



**Ministry of Education
Resource Management & Corporate Services Division**

2016/17 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 33 (Chilliwack)

FRASER VALLEY DISTANCE EDUCATION SCHOOL

2016/17 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 33 (CHILLIWACK)

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.

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 over 60 centres reported as public Distributed Learning schools in the Province totalling 3,809.1253 FTEs as at February 2017 for the 2016/17 school year. Fraser Valley Distance Education School (FVDES) at School District No. 33 (Chilliwack) reported a total of 222.5625 FTEs on their February 2017 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 [Distributed Learning Agreements](#), and related [Ministry policies](#).

Description of the Audit Process

A Distributed Learning audit was conducted at FVDES in School District No. 33 (Chilliwack) during the week of May 15, 2017. A total of 250 student files or 84.3125 FTEs were reviewed from the February Data collection.

Entry meetings were held with the Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, and Director of Instruction as well as the Principal of the DL School, two Vice Principals, the Secretary, Business Manager, and Counsellor 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 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 Principal and staff reviewed with the audit team the files and the documentation provided to conduct the audit.

The audit team worked out of a large classroom within the School and were provided with a set of computers for use in accessing the School'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.

Exit meetings were held with the DL Principal, two Vice Principals, Counsellor, Business Manager, Secretary, and the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of Instruction, and 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

FVDES is one of the largest distance education schools in British Columbia. It offers both online and paper-based distance learning from Kindergarten to Grade 12. FVDES students include both school aged and adult learners. Most live in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia with a growing number residing in other areas of the province or ordinarily resident in B.C. families temporarily overseas.

FVDES currently has over 500 full-time on-line learners and approximately 3,000 correspondence students who use predominantly paper-based correspondence materials, although many are starting to enrol in the new online course offerings. Two new areas of growth are adult learners and students who are cross enrolled at 'standard' schools.

FVDES's online and paper-based programs offer different features and different ways of learning. Online courses are more structured and feature full time teacher support and online instruction. They also have email access, virtual classrooms and discussion groups. Paper-based courses offer greater flexibility and a wide range of course options. Students with special needs have trained staff members who will develop an individual education plan and provide all the necessary supports for students to be successful.

FVDES offers a middle school program for students in Grade 8 and 9 called IMAGINE. The program is a blend of both distributed learning and face-to-face instruction. Students attend classes three mornings per week for direct teacher instruction and integrated project-based learning.

Observations

The auditors found that:

- The files were all available in an organized manner.
- The team was given access to the school's student data management system as a back up to the evidence found in the student files.
- Each student file contained all the required evidence. This included the enrolment form with ordinarily resident verification, Kindergarten to Grade 9 Student Learning Plans with documented commitment by the parent, course plans, a Kindergarten to Grade 9 evidence collection form with attached confirmation of work done by students three weeks after the claim date, as well as course enrolment and 'activation' forms which indicated the enrolment date and activation date with attached marked student work.
- In the school-age Grade 10 to 12 and adult student files, each claimed course had a record of course activity form with attached student work marked and evaluated. The form indicated the date work was started as well as the date the student completed 5% of the course's learning activities.
- All student assignments were marked with appropriate feedback from teachers.
- Documents were dated enabling auditors to verify the date substantive course activity was submitted and the date the course was activated.
- Clarification requests were responded to in a timely manner providing the auditors with the required evidence.
- The School followed the District policy to verify that students along with their parent/guardian (where applicable) were ordinarily resident in British Columbia.
- Teacher-developed student learning plans for Kindergarten to Grade 9 students claimed for FTE funding were complete and contained detail about the program to be followed. The plans contained dates and documented commitment by the parent. There was evidence of work submitted by the student to the teacher and the work which was provided as evidence of the student's active participation in the program was dated.
- The courses listed on the Student Learning Plan corresponded with the courses claimed. The Student Learning Plans were current, signed and dated.
- The evidence required to verify funding claims for Work Experience 12 as well as Youth Work in Trades/SSA 11 and 12 was very well organized and accessible, indicating valuable educational services are being provided to students.
- Students with a special needs designation had a current IEP on file.
- There was evidence of a significant number of course completion certificates in student files indicating a high level of student engagement and success.

Audit Sample Findings

The auditors found that:

- 0.7500 Grade 10-12 school-age FTEs did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy and in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions. There was no evidence the student was enrolled and active in the courses claimed.
- 0.8750 FTEs (consisting of 0.3750 Grade 10-12 school-age and 0.5000 non-graduated adult students) were verified to be without evidence of course activity. These ineligible course claims were corroborated by the FVDES staff.

- 0.5000 Grade 10-12 FTEs did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy nor in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions. It was verified this claim was for a Grade 4 student reported at the September 30, 2016 claim date.

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:

- The DL Centre ensure that only eligible course claims are reported for funding and that these claims are in accordance with the Data Collection requirements and related Ministry directives.
- The District ensure reported funding claims are verified before submission, including verification of each student's grade.
- 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, including attendance verification.
- The DL staff ensure all course claims meet the DL Active and DL Funding Policy requirements, including evidence of substantive student course activity for Grade 10-12 course claim.

Auditors' Comments

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