



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

**2015/16 Special Education Enrolment Audit**

**AUDIT REPORT**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)**

## **2015/16 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)**

### **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 2015/16 school year, school boards reported 26,633 students enrolled in the low incidence supplemental special education funding categories at September 2015. School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) reported 126 students in the supplemental special education funding categories as of September 30, 2015.

For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) reported two student claims in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), 17 student claims in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 32 student claims in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), two student claims in the Visual Impairment Category (Code E), four student claims in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 34 student claims in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 35 student claims 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 are receiving the service and 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. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) during the week of March 7, 2016.

An entry meeting was held on March 7, 2016 with the Superintendent, the District Principal of Student Support Services, the Assistant Secretary Treasurer, and the Secretary of Student

Support Services. Daily meetings with the District Principal of 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 an overview of District Processes and Procedures which included the District Philosophy of Inclusion, Process for Student Designation, District Staff and Contracted Services, Staff Allocations, Parent Involvement, IEP Preparation and Unique Features of the District. The auditors were also provided with a month-by-month outline of Expectations/Guidelines for Student Support Services.

A sample of two student files reported in the Physically Dependent category (Code A), 17 student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 32 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), two student files in Visual Impairments (Code E), four student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), 34 student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 35 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.

The file review process did not encounter issues requiring school visits. Meeting daily with the District Principal of Student Support Services enabled the audit team to keep the District staff apprised of the audit progress.

An exit meeting was held with the Superintendent, the District Principal of Student Support Services, the Secretary Treasurer, the Assistant Secretary Treasurer, the Secretary of Student Support Services, and four School Trustees on March 9, 2016. 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 2015/16 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.
- Of the 17 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code C, one student was recommended for reclassification to Code D.
- There were no recommended reclassifications for the 32 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code D.
- There were no recommended reclassifications for the two student files reviewed by the auditors in Code E.
- There were no recommended reclassifications for the four student files reviewed by the auditors in Code F.

- There were no recommended reclassifications for the 34 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code G.
- There were no recommended reclassifications for the 35 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code H.

The auditors found that:

- For a student claimed in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability category (Code C), the assessment data did not support placement in Code C as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedure and Guidelines. The evidence did support placement in Physical Disabilities/Chronic Health category (Code D). IEP goals, supports and services met the criteria for reclassification to Code D.
- The auditors found that two students who were reported in the Moderate to Profound Disabilities (Code C) had cognitive assessments dating back to their preschool years. One student was in Grade 3 and the other in Grade 7. Although the IEP goals and measurable objectives and services were in place for those students, there were no current cognitive assessments to support educational program planning for the students as they transition through the grades.
- Some IEPs written at the secondary level in the Behaviour Interventions/Serious Mental Illness category (Code H) had individualized goals and objectives to address the needs of the students, but many of the objectives were not measurable.
- The “Outside Agency” section was often blank on the IEP template for Code H students. In each case, evidence of coordinated, cross agency and community planning was identified in the student files.
- The student files were organized in the same manner and the data was readily available with documentation dated and, for the most part, current.
- The District-developed IEP template was clear and contained all the requirements of an IEP.
- 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 IEP goals, measurable objectives and services addressed the needs of the student and corresponded to the categories in which the students are reported. There is evidence that IEP goals were reviewed at regular intervals throughout the year.
- There was consistent use of the Instructional Support Planning Tool in Code D and Code H student files providing useful planning information and evidence required aligning with the criteria in these categories.
- All the student files reviewed in Code G contained evidence of well-defined services and programs, as well as up to date assessments.
- 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.
- The District guide entitled “Month by Month Expectations/Guidelines for Student Support Services” was identified as an excellent comprehensive guide for Special Education staff to follow to ensure they were aware of and completing monthly requirements.

## **Recommendations**

The auditors recommend that:

- The District report student claims in Code C only if they meet the criteria listed in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for that category. Assessment documentation showing the student's intellectual functioning in three or more standard deviations below the mean on an individually administered Level C Assessment and assessment documentation shows there are limitations of a similar degree in two or more adaptive skill areas.
- The District consider updating assessments for students. Although there are no specific guidelines regarding the currency of assessments, updated psycho-educational assessments are recommended to provide assistance and direction to staff in educational planning and programming for these students as they progress through the K-12 school system and to assist with the transition after leaving the K-12 school system.
- The District ensure all IEPs in all categories have goals and measurable objectives to enable staff to assess student progress.
- Cross-agency/community services be identified in the area provided in the District IEP template.

## **Auditors' Comments**

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