



**Ministry of Education
Resource Management and Corporate Services Division
School District Financial Reporting Unit**

2016/17 Special Education Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

**ASCEND ONLINE
(073 96838)**

2016/17 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT

ASCEND Online (073 96838)

Background

The Ministry of Education funds Independent School Authorities based on the Authorities' reported enrolment as of September 30th each year and supplemental special needs classifications in September and February. Independent School Authorities report students with special needs to the Ministry on *Form 1701: Student Data Collection* (Form 1701).

In the 2016/17 school year, the Ministry of Education conducted Special Education enrolment audits, in selected schools recommended by the Office of the Inspector of Independent Schools (OIIS), to verify reported enrolment on Form 1701.

Purpose

The purpose of the Special Education enrolment audit is to provide assurance to the Ministry of Education and Independent School Authorities that schools are complying with the instructions contained in [*Form 1701: Student Data Collection, Completion Instructions for Independent Schools*](#) and Ministry policies are being followed. The audit also provides assurance that the students reported have been placed in the appropriate special education category, as per the [*Special Education Services: A Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines \(April 2016\)*](#).

Description of the Compliance Audit Process

A compliance audit was conducted at ASCEND Online on February 15 to 17, 2017.

Prior to the file reviews, an entry meeting was held with School assigned staff. The Administrator of ASCEND Online was not available for the duration of the audit. The auditor interviewed the School's Special Education Coordinator and the Learning Services Coordinator to enquire about the Independent School Authority's policies, procedures and programs.

The Special Education Coordinator explained that ASCEND Online has a growing population of students with special learning needs. (34 students in the Interior, 15 in the Coast/Island, one in the Kootenays, ten in the Lower Mainland and eight in the northern areas of the Province). They have recently expanded their program to include 11 teachers, assigned zonally who all make scheduled visits to the students' homes. The teacher, in consultation with the parent and in response to the student's needs, develops the IEP and determines the appropriate supports. The supports are approved by the Special Education Coordinator. ASCEND Online has partnerships with School District No.70 (Alberni) as well as several specialist programs throughout the Province. The files are kept in both paper and online format.

ASCEND reported 59 students in special education categories at the Fall 2016 Form 1701 data collection period. For the purposes of this audit, 39 student records were reviewed in the following low incidence special needs categories:

Headcount	Category
8	Physically Dependent (Code A)
15	Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D)
15	(Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G)
1	Intensive Behaviour Intervention or Serious Mental Illness (Code H)

The ASCEND Online Coordinator of Special Education was able to provide the auditor with evidence when clarification was required. Daily meetings with the Special Education Coordinator and the Learning Services Coordinator enabled the auditor to keep the ASCEND Online staff apprised of the audit progress.

An exit meeting was held with the Special Education Coordinator and the Learning Services Coordinator on February 17, 2017. The auditor reviewed the purpose of the audit and the audit criteria, explained the audit reporting process, reported the findings, clarified any outstanding issues, discussed reclassifications for the 2016/17 school year, and expressed appreciation for the assistance provided.

Observations

There were no recommended reclassifications for the student files reviewed by the auditor.

The auditor found that:

- During the review of the student records it was evident students were receiving appropriate and comprehensive programs designed to meet their individual learning needs.
- There was evidence of regular communication and collaboration with parents.
- There was a clear indication of who the service providers were and their role to support the student.
- Every file had a current, dated and signed Special Education Funding: Parent/Guardian Confirmation Form.
- 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.
- There was evidence of co-planning between the parent, the contact teacher, the tutors, Educational Assistants and Behaviour Interventionists, as well as outside agencies.
- There was evidence of budget expenditures in support of appropriate support services for each category.
- The student files were well organised and the documentation was current and dated.
- Some IEPs did not clearly state the methods being employed to gather data and assess student progress.
- Many of the IEPs did not have measurable criteria for the objectives.
- One Code H file did not have clearly stated evidence of coordinated planning across agency and community (integrated case management/wraparound). Required verification was obtained through clarification from the School staff.

Recommendations

The auditor recommends that:

- ASCEND Online staff ensure the IEPs outline the methods for measuring progress in relation to the IEP goals and objectives as stated in the Special Education Services Manual of Policies, Procedure and Guidelines.
- ASCEND Online staff ensure that the IEPs for identified students claimed through the Form 1701 Data Collection process clearly state the specific date the IEP was written.
- ASCEND Online staff ensure the IEPs clearly state measurable criteria for each objective.
- ASCEND Online ensure all Code H files have clearly stated evidence of coordinated planning across agency and community (integrated case management/wraparound) in accordance with the Special Education Services Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.

Auditor's Comments

The auditor expresses appreciation to the school staff for their cooperation and hospitality during the audit.