



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

2013/14 Special Education Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 34 (Abbotsford)

2013/14 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 34 (Abbotsford)

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 2013/14 school year, school boards reported 24,964 students enrolled in the Level 1, 2, and 3 supplemental special education funding categories at September 2013. School District No. 34 (Abbotsford) reported 880 students in these supplemental special education funding categories as of September 30, 2013. For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 34 (Abbotsford) reported 25 students in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), two students reported in the Deafblind Category (Code B), 46 students in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 281 students in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), eight students in the Visual Impairment Category (Code E), 32 in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 196 in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 290 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 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. 34 (Abbotsford) during the week of January 20th 2014.

An entry meeting was held on January 20th 2014 with the Superintendent, three Assistant Superintendents, Director of Human Resources, Secretary Treasurer, Director of Instruction, Vice Principal Learning Support Services and five members of the Learning Support Services staff. Daily meetings with the Director of Instruction 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 a copy of the document "Learning Support Services – Quick Reference Guide" that listed the District's Special Education Services. A historical overview of Special Education enrolment and an explanation of the Special Education Service Delivery model was described in the presentation "A Snapshot of the Abbotsford School District".

A sample of 25 student files reported in the Physically Dependent category (Code A), two student files in the Deafblind (Code B), 15 student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 140 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), 16 student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), 65 student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 154 student file 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.

Although the file review process did not encounter issues requiring school visits, there were 124 student files in the Intensive Behavior Interventions/Serious Mental Illness category (Code H) reviewed that were reported from the Bakerview Center for Learning. The file review process described a comprehensive service delivery to these students, all of whom met the criteria for this category. The audit team upon completion of the file review on Friday morning was given the opportunity to visit Bakerview Center for Learning to speak with staff about the service delivery model and observe a number of students engaged in learning activities that were described in their IEPs.

An exit meeting was held with the Superintendent, two Assistant Superintendents, Director of Instruction and Vice Principal Learning Support Services on January 24th 2014. 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 2013/14 school year, and expressed appreciation for the assistance provided.

Observations

There were no recommended reclassification claims for Code A, Code B, Code E, Code F, Code G, and Code H student files reviewed by the auditors.

Of the 15 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code C:

- 1 student was recommended for reclassification to Code K

Of the 140 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code D:

- 1 student was recommended for reclassification to Code K
- 1 student was recommended for reclassification to regular education

The auditors found that:

- One student reported in Code C whose assessment did not support placement in that category as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedure and Guidelines, but did support placement in the Mild Intellectual Disability category (Code K). A recent assessment by the District confirmed the student met criteria for Code K.
- One student reported in Code D did not have any evidence of a medical diagnosis to support the claim in that category. There was evidence in the student file to support a placement in the Mild Intellectual Disability category (Code K)
- One student claimed in Code D at September 30 had been given a “provisional” designation based on a referral to CDBC (Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions Network). The student had not yet been assessed (scheduled for January 29, 2014) nor had the diagnosis been confirmed by CDBC or a pediatrician. The evidence verified that this student claim be reclassified to regular until there is evidence that meets criteria for placement in a special education category as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and Form 1701 Instructions.
- The student files were well organized, data readily available, documentation dated and current.
- There were a number of district developed forms that were used consistently and contained the information auditors needed for evidence during the audit. These included: the revised IEP format, History of Behavior Interventions, and Integrated Case Management Meeting notes.
- The IEPs for students in all categories were consistently written to reflect the specific needs of each individual student. The goals and strategies often reflected recommendations from various assessment or medical reports.
- The IEPs were consistently signed even though this is not a requirement of the Ministry.
- There was consistent use of the Instructional Support Planning Document in Code D and Code H student files providing useful evidence needed for these categories.
- All the student files reviewed in Code F contained evidence of well defined services and programs as well as up to date assessments.
- The Code H student files reviewed contained a considerable amount of evidence to support the additional services being provided to students. Outside agency support and collaboration was well documented.
- The Code H student IEPs reviewed consistently contained transition information in the section “Year End Recommendations/Transition Information”. This was also evident in student IEPs in other categories.
- There were nine student files reviewed in Code H for whom there was no evidence that a mental health professional had made the diagnosis of anxiety and /or depression. While students claimed under the “Serious Mental Illness” segment of this category must have a diagnosis made by a qualified mental health clinician (per Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedure and Guidelines), there was evidence found for these students to support the Code H criteria requiring Intensive Behavior support.

Recommendations:

The auditors recommend that:

- The District report student claims in Code C only if they meet the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for that category. Assessment documentation showing the student's intellectual functioning is three or more standard deviations below the mean on an individually administered level C assessment and assessment documentation shows there are limitations of a similar degree in two or more adaptive skill areas.
- The District ensure any student claims in Code D meet the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies Procedure and Guidelines for that category. There must be documentation of a medical diagnosis in one or more of the following areas: nervous system impairment that impacts movement or mobility, musculoskeletal condition, or chronic health impairment that seriously impacts student's education and achievement.
- The District report only student claims in each category when there is evidence that all criteria for that category are met by the September 30 claim date.
- The District ensure any student claimed in Code H with a mental health diagnosis has evidence to support the diagnosis was made by a qualified mental health clinician as specified in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.

Auditors' Comments

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

**Education Sector Quality Assurance Branch
Knowledge Management and Accountability Division
Ministry of Education
January 27, 2014**