



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

2015/16 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

ConnectEd

2015/16 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha)

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. ConnectEd at School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) reported a total of 54.5000 FTEs on their February 2016 enrolment.

Purpose

The purpose of the DL 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 DL Agreements, and related Ministry policies.

Description of the Audit Process

A DL audit was conducted at the ConnectEd DL school in School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) during the week of May 16, 2016. The total enrolment reported at February 12, 2016 was 54.5000 FTEs, of which 154 student files were reviewed.

One combined entry meeting was held with the Superintendent, Director of Instruction and 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 procedures and processes that the school follows 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 DL school's administrative team.

The audit team worked out of a classroom within the DL school and were provided with computers for use in accessing the DL program'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 program. All recommended adjustments were discussed with the staff during the course of the audit, providing every opportunity to locate the necessary documentation.

One exit meeting was held at the School Board Office with the DL Principal and the Director of Instruction. The Superintendent joined the meeting by telephone. 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

ConnectEd is a public DL school in School District No. 67 (Okanagan Skaha) located in the city of Penticton. ConnectEd is a teacher-led DL program offering a selection of academic courses and some Grade 10 to 12 elective choices. The school shares its facility, staff and resources with the Continuing Education Program and the Access Alternate Program. They also work closely with the secondary schools in the District to offer blended program options. The DL school provides a ten-month program with continuous intake and exit, aligning itself with the standard school calendar. The school offers programs from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The Kindergarten to Grade 7 program is called Home Learners' Program which was developed to provide choices for families who wish to have their children educated in the home or require flexible timelines.

Observations

The auditors found that:

- The school staff were very helpful and accommodating during the audit process.
- The majority of the audit was conducted electronically and the Student Management System was simple to navigate in order to find the necessary information. Any paper evidence that was required was readily available and well organized.
- Assessment of student work was clearly evident and the emails teachers sent to students and parents demonstrated the extra time teachers spent with assessment and student connection.
- The elementary students use FreshGrade (currently a pilot program) which is a digital portfolio that allows students to have continuous and ongoing assessment.
- The school runs a ten-month program with teachers actively encouraging students to finish their educational options within the standard school year.
- The evidence verified that very few students withdrew from their courses and completion rates were good.
- The majority of students are cross-enrolled.

- There is considerable face-to-face support at the DL and the secondary schools for the cross-enrolled students.
- All members of the teaching staff are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- The registration process and the creation of the Student Learning Plan (SLP) or course selection/enrolment form requires modification. Parents sign a document acknowledging they know students will be taking a DL program or courses but neither they or the student sign the form. The components of an SLP or course selection/enrolment form are available but need to be coordinated and properly signed to align with DL directives.
- The school is currently not in accordance with the [DL-General Policy](#) regarding financial reimbursements to third party providers. The school directly reimburses families for activities such as swimming or hockey. The website and literature provided to the parents indicates that ConnectEd prefers to pay the educational service provider directly but when parents pay for a service the school will reimburse them. The DL General Policy is very clear regarding reimbursements to third party service providers, including “...the board must do the following: pay only the third party directly and not the parent, learner or any other person.”
- Timetables from the high schools indicated that most students are automatically registered for Planning 10 DL. Some students who take the Planning 10 DL course are enrolled in a funded support block and are registered in more than eight courses which is contrary to Form 1701 eligibility for a funded support block. Other students are in support sessions which are not reported for funding.
- The school currently runs two different Physical Education (PE) 10 courses: one traditional PE 10 and another focusing on hockey which is titled “Hockey Academy PE”. For the “Hockey Academy PE” students are registered with an independent hockey academy in Penticton. Both courses cover the learning outcomes required for PE 10 and students receive PE 10 assessment on their report cards.
 - Neither the DL school nor the District have Specialty Academy educational program options in accordance with Ministry directives. In the audit sample there were two instances of course claims incorrectly identified as Academies for Hockey and Weightlifting.
- Courses were not always claimed at the data collection period during which they meet the active criteria and in accordance with the reporting claim directives of the Form 1701 Instructions.

Audit Sample Findings

The auditors found that:

- 0.1250 school-age Grade 10-12 FTEs reported did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy and in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions.
- 0.1250 school-age Grade 10-12 FTEs, were reported in February for the continuation of learning in a course claimed during the previous DL data collection period. In accordance with the Form 1701 directives (P.12): open-ended timeline courses encompass only one organized set of learning outcomes. While completion of the course’s learning outcomes may be over a number of registration periods, only one course is undertaken and therefore eligible for only one funding claim. The [DL Funding Policy](#) says: “For boards to be eligible for funding for the same DL course taken in the same DL school by Grade 10-12 students (including adults) the following conditions must be met:

- *The student must have been previously reported as failed (through course completion), or as course completed and wanting to improve their mark, or withdrawn from that course.*
- *If a student has withdrawn from a course or did not complete a course, there must be a record of student inactivity for two DL enrolment counts, with a corresponding record of attempts made by the DL school to contact the student for that course.”*

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 amend the DL school’s practice regarding the creation of an SLP or the course selection/enrolment form to ensure alignment with the directives of the DL Active Policy. For students in Kindergarten to Grade 9 there is: *“Evidence on site 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 these elements: learning outcomes in the Integrated Resource Packages for the program or course(s) or both; required areas of student 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”*. For students in Grades 10-12 there is: *“Evidence of a current course selection or enrolment form, dated and signed by the student or parent or both. These forms must list each eligible course that is reported for funding...The forms must be on site, or documentation must be readily available to verify that the school of record maintains the course selection or enrolment form”*.
- The DL staff ensure that courses are claimed at the data collection period during which they meet the DL 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 ensure the school adheres to the directives of DL General Policy including the requirement that boards pay only the third party directly and not the parent, learner or any other person.
 - The DL school cease their current payment practice and update their website to reflect the required DL directives including the Distributed Learning Standards http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/documents/dl_standards.pdf
- The District ensure all schools are reporting support blocks in accordance with Ministry directives including the recognition that once a support block is assigned to a student’s timetable and claimed for funding through the standard schools, the student’s annual educational program (including DL courses) is capped at eight (reference P.14 of Form 1701 instructions and DL Funding Policy). To avoid the cap and to enable an annual educational program without limitation, do not report support blocks for funding.
- The District avoid the term ‘Academy’ unless these educational options are aligned with the related directives for a specialty academy including Sec 82.1 of the [School Act](#), the “goods and services” segment of [School Regulation 265/89](#), and the [Specialty Academy Criteria Regulation 219/08](#).

Auditors' Comments

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