' resident in B.C.
- To be considered active in a DL course/program for funding purposes, Grade 10 to 12 student files must contain at least one substantive assignment that addresses the learning outcomes of the course and noticeably impacts the final percentage value of the students school mark. The substantive assignments were not readily available to the auditors for verification. The District keeps the majority of individual student assignments on file through the Moodle teaching platform. In a small number of instances, these substantive assignments are kept by the teachers at the bricks and mortar schools. To ensure this criterion was met, the auditors randomly selected substantive assignments for 100 students and reviewed them online and in print.
- The student files contained a letter from the School of Record verifying that the student learning plan exists but the letter did not include the name(s) of the course(s) the student was taking.

Audit Sample Findings

The auditors found that:

- 0.2500 Grade 10 to 12 school-age FTEs reported in September were active in fewer courses than claimed by the activation submission date as required in the Form 1701 Instructions and the Distributed Learning Active Policy. One course claim did not meet the active criteria of *“at least one example of instruction-related communication between the teacher and the student”*; the second course claim did not meet the active criteria of *“at least one substantive assignment submitted to the teacher by the student”*.

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:

- The District report for funding only claims for those students who are active in accordance with the Form 1701 Instructions, and the Distributed Learning Funding and Active Policies.
- The DL staff ensure all student or school files contain the required evidence in accordance with the Distributed Learning Active Policy demonstrating the student has met all the active requirements, including the substantive assignment for each course claimed, before reporting funding claims.
- The student files contain a letter from the School of Record verifying the student learning plan exists, including the name(s) of the course(s) the student is taking and was claimed for.

Auditors' Comments

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

**Funding & Compliance Branch
Resource Management Division
Ministry of Education
May 25, 2011**
