



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

**2014/15 Special Education Enrolment Audit**

**AUDIT REPORT**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 40 (New Westminster)**

## **2014/15 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT** **SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 40 (New Westminster)**

### **Background**

The Ministry of Education funds boards of education based on the boards' reported enrolment as of September 30<sup>th</sup> 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 2014/15 school year, school boards reported 25,615 students enrolled in the Level 1, 2, and 3 supplemental special education funding categories at October 2014. School District No. 40(New Westminster) reported 258 students in these supplemental special education funding categories as of October 17, 2014. For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 40 (New Westminster) reported two students in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), two students reported in the Deafblind Category (Code B), eight students in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 104 students in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), one student in the Visual Impairment Category (Code E), 12 in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 99 in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 96 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. 40 (New Westminster) during the week of March 23, 2015.

An entry meeting was held on March 23, 2015 with the Superintendent, Acting Associate Superintendent, three District Vice Principals of Student Learning Services. Daily meetings with the Acting Associate Superintendent and the District Vice Principals of Student Learning Services 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 Power Point presentation that described the demographics of New Westminster, outlined the delivery of special education services and identified the unique features of the school district. The staff also shared the key findings that came from the preparation for the audit. There was a binder that was prepared for each auditor with all of this information, as well as samples of the new IEP format they have developed and are implementing in the district to ensure consistency in all their schools. The binder also included the description of a new project the school district is implementing – Teaching and Learning in Diverse Classrooms.

The staff also shared at the entry meeting a list of student names they had concerns about when they reviewed the student files prior to the audit.

A sample of two student files reported in the Physically Dependent (Code A), two student files in the Deafblind (Code B), eight student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 104 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), one student file in Visual Impairment (Code E), 12 student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), 33 student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 96 student files 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 55 student files in various low incidence categories reviewed that were reported from New Westminster Secondary School and 17 student files from Sigma, the on-site Alternate program. The file review process described comprehensive service delivery to these students. The IEPs were also comprehensive, relevant and had goals and objectives specific to the needs identified for each student. The audit team was given the opportunity to visit New Westminster Secondary School to speak with the staff about their IEPs, service delivery model, visit the Foundations Program for students in low incidence categories and observe a number of students engaged in learning activities described in their IEPs. The audit team also had the opportunity to visit the Sigma Alternate Program and speak with staff about the program. The team observed the student/teacher conference process taking place.

An exit meeting was held with the Superintendent, Acting Associate Superintendent and three District Vice Principals of Student Learning Services on March 27, 2015. 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 2014/15 school year, and expressed appreciation for the assistance provided.

### **Observations**

There were no recommended reclassifications for the two student files reviewed by the auditors in Code A.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the two student files reviewed by the auditors in Code B.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the eight student files reviewed by the auditors in Code C.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the 104 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code D.

There was no recommended reclassification for the one student file reviewed by the auditors in Code E.

Of the 12 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code F:

- one student was recommended for reclassification to Regular Education

There were no recommended reclassifications for the 33 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code G.

Of the 96 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code H:

- one student was recommended for reclassification to Code R

The auditors found that:

- One student claim reported in Code F did not meet the criteria in this category. The 2011 audiogram did not support a significant bilateral hearing loss. The evidence in the file did not support a substantial educational difficulty due to the hearing loss. There was no evidence to indicate the student was receiving support services from the Resource Teacher Deaf or Hard of Hearing, nor did the goals in the IEP correspond to Code F.
- One student reported in Code H did not have evidence to meet the criteria for placement in the Intensive Behaviour Interventions/Serious Mental Illness Category. The IEP goals did not reflect the category in which the student was claimed. There was no evidence of special education services being provided beyond those offered to the general student population or evidence of integrated case management as at the Form 1701 Data Collection claim date. There was evidence to support placement in Code R.
- There was one student reported in Code D who did not have positive confirmation of a diagnosis by the claim date. The student and his family are involved in a complicated law case with ICBC due to a motor vehicle collision when the student was a young child and sustained a suspected traumatic brain injury. Based on recent psychoeducational testing indicating “a complex developmental learning profile which could be consistent with an acquired brain injury” and the considerable support this student required, the District made the decision to claim this student in Code D at the Form 1701 Data Collection claim date. When the student file was reviewed by the District for the February 2015 Form 1701 Data Collection count, the student was no longer claimed in Code D as there was still no confirmation of a positive diagnosis. The IEP goals and levels of service provided at the October 1701 claim date reflected the category, and the significant impact on functioning and education. The District is pursuing further investigation to confirm a diagnosis for this student.

- The student files were comprehensive, well organized and the evidence needed to support the criteria was being met was readily available.
- The documentation was current and dated.
- The diagnostic information supported the category criteria required to claim a student in that category.
- There were a number of District-developed forms that were used consistently in student files and contained the information auditors needed for evidence during the audit. These included:
  - Ministry of Education Statistics - for all low incidence categories
  - Student Services File Review – School History
  - Sharing of Psychiatric Diagnosis
  - Communication Logs
  - Inter-ministerial Committee Meeting Notes
- The IEPs were very comprehensive with all the criteria areas evident. The methods for measuring progress were well documented and relevant to the goals and objectives.
- 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.
- There was evidence the new IEP format developed by the District was being used by a number of the schools.
- There was evidence of the support students were receiving on the IEP or on the Ministry of Education Statistics form.
- The services and programs the students were receiving corresponded appropriately with the category in which they were claimed.
- There was evidence in the student files that District staff regularly reviewed student designations and made changes as needed to reflect the current status of the student.

**Recommendations:**

The auditors recommend that:

- The District report student claims in Code H only if they meet the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for that category. There must be evidence the goals reflect the category in which the student is claimed and that the student is receiving special education support services that are beyond those offered to the general population. There must also be evidence that planning is coordinated, across agency and community (integrated case management/wraparound).
- The District ensure any student claims in Code F meet the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies Procedure and Guidelines for that category. There must be documentation that supports there is a substantial impact on student's education and achievement due to the hearing loss. There must also be evidence that the student is being supported by a Resource Teacher of the Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- The District report only student claims in each category when there is evidence to verify criteria has been met for the special education category.
- The District encourage consistent use of the various in-house forms and tools as well as the new IEP format.

## **Auditors' Comments**

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