



**Ministry of Education  
Resource Management Division**

**2012/13 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit**

**AUDIT REPORT**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 57 (Prince George)**

**CENTRAL INTERIOR DISTANCE EDUCATION SCHOOL  
(CIDES)**

## **2012/13 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 57 (Prince George)**

### **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 Central Interior Distance Education School (CIDES) at School District No. 57 (Prince George) reported a total of 43.7188 FTEs on their September 30, 2012 enrolment and 34.7500 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 CIDES in School District No. 57 (Prince George) during the week of May 6, 2013. The review included all reported students.

An entry meeting was held with the Superintendent, the Secretary-Treasurer, the Distributed Learning Centre's Principal and staff 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 school was discussed. The school administrators, staff, and the audit team discussed the procedures that would be followed to undertake the audit. This was followed by a discussion of the program attributes.

The audit team worked out of the John McInnis Center for Learning Alternatives. 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.

Exit meetings were held with the DL Principal, DL staff, and the Superintendent. At each 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 including those teachers employed as 'markers'.

### **Description of the Program**

The CIDES program began in 1987 and was part of a group of nine schools established to offer distributed learning options for students. Currently, the school offers Kindergarten to Grade 12 both on-line and paper-based to school age students, as well as non-graduated and graduated adults. Delivery is provided by five BC certified teachers each with a program focus. The school administration consists of two vice-principals and a principal who oversee all non-mainstream programs in the District including CIDES, Continuing Education, Alternate Program Education and career program courses all through the Center for Learning Alternatives. The administration and advisors place students looking for an alternative to 'regular' schooling in the most appropriate option. The DL program is only offered at the one site.

The majority of students enrolled at CIDES are school-age Grade 10-12 students cross-enrolled at standard high schools in the Prince George School District. Nearly all the students come from within the Prince George School District boundaries. Many of the full time DL elementary students are from remote areas not served by a conventional school. The small adult population is made up primarily of individuals up-grading academic science and math.

### **Observations**

The auditors found that:

- 0.2500 school-age Grade 9 FTEs claimed in February for four courses in addition to the 0.5 FTE base funding with no evidence the student was participating in more than two courses at the activation date. In Accordance with the DL Funding Policy, "*Students in Grades 8 and 9 will be funded at 0.5 FTE plus 0.125 FTE per eligible four-credit course to a maximum of 1.0 FTE per school year*".
- 0.3750 graduated adult FTEs reported in September and February were for courses not listed on Appendix 1. 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.”*

- The documentation for the actual activation date for courses claimed was inconsistent and often difficult to determine based on the records available in the student file. The majority of the assignments contained numerous dates. The verification process was further complicated by the fact that many courses had more than one assignment required before the student was considered ‘active’. Often this was what accounted for the various date discrepancies when the auditors accessed the database. During these reviews, the DL staff became aware of the differences between how teachers were recording and providing data for entry into the data system. During the audit review process the Principal and his staff began taking steps to try and standardize the data collection procedures. Conversations around the inconsistent dating and related data entry for ‘active’ were undertaken by the Lead Auditor and the Principal. Overall this was viewed as an administrative issue which if resolved would provide clarification and ease of practice, enabling the DL staff to identify exactly when a student had met the ‘active’ criteria.
- The school continues to use the term “Activation Assignment” to designate the work the student must complete prior to becoming ‘active’. To meet the ‘active’ attendance option this school follows, the terminology and practice must align with the directives of the DL Active Policy which states: “***Substantive student course activity must be submitted by the student to the teacher***” with this activity (or group of activities) representing a minimum of 5% of the course.
- The District does not have a policy regarding ‘ordinarily resident’ (2007/08 CE Audit Report recommendation). The school follows the District’s procedures for determining ‘ordinarily’ resident in B.C.
- All members of the teaching and marking staff of the Central Interior Distance Education School are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- 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.
- Learning resources used at Central Interior Distance Education School comply with the *School Act* and related Ministry directives.
- The school is conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles.
- The school provides no financial reimbursements to third party providers.
- The school follows the Distributed Learning Active Policy.

## **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 District claim only courses listed on Appendix 1 for Graduated Adults.
- The District develop a policy with respect to ‘ordinarily resident’ in BC consistent with the *School Act*, Ministry legislation and the Eligibility of Students for Operating Grant Funding

Policy by December 2013 to ensure all students claimed for provincial funding are ordinarily resident and as a mechanism to be followed by all District schools.

- The school review all forms and documentation to ensure practice aligns with the current terminology and requirements as identified in the Distributed Learning Active Policy.
- The school develop a consistent system for the documentation of accurate student activation claim dates.

### **Auditors' Comments**

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