



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

**2015/16 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit**

**AUDIT REPORT**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 47 (Powell River)**

**PARTNERS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM  
(PIE)**

# 2015/16 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT

## SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 47 (Powell River)

### 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 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.

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 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 Partners in Education Program at School District No. 47 (Powell River) reported a total of 43.3750 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 DL audit was conducted at the Partners in Education Program in School District No. 47 (Powell River) during the week of May 9, 2016. The total enrolment reported at February 12, 2016 was 43.3750 FTEs, of which 107 student files were reviewed.

Entry meetings were held with the Superintendent, assigned staff and with the DL 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 the information provided in advance by the Principal and through the DL program's website about the procedures and processes

followed by the School were discussed. The administrators and the audit team discussed the steps which the auditors would take to ensure effective communication between the auditors and the School's administrative team.

The audit team worked out of a large classroom within the School and were provided with WIFI access to receive any additional information or documentation from DL staff. The School provided paper records for each student included in the audit sample. The auditors sought evidence 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 every opportunity to locate the necessary documentation.

An exit meeting was held with the DL Principal and the Coordinator. At the 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**

The Partners in Education (PIE) Program serves students in both the Powell River and Comox Valley communities. Approximately two-thirds of the students reside in the Comox Valley and one-third of the students reside in the Powell River area. The Program uses both print and online courses and resources. The structure of the Program is the same in both communities, however the Powell River staff are located at the Ocean View site, whereas the teachers in the Comox Valley work from their homes. When Interaction Days occur, the Comox Valley staff rent space at the local recreation centre to meet with students and parents. Two staff members (the coordinator and the special education teacher) work in both communities.

All students and/or parents are interviewed in person or by telephone prior to registration. During this conversation the roles of the parents and teachers, the expectations of the program, the delivery of the curriculum, selection of learning resources, etc., are fully explained. The parents/students are referred to the Program website and specifically the on-line handbook.

The PIE program is offered mainly at a distance, however, there are opportunities for the students and parents to meet face-to-face with the staff. Three times a year there are Interaction Days offered once per week for a six-week period for students and parents. During the morning there is help offered, termed the "Support Zone", where students and parents can come in for individual instruction and assistance. The afternoon is left open for activities which are determined by student/parent survey and teacher suggestions. A range of opportunities have been provided such as gymnastics, music, horseback riding and drama. For secondary students there is also a second half day (two hour session) made available on the day after the Interaction Day as a quiet place and study hall. Students are invited to come in for assistance with secondary grade level Science and Math and to do testing.

At the three reporting periods, teachers in the PIE Program also meet with each family or student individually, usually in their home.

## **Observations**

The auditors found that:

- In two instances there was no evidence available to indicate that students met the criteria of the Active Policy as it relates to Grade 8 and 9 students.
- In one instance there was insufficient evidence available to support a Work Experience 12 claim.
- All members of the teaching staff are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- PIE is in accordance with the [Distributed Learning-General Policy](#) regarding financial reimbursements to third party providers.
- The student files were complete and evidence was clearly dated.
- The IEPs for designated students were thorough and written to enable effective use when developing learning strategies.
- The course outlines were comprehensive and made specific reference to all components of the education program.

## **Audit Sample Findings**

The auditors found that:

- 2.0000 FTE Grade 8-9 FTEs did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy and in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions. There was no evidence these students were provided with an educational program.
- 0.1250 Grade 10-12 school-age FTEs there was no verifiable evidence aligned with the required directives of the [Elective Work Experience Courses and Workplace Safety Policy](#), the [Work Experience Order M237/11](#), or the [Program Guide for Ministry-Authorized Work Experience Courses](#). Aligned with the Work Experience Program Guide: *“In those cases where paid employment for credit for Work Experience 12A or Work Experience 12B may be in a student’s best interests, the paid employment must coincide with a student’s Focus Area, and the school must contact the employer to establish a training plan and evaluation criteria. The training plan should include such information as hours to be worked, duties or tasks to be performed, employability skills to be practiced, and workplace-specific skills to be developed. The paid hours to be used for work experience may only begin after the school has contacted the employer and a training plan has been developed.”*
  - For the one student enrolled in Work Experience there was no evidence of a training plan for use by student and employer. In addition, the PIE Program did not have a plan for school personnel to monitor the student in accordance with the Powell River Board guidelines which state that the teacher should visit the worksite a minimum of two times during the work placement.

## **Recommendations**

The auditors recommend that:

- The District and DL staff ensure that no funding claims are submitted for students who have not met the requirements of the DL Active Policy.
- The District ensure that all schools offering Work Experience options are aware of the requirements of these Ministry authorized courses including implementation and adherence

to 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.

### **Auditors' Comments**

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