



**Ministry of Education
Resource Management Division**

2012/13 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 39 (Vancouver)

**VANCOUVER LEARNING NETWORK
ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY**

2012/13 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 39 (Vancouver)

Background

The Ministry of Education funds boards of education based on the number of student full time equivalents (FTEs) reported by the school districts on Form 1701: Student Data Collection (Form 1701). The FTEs are calculated by factoring the number of qualifying programs and courses taken by students. A funding formula is used to allocate funds to boards based primarily on the calculated student FTE.

The Resource Management Division annually conducts Distributed Learning (DL) 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.

DL programs and courses are alternatives to regular classroom-based instruction for students in Kindergarten to Grade 12 providing a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between learners and BC certified educators, including internet, other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing, and correspondence. DL takes place when a student is primarily at a distance from the teacher.

Currently the Ministry funds boards of education for their Distributed Learning programs and courses based on student full-time equivalents (FTE) reported on *Form 1701: Student Data Collection* (Form 1701). There are 56 centres reported as Distributed Learning schools in the Province totalling 12,960.6353 FTEs for the 2012/13 school year. The Vancouver Learning Network at School District No.39 (Vancouver) reported a total of 617.2500 FTEs on their September 30, 2012 enrolment and 294.6250 FTEs on their February 2013 enrolment.

Since 2009/10 funding recoveries are 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 Distributed Learning audit was conducted at the Vancouver School Board Office in School District No. 39 (Vancouver) during the week of May 13, 2013. The review was extended to include all reported students for analysis when a school-wide issue regarding International student claims was identified by the audit team.

An entry meeting was held with the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent, a District Principal and the Distributed Learning Centre's Vice Principal to review the purpose of the audit and the criteria for funding as outlined in the Form 1701 Instructions. The process of the audit was reviewed and information about the program offered by the Distributed Learning Centre was provided. The administrators and the audit team discussed the procedures that would be followed to undertake the audit.

The audit team worked out of the Vancouver School Board Office. 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. The review was extended to include all reported students for analysis when school-wide issues were identified by the audit team.

An exit meeting was held with the Superintendent, the Associate Superintendent, a District Principal and the Distributed Learning Centre's Vice Principal. At the exit meeting the auditors presented their 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 Teacher Regulation Branch.

Description of the Program

The Vancouver Learning Network is a distributed learning program operating out of two locations within the Vancouver School District.

Vancouver Learning Network – Elementary (VLN-E)

The elementary program registers full time Kindergarten to Grade 7 students and operates out of Garibaldi Annex. Distributed Learning assignments are typically submitted by mail. Students maintain contact with teachers and with each other through personal email, telephone, via the internet, visiting the VLN-E office, and by participating in monthly field trips and activities.

Vancouver Learning Network – Secondary (VLN)

The VLN is an online model with continuous enrolment and approximately 80% of the program is offered online. The other 20% of the courses are paper based.

The secondary program registers full time as well as part time students and operates out of John Oliver Secondary School. VLN opened in 1990 as the Greater Vancouver Regional Correspondence School, a name which reflects the origin of what is now known in British Columbia as "Distributed Learning". There still is a core of self-paced correspondence courses available to students, but most of the course offerings and enrollments at VLN today are online. Over 90 courses are offered.

Each student works at a pace reflected in a personalized Student Learning Plan and/or Course Plan, both of which are established in consultation with the staff at the Vancouver Learning Network, and according to individual timelines and goals.

For the Grade 8 and 9 students VLN is the school of record, but approximately 70% of the Grade 10 to 12 students are cross enrolled from secondary schools in the District. While the majority of the cross enrolled students are from within the District, the school does enrol students throughout the Province.

The Vancouver Learning Network has a data system for tracking students from the time they register until they meet the requirements for funding eligibility. The audit team utilized this data system to undertake their file reviews. It was noted that the system has undergone a number of changes. Currently, there is one database instead of the two that existed during the 2009/10 school year audit. The Vice Principal indicated they have revised the student tracking system three times during the development of the current database, and the data tracking system is still under revision. Although there was ease of access to the data, some difficulties were encountered during the audit review:

- (a) repeated registration information in various segments of the database;
- (b) inconsistent use of various registration forms. Different registration forms had different information. The Vice Principal indicated that was a result of the effort to improve the tracking process;
- (c) inconsistency regarding dating of documents. In some instances dates identified students were registered after their first assignment was submitted and marked. Dates indicated some students registered and completed five percent of the courses on the same day. According to the Vice Principal and District Principal, all of these instances were related to the way the database 'functioned'; and
- (d) inconsistent access to Teacher Feedback forms. The dated feedback forms which included the teacher comments and dates of feedback had to be requested in each instance and were not part of the information provided to the auditors.

Observations

The auditors found that:

- 1.2500 Grade 10-12 school age FTEs claimed in September were the result of data entry errors. A 0.1250 FTE claim was entered incorrectly as 1.2500 FTE. A 0.1250 FTE was identified by the DL Centre staff as a course claim that should not have been reported for funding.
- 1.0000 Grade 10-12 school age FTEs (0.8750 in September and 0.1250 in February) were reported for students enrolled in fewer courses than claimed.
- 7.0000 Kindergarten to Grade 9 FTEs (6.0000 in September and 1.0000 in February) were not active at the activation date as required by the Distributed Learning - Active Policy and in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions.
- 2.1250 Grade 10-12 school age FTEs (2.0000 in September and 0.1250 in February) were active in fewer courses than claimed.
- 0.5000 FTEs non graduated adults reported in September were active in fewer courses than claimed.
- 4.0000 Grade 10-12 school age FTEs reported in September were verified to be fee paying international students claimed for funding.
- 0.6250 adult FTEs (0.1250 non graduated and 0.5000 graduated) reported in September were verified to be fee paying international students claimed for funding.

- 0.1250 graduated adult FTE reported in February. Claimed was for XEN10 which is a two hour English Placement test recommending the student take English 10 – not a fundable four credit course.
- 0.3750 FTEs claimed in September FTE (0.2500 Grade 10-12 school age and 0.1250 non graduated adult) were reported for students who had withdrawn and were reclaimed prior to the lapse of two additional reporting periods. In accordance with the DL Funding Policy, *“If a student has withdrawn from a course or did not complete a course, there must be a record of student inactivity for two DL enrolment counts, with a corresponding record of attempts made by the DL school to contact the student for that course”*.
- 0.2500 FTEs were reported in February for an adult incorrectly reported as a non-graduate and was claimed for two courses not listed on Appendix 1. Student was verified to be a graduated adult. The Adult Funding Policy states that, *“boards of education may receive funding for adult students who have graduated and who take a select group of upgrading and literacy courses offered at continuing education centres, K-12 schools or through distributed learning. Courses eligible for funding for adults who have already graduated can be found in Appendix 1: Courses Funded Under the Education Guarantee of the Education Guarantee page.”*
- 0.1250 Grade 10-12 school age graduate was verified to have paid \$450.00 tuition for a course claimed for funding in September.
- During the file reviews it was verified that a number of graduated students were reported as non graduates.
- A selection of students in the database had incorrect PEN numbers.
- VLN follows the District’s policy and procedures to verify BC residency only for students that are within the School District. Verification of residency for students outside the School District is not a practice/process currently in place.
- All members of the teaching staff of VLN are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- Learning resources used at VLN comply with the *School Act* and related Ministry directives.
- VLN operates in accordance with the Distributed Learning-General Policy regarding financial reimbursements to third party providers.

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:

- The District review the structure of VLN’s data system to ensure it contains consistent key student data required to verify the Form 1701 course claims submitted to the Ministry for funding.
- The District and VLN review their data entry procedures to ensure all claims for funding are verified as accurate prior to submission on Form 1701.
- The District and VLN 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 District ensure only eligible ordinarily resident students are claimed for funding. International and Out of Province individuals are non-resident, ineligible for a provincially funded education, and are not to be claimed for funding.
- The District immediately put into practice, at VLN, mechanisms to ensure all students claimed for provincial funding are ordinarily resident in BC, including those students who do

not resident within the Vancouver School District boundaries. In accordance with the *School Act*, the DL BC Residency Policy, Eligibility of Students for Operating Grant Funding Policy, and as stated in the K-12 Funding General Policy, “*To be eligible for provincial funding, Boards of Education must ensure that students are: ordinarily resident in BC (and where applicable for school-age students) with their parent/legal guardian*”.

- The District ensure that VLN reports funding claims only for actual courses and based on the actual course credit value.
- The District ensure VLN adheres to the DL Funding Policy directives specific to re-claimed courses, including the requirements specific to student inactivity tracking and contact attempts to the student.
- The VLN ensure adult funding claims are in accordance with the student’s verified graduation status.
- The District ensure that all schools enrolling adult students, including VLN, are aware of and adhering to the Adult Funding Policy, including the course claim eligibility for Graduated Adults.
- The District and VLN refrain from reporting funding claims where students are charged tuition.

Auditors’ Comments

The auditors wish to express their appreciation to the District and program staff.