



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

2015/16 Special Education Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)

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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 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. 91 (Nechako Lakes) reported 382 student claims in the supplemental special education funding categories as of September 30, 2015. For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes) reported five student claims in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), two student claims reported in the Deafblind Category (Code B), 27 student claims in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 137 student claims in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), seven students in the Visual Impairment Category (Code E), eight student claims in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 98 student claims in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 98 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. 91 (Nechako Lakes) during the week of January 11, 2016.

An entry meeting was held on January 11, 2016 with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, Principal Learner Services, Vice Principal Learner Services as well as the Director of Instruction, District Principal Aboriginal Education and District Career

Programs Coordinator who were in attendance for the K-12 audit entry meeting which was being held at the same time . Daily meetings with the Superintendent and the Principal and Vice Principal Learner 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 verbal presentation about the unique features of this District which included information about the vast geographic area this amalgamated District covers, the high vulnerability of the population supported by the Early Development Instrument (EDI) results shared with the auditors, the challenges recruiting and retaining staff and outlined the process for the provision of services to students. The District staff did inform the auditors that there were long waitlists for assessments for a number of students waiting for confirmation of diagnosis. These students were receiving the services they required while waiting for the assessments. They also shared information about their IEPs and the any changes the staff were in the process of making to the IEPs.

A sample of five student files reported in the Physically Dependent category (Code A), two student files in the Deafblind (Code B), 15 student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 80 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), seven student files in Visual Impairment (Code E), eight student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), 33 student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 75 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. The Principal and Vice Principal of Learner Services were able to provide the audit team with evidence when clarification was required. Meeting daily with the District Principal Learner Services and the Superintendent enabled the audit team to keep the District staff apprised of the audit progress.

An exit meeting was held with the Superintendent, Principal Learner Services and Vice Principal Learner Services on January 14, 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 five student files reviewed by the auditors in Code A.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the two student files reviewed by the auditors in Code B.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the 15 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code C.

Of the 80 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code D:

- one student claim was recommended for reclassification to Code Q
- two student claims were recommended for reclassification to Regular Education.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the seven student files reviewed by the auditors in Code E.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the eight student files reviewed by the auditors in Code F.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the 33 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code G.

There were no recommended reclassifications for the 75 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code H.

The auditors found that:

- For students recommended for reclassification, the evidence in their files lacked sufficient documentation to support that the student had been appropriately assessed and identified for the category in which they were claimed.
 - One student reported in Code D whose assessment did not support placement in that category as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedure and Guidelines did support placement in the Learning Disabilities Category (Code Q). The Psychological Assessment report summary supported placement in Code Q.
 - Two students claimed in Code D at October 2, 2015 had been given a “provisional” designation based on a referral to CDBC (Complex Developmental Behavioural Conditions Network). These students had not yet been assessed nor had the diagnosis been confirmed by CDBC or a paediatrician. The evidence verified that these student claims be reclassified to regular education until there is evidence that meets criteria for placement in a special education category as outlined in the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines and Form 1701 Instructions.
- The student files were well organized, data was readily available, documentation was dated and current.
- The auditors found that most of the files contained all the evidence needed to verify that the criteria was being met for the category in which the student was being claimed.
- The student files from Ebus Academy were easily accessed and contained all the information needed for evidence that the criteria was being met in the various categories claimed for supplemental funding.
- There were a number of District-developed forms that were used consistently by most schools and contained the required evidence. These forms were attached to the front of the student binder.
- The format used for IEPs in the District was not consistent. The District is in the process of reviewing their IEP format. The District staff have also implemented the Response to Intervention (RTI) approach in the District and are using approved Pyramids of Intervention Model as an IEP format.

- Most IEPs did not have a specific date. This is being rectified by the District. They were current and did meet criteria.
- 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 level and amount of service to students was not always well documented on the IEPs although there was evidence that students were receiving additional services.
- There was, in most schools, a consistent use of the Instructional Support Planning Document in Code D and Code H student files providing useful evidence needed for these categories.
- All the student files reviewed in Code F 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.

Recommendations:

The auditors recommend that:

- 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 of a medical diagnosis in one or more of the following areas: nervous system impairment that impacts movement or mobility, musculoskeletal condition, or chronic health impairment that seriously impacts student's education and achievement.
- Documentation of the level and amount of service given to students be clearly recorded in the IEP.
- The District encourage consistent use of the various in-house forms and tools.
- The District ensure that all student files contain dated evidence, including IEPs, supporting the placement of a student in a category.

Auditors' Comments

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