



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

**2014/15 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit**

**AUDIT REPORT**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 63 (Saanich)**

**South Island Distance Education School (SIDES)**

# 2014/15 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT

## SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 63 (Saanich)

### **Background**

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

The Ministry of Education annually conducts Distributed Learning (DL) 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 B.C. 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.

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.

There are 60 centres reported as public Distributed Learning schools in the Province totalling 10,443.8470 FTEs as at February 2015 for the 2014/15 school year. The South Island Distance Education School (SIDES) at School District No. 63 (Saanich), reported a total of 436.5000 FTEs on their October 17, 2014 enrolment and 213.7500 FTEs on their February 2015 enrolment.

### **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 SIDES during the week of April 27, 2015. The total enrolment reported at October 17, 2014 and February 13, 2015 was 650.2500 FTEs, of which 397 student files were reviewed.

An entry meeting was held with the Superintendent and the DL Centre's 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 DL

Department 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 SIDES school site at 4575 Wilkinson Road in Victoria. 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.

One joint exit meetings was held with the DL Principal and the Superintendent. At the 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**

SIDES is the DL School in the Saanich School District. It is one of the largest DL schools in the province, serving just under 4,000 individual K-12 students. There are 32 teachers and two administrators working at the School. The SIDES program is run out of two campuses. Students in Kindergarten to Grade 8 are at the Beaver Lake Site and the students in Grades 9 to 12 are at the main campus.

The School supports a number of students with special needs through their Learning Services Program as well as special needs non-graduated adults through their "Transition to Adulthood" Program.

The majority of the students who attend SIDES are from the local area but they also serve students from around the Province. SIDES have a partnership with their local Secondary Schools and Camosun College with the South Island Partnership (made up of five school districts and the college). As well, SIDES has emerging relationships with several of the local private and independent schools. They offer individual programs for students requiring one or more courses but also offer "full class" programs for students taking all of their courses in DL.

The School advised that they create their own course content to continuously improve their on-line programs and to meet the dynamic changes in technology, including students' increased preference for mobile technology.

### **Observations**

The auditors found that:

- All members of the teaching staff of the South Island 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.
- The School is in accordance with the [Distributed Learning-General Policy](#) regarding financial reimbursements to third party providers.
- The School generally follows the District's policy and procedures for 'ordinarily' resident in B.C.
- The School follows the [DL Active Policy](#).
- School electronic files generally contained dated evidence that the student was active on or before the dates listed in the Form 1701 instructions.
- Ministry Work Experience course evidence was difficult to find due to a number of staffing changes as well as other factors, but once resolved, the auditors were able to confirm the essential requirements.
- Teacher feedback to the students was notably thorough and informative.
- The Student Summary Report created for the audit was a very helpful tool.
- The SIDES staff provided quick and timely responses to the auditors' inquiries.
- The Technology Department was supportive and resourceful in helping expedite the use of the online evidence.
- SSIS (SIDES' Student Information System) was easy to navigate and generally contained thorough information required for each student.
- The School's partnership with their post-secondary institution (Camosun College) was well documented.

### **Audit Sample Findings**

The auditors found that:

- 0.3750 Grade 10-12 school-age FTEs (0.1250 in October and 0.2500 in February) were active in fewer courses than claimed.
- 0.2500 non graduated adult FTEs (0.1250 in October and 0.1250 in February) had no evidence of substantive student course activity.
- 0.5000 non graduated adult FTEs reported in October and February had no proof of residency in B.C. and therefore ineligible for an educational program.
- 0.3750 non graduated adult FTEs reported in October were active in a prior school year and should not have been reclaimed.
- 0.1250 Grade 10-12 school age FTEs were reported for Work Experience in the February claim period. There was no verifiable documentation in accordance with P.13 of the Form 1701 reporting instructions or evidence reflecting the required directives of the [Elective Work Experience Policy](#), the [Work Experience Ministerial Order 237/11](#), or the [Work Experience Program Guide](#).

### **Recommendations**

The auditors recommend that:

- While all evidence was available for the K-9 students, the School staff organize the information into a single Student Learning Plan aligned with the DL Active Policy directives: *“Evidence onsite of a Student Learning Plan on record, signed and dated by the teacher and parent (and by the student, if old enough to understand the plan), referring to the following*

*elements:*

- *learning outcomes in the Integrated Resource Packages for the program or course(s) or both*
- *required areas of study for the program or course(s) or both*
- *the teacher's plan for providing learning activities*
- *learning resources being used to complete the program or course(s) or both.*
- *assessment strategies and standards of performance expected of the student.*
- 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.
- Where required for 'active' consideration, substantive student course activity must be submitted by the student to the teacher:
  - the activity must represent a minimum of five percent of the course's learning activities.
  - the activity must be clearly linked to the learning outcomes of each course.
  - the activity must have been evaluated by the teacher and entered in the teacher's records, dated on or before the date the student became active.
- The DL staff implement practices to ensure all active requirements are identified by course and dated in accordance with the directives of the DL Active Policy and related Form 1701 instructions.
- The DL staff ensure that student courses are claimed for the funding period during which they meet the Distributed Learning 'active' criteria and in accordance with the reporting claim directives of the Form 1701 Instructions. In instances where the timelines are not followed, there must be documentation to verify the course was not previously claimed along with an explanation of why Form 1701 directives were not followed.
- The District must ensure only eligible 'ordinarily resident' students are claimed for funding. Boards may not offer a course or an educational program through distributed learning to students not ordinarily resident in British Columbia. International and Out of Province individuals are non-resident and therefore ineligible for a provincially funded education, and are not to be claimed for funding.
- The District ensure that only eligible student FTEs are claimed for the funding of Work Experience and that the students receive an educational program and instructional component in accordance with all Ministry directives related to Work Experience including evidence of this to verify those claims. As all WEX course evidence was difficult to find, it may be prudent to organize the evidence requirements in one file.

### **Auditors' Comments**

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

**Knowledge Management & Accountability Division**  
**Ministry of Education**  
**June 2, 2015**

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