



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

2016/17 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 68 (NANAIMO-LADYSMITH)

ISLAND CONNECT ED K-12

2016/17 DISTRIBUTED LEARNING ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 68 (NANAIMO-LADYSMITH)

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. The Island ConnectEd K-12 at School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) reported a total of 141.6250 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 DL audit was conducted at Island ConnectEd K-12 in School District No. 68 (Nanaimo-Ladysmith) during the week of April 24, 2017. A total of 250 student files or 83.2500 FTEs were reviewed from the February Data collection.

Entry meetings were held with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, the Director of Student Data and with the Distributed Learning Centre's Principal, Program Coordinator and Secretary 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. Questions regarding the School's program and processes were responded to. 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 a set of computers for use in accessing all the courses on Blackboard LMS, to see teachable content and assignments. A portable drive was provided for each auditor containing electronic copies of course plan outlines, and student work from the Grade 10-12 course examples. Paper records for each student included in the audit sample were located in the workroom. The Principal took the time to familiarize the team with the student file format. The auditors sought evidence to determine that the courses claimed met the attendance criteria by the Data Collection submission date and other related Ministry directives. Throughout the audit there were ongoing discussions with DL staff to ensure the audit team 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 and the Program Coordinator, as well as the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, Executive Director of Communication and the Director of Student Data and Educational Technology. 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

Island ConnectEd K-12 (formerly Learn@Home K-7 and Learn@Home 8-12) is the District's DL school. At the end of the 2015/16 school year, the two distributed learning programs were combined into one facility.

The School offers a flexible learning environment enabling students to learn at a distance, to receive face-to-face learning support, and to cross-enrol in Grade 10-12 courses while attending another high school.

The Kindergarten to Grade 7 Program involves a partnership with the student, parent, and teacher. The year begins with a learning plan conference where teachers develop a grade specific Student Learning Plan focused on Ministry of Education learning outcomes. There are a minimum of three learning plan conferences during the year.

The Grade 8 to 9 Program incorporates a blended learning model. Students and parents meet with teachers to develop the learning plan. The majority of the Grade 8 to 9 courses are offered on-line through the Blackboard Learning Management System. Teachers meet with students once a week to review academics and to offer opportunities to participate in school outings.

The Grade 10 to 12 Program also offers a blended model where students work at a distance but can come to the School to receive support.

Observations

The auditors found that:

- The Principal provided the auditors with a list of the course names each student in the sample were enrolled in.
- All student learning plans were current, dated and signed.
- All student assignments were marked and contained appropriate feedback from teachers.
- Documents were dated enabling auditors to verify the date substantive course activity was submitted and the date the course met the attendance (active) requirement.
- Clarification requests were responded to in a timely manner providing the auditors with the required evidence.
- The School followed the District's policy verifying that students along with their parent/guardian (where applicable) are ordinarily resident in British Columbia. The School has a process in place to review, at every claim period, whether students are ordinarily resident.
- Teacher-developed student learning plans for Kindergarten to Grade 9 students were complete and contained detail about the educational program to be followed. These dated plans, with corroboration by the parent, were the evidence of parental commitment to the student learning plan.
- 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 was dated.
- The School has developed and utilizes an internal administrative practice to verify that each Form 1701 FTE claim is in accordance with Ministry directives, as well as a useful framework for tracking students.
- The District and School staff welcomed the audit team and saw the audit as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Audit Sample Findings

The auditors found that:

- 1.0000 Grade 8 to 9 school age FTE was a cross enrolled student at the DL School taking one Grade 10 course. [The DL Funding Policy](#) says: *A student enrolling only in Grade 10 – 12 courses in a DL school, who is also enrolled in Grades K-9 in another school, is counted as a Grade 10 - 12 student for DL funding purposes.* An FTE adjustment has been made to reflect one Grade 10 four-credit course claim.
- 0.6250 Grade 8 to 9 school age FTE was reported for a Grade 10 to 12 student taking one Grade 9 level course with no evidence of any other courses being taken by this student. It was verified that individual was a Grade 9 student in 2015. An FTE adjustment has been made to reflect a four credit course taken by a Grade 10 to 12 school age student. The DL Funding Policy says: *“DL courses taken by students in Grades 10 - 12 will be funded at 0.1250 FTE for each eligible four-credit course in which a student becomes active”.*
- 0.1250 FTE Grade 10 to 12 school age FTE was reported for a student withdrawn from a course and re-claimed before two enrolment periods had passed. The DL Funding Policy says: *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.*

- One Grade 10 to 12 student claim for 0.1250 FTE was for student course work completed during July and August 2016. This student's teacher left the school prior to the September 30, 2016 claim date without submitting records of the student's work to support a Fall Data Collection claim. The new teacher reported the course claim in October 2016 based on work completed prior to October 1, 2016. In this instance only there was no recommendation for recovery outside the Form 1701 claim timeline, as it was verified that the course was not previously claimed.

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:

- The DL Centre staff ensure that student courses are claimed for the funding period during which they meet the Distributed Learning 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's DL staff ensure the claims reported for funding are accurate, including the grade level of students and number of courses.
- The DL staff refrain from reclaiming FTE unless the DL Funding Policy directives are met including 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. Additionally withdrawal of the student must be in accordance with the [Provincial Letter Grades Order](#).
- The DL School consider implementing attendance references consistent with the current DL Active policy. While the evidence provided supported the attendance criteria of substantive student course activity representative of five percent of the course work, the DL teachers' gradebook references were outdated and not aligned with the present attendance terminology. In many instances the language used in describing learning activities were referred to as: "activation assignment", "substantive assignment", or "get started assignment".

Auditors' Comments

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