



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

2014/15 Special Education Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

2014/15 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen)

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 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. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen) reported 131 students in these supplemental special education funding categories as of October 17, 2014. For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen) reported one student in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), no students were reported in the Deafblind Category (Code B), eight students in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 40 students in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), two students in the Visual Impairment Category (Code E), two in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 56 in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 22 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. 58 (Nicola-Similkameen) during the week of February 2, 2015.

An entry meeting was held on February 2, 2015 with the Superintendent and District Principal (Student Support Services). Daily meetings with the District Principal (Student Support 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 binder containing pertinent information about the District including the "Superintendent's Report on Student Achievement", the District's "Four Strategic Priorities", description of the file organization, Yearly Student Support Services Timeline, Designation Change/Update Form, and the Education Assistant Handbook. The Superintendent and District Principal (Student Support Services) presented a Power Point overview of the District's demographics, challenges and opportunities, Vision and Philosophy Statements and a description of staffing, programs and services and delivery of service. They also shared the process they embarked on to prepare for the audit and what they learned from that process.

A sample of one student file in the Physically Dependent category (Code A), eight student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 40 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), two student files in Visual Impairment (Code E), two student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), 42 student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 22 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 31 files in various categories reviewed from Merritt Secondary School. 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 Merritt Secondary to speak with the staff about their IEPs, 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 and the District Principal – Student Support Services on February 5, 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 was no recommended reclassification for the one student file reviewed by the auditors in Code A.

There was no recommended reclassification for the eight student files reviewed by the auditors in Code C.

Of the 40 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code D:

- one student was recommended for reclassification to Code C
- one student was recommended for reclassification to Code Q
- one student was recommended for reclassification to Regular Education

There was no recommended reclassification for the two student files reviewed by the auditors in Code E.

There was no recommended reclassification for the two student files reviewed by the auditors in Code F.

There was no recommended reclassification for the 42 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code G.

Of the 22 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code H:

- one student was recommended for reclassification to Regular Education

The auditors found that:

- One student previously reported in Code C moved to another district that claimed the student in Code D. The student returned after several years and based on verbal information from the previous District was reported in Code D while waiting for student files to be sent. The receipt of the files after the claim date did not contain evidence to support placement in Code D. The file did contain evidence to support placement in Code C. The psychological report, current IEP goals and provision of service met the criteria for being reported in Code C as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and Form 1701 Instructions.
- One student reported in Code D did have evidence of a medical diagnosis but did not have the evidence about functioning level, services provided, and impact on learning to support the claim in that category, nor was this reflected in the IEP. There was evidence provided that the school was planning on removing the student from this category as she no longer met criteria but failed to do so before the claim date.
- One student claimed in Code D did not have evidence to meet the criteria for placement in the Physical Disability/Chronic Health Impairment Category. The assessment information from Interior Health Children's Assessment Network (IHCAN) and from a previous psychological assessment contained evidence that supported a claim in Code Q. The IEP goals and service provided also supported a claim in that category as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.
- One student claim for Code H did not have evidence to meet the criteria for placement in the Intensive Behaviour Interventions/Serious Mental Illness Category. There was no evidence in the file that there was an IEP in place after September 30, 2013, nor was there evidence that there was an IEP from the year previous. The District attempted to obtain an IEP for the 2013/14 school year from the previous school district he attended but the previous district was not able to provide it.
- The student files were well organized, data was readily available, documentation was dated and current.
- There were a number of District developed forms that were used consistently and contained the evidence required during the audit. These included: The Behavior Incident Log, Second Agency Support Log and the Designation Change/Update Form.
- 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 methods for measuring progress were well documented and very relevant to the goals and specific objectives.

- The support services students were receiving were well documented on timetables indicating hours of support for each student.
- 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 all student files providing useful information needed for these categories.
- The student files reviewed in Code E and Code F contained evidence of well defined services and programs as well as up to date assessments.
- The Code G students files from the District's Distributed Learning Program (SCIDE) contained well documented evidence to support that students met the criteria in all areas of this category as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures, and Guidelines.
- 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.
- There were a number of student files in all categories that contained transition goals.

Recommendations:

The auditors recommend that:

- The District report student claims in the category when they have specific evidence that supports the student meets the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.
- 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 besides a medical diagnosis that supports the serious impact on a student's education and achievement. This includes appropriate IEP goals and provision of service.
- The District only report student classifications that meet the requisite reporting criteria in accordance with the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guideline and ensure processes are in place for delisting students when they no longer meet category placement.
- The District report only those student claims that meet the criteria for the category in which they are claimed and that the assessment information, IEP goals and services provided supports the category in which they are being claimed.

Auditors' Comments

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