



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

2015/16 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 41 (Burnaby)

BURNABY ONLINE

2015/16 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 41 (Burnaby)

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.

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.

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.

There are 61 centres reported as public Distributed Learning schools in the Province totalling 3,985.9375 FTEs as at February 2016 for the 2015/16 school year. The Burnaby Online DL School at School District No. 41 (Burnaby) reported a total of 41.0000 FTEs on their February 2016 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 Burnaby Online DL Centre in School District No. 41 (Burnaby) during the week of April 18, 2016. The total February FTE sampled was 33.1250, of which 211 student files were reviewed.

Entry meetings were held at the School Board Office with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Instruction for DL and the Assistant Secretary Treasurer. At the DL

Centre, the meeting was held with the Vice-Principal, Director of Instruction for DL and the Head Teacher 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 was provided by the Director of Instruction for DL about the procedures and processes followed by the DL Centre.

The Vice-Principal reviewed the development of the new registration and activation procedures that the centre put in place for the May 2016 data collection period as a result of the outcomes of the DL Centre's FTE Verification undertaken March 4, 2016. Samples of the new process were provided. The administrators and the audit team discussed the steps which the auditors would take to ensure effective communication with the Centre's administrative team. The clarification process was reviewed and there was discussion regarding required evidence of the substantive student work aligning with the DL attendance and reporting requirements.

The audit team worked out of a classroom within the Centre. The majority of the evidence was provided in paper format along with computers which were made available to access the Centre's database. Paper records for each student included in the audit sample were located in the work room. 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 programs. All recommended adjustments were discussed with the administrators during the course of the audit, providing every opportunity to locate the necessary evidence.

Exit meetings were held at the DL Centre with the DL Vice-Principal, Director of Instruction for DL and the Head Teacher. At the School Board Office the audit team met with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Instruction for DL and the Secretary Treasurer. 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.

Description of the Program

Burnaby Online is a Kindergarten to Grade 12 public DL school situated within the Cariboo Hill Secondary School site. In addition to the Elementary school programs, the secondary courses offered through Burnaby Online include: English, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Advanced Placement, Applied Skills, Modern languages, Physical Education, Planning 10, and Visual and Performing Arts. Students receive assistance and instruction by email, telephone, skype/video conferencing and through Face-to-Face communication. Some courses offer the option for collaborative projects with other students. Burnaby Online students can also connect with classmates to discuss their studies and chat, using email and web conferencing. Assignments and projects are submitted electronically and in paper format. Exams are generally written at the Centre. Burnaby Online offers home teaching support for elementary students based on their Student Learning Plans, and the interviews and assessments that are done prior to enrolling the students.

Observations

The auditors found that:

- The DL Centre's staff were efficient, responsive, accommodating and very helpful during the audit process.
- The Centre was aware of the eligibility requirements for the audit process and had prepared the student files with as much evidence as possible.
- Kindergarten to Grade 9 student claims had evidence of a current teacher-developed learning plan and evidence of a commitment to that plan by the parent by the activation submission date. It was verified that these students were active in their program by at least three weeks after the activation submission date. All aligned with the active directives for attendance and reporting for eligible DL funding claims.
- For the primary grades, a teacher arranges home visits for many of the students. The amount of teacher allocated time is based on the student's identified needs determined from the testing done during the student registration process.
- For the secondary school student claims, the dating of the substantive student work was inconsistent. Dated evidence is required to align with the Form 1701 Data Collection reporting timelines; and, in accordance with the DL Active Policy to verify registration, substantive student work and teacher evaluation.
- 8.0000 school-age Grade 10-12 FTEs and 0.3750 non-graduated adult FTEs reported in February did not meet the funding eligibility requirements.
 - Many of the Grade 10-12 school-age students and non-graduated adults reported at the February Data Collection claim date did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy, the K-12 Funding General Policy, or the Form 1701 Data Collection Instructions. It was verified that the Centre's standard process was to provide the student with a learning activity package prior to registration. Registration was undertaken once the learning activity (referred to by the Centre as the "activation" assignment) was completed and submitted. There was no evidence to verify student eligibility prior to the provision of an educational program. In accordance with the Form 1701 reporting instructions, students are to be reported by the education facility with which they are enrolled and attending as at the Data Collection claim date. There must be evidence the student is eligible prior to assigning the student any tasks. To align with Ministry directives regarding student claim eligibility, the DL Centre staff were asked to provide evidence of student work after the registration process was undertaken and that a current course selection or enrolment form was in place. While the process of gathering relevant data and entering the information on or before the data collection date may be undertaken, this information must be assembled prior to assigning the student tasks related to the funded education session.
- 0.1250 non-graduated adult FTEs were claimed for a Ministry Authorized Work Experience course. There was no documentation or evidence reflecting the required Work Experience directives [Elective Work Experience Courses and Workplace Safety Policy](#), the [Work Experience Order M237/11](#), or the [Program Guide for Ministry-Authorized Work Experience Courses](#).
- 0.1250 school-age Grade 10-12 FTEs were verified by the DL Centre as claimed in error.
- During the audit, significant questions arose as to whether a variety of the substantive student course activity, used to substantiate Grade 10-12 funding claims, represented a minimum of

five percent of the course's learning activities. The Principal, when questioned about the validity of these assignments, advised that he and his staff were currently developing new expanded substantive student course activities to be used to support the "active" attendance criteria for the coming school year. A selection of these new assignments have already been developed, and are available on the Centre's web site.

- The Centre is in accordance with the [Distributed Learning-General Policy](#) regarding financial reimbursements to third party providers.
- All members of the teaching staff are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- All of the verification evidence the audit team required was provided by the DL Centre staff. Requests to receive information and explanations necessary to complete the duties assigned to the audit team was not supplied by the School Board staff. In accordance with the [Compliance Policy](#) and aligned with the information identified in the District's DL audit notification letter: "*contracted auditors assigned to compliance audits are authorized to have access to all school district records and are entitled to receive information and explanations necessary for the performance of their compliance audit duties from any school district staff.*".

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:

- The District revisit the recommendations from the [2010/11 DL Audit Report](#) which were verified as ongoing issues as at the date of the 2015/16 school year DL audit.
 - The District report for funding only those student claims that are active in accordance with the Form 1701 Instructions, and the Distributed Learning Policies.
 - All student files contain evidence, including dated evidence of instructional communication for each course claimed, that demonstrates the student has met all the active requirements before reporting funding claims.
 - The District continue to improve the practices for recording and tracking students in the program.
- The DL Centre staff ensure that students are enrolled and have the required course selection/enrolment form prior to assigning any portion of a funded education program. In accordance with Sec.82 of the School Act, boards are required to provide an educational program free of charge for those student enrolled in an educational program in a school operated by the board. The Form 1701 Instructions requires students to be enrolled and in attendance to be eligible FTE claims. The [K-12 Funding General Policy](#) requires that boards ensure students are enrolled to be eligible for provincial funding.
- The District and DL Centre staff ensure that no funding claims are submitted for students who have not met the requirements of the DL Active Policy.
- DL Centre staff ensure the DL Active Policy requirements specific to substantive student course activity are met for each Grade 10-12 course reported for funding. These include ensuring there is evidence the substantive course work represents a minimum of five percent of the course's learning activities; the activities are clearly linked to the learning outcomes of each course; the activities must be evaluated by the teacher and entered in the teacher's records, dated on or before the Form 1701 timeline for each Grade 10-12 course reported for funding.
- The District ensure that a process is in place to effectively track student claims from the time of registration until they are reported in accordance with the Form 1701 Instructions and

- related Distributed Learning Policies.
- The DL Centre staff review the DL Active criteria specific to dated evidence and implement these requirements into their procedures.
- The District ensure there are Board established Work Experience guidelines aligned with the Ministry's related directives.
- The District ensure that all schools offering Work Experience options are aware of and adhering to the requirements for these Ministry authorized courses including implementation and understanding of board established guidelines regarding conduct, supervision, evaluation and participation of eligible students. Staff must align their procedures and practices ensuring recognition of eligible work placements, awareness and adherence to the various standards for authentic work experience, use of paid work experience, monitoring students on their work study program, and assessing and evaluating students.
 - Specific to Work Experience for adults, recognition of current or past work for adults can be used for credit recognition through a prior learning assessment (while not funding eligible, a fee can be charged).
- The DL Centre 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 related District staff continue to participate in the Ministry's regular DL Administrators' Collaboration sessions in an effort to ensure Ministry DL requirements are understood and met.
- District staff ensure the claims that are reported for funding are accurate.
- The District ensure that for all future compliance audits contracted auditors have access to all school district records, and receive information and explanations necessary for the performance of their compliance audit duties.
- The DL Centre be scheduled for a return audit to determine that the above findings have been amended to reflect only eligible claims aligned with Ministry directives and in accordance with the DL Active Policy.

Auditors' Comments

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