Ministry of Education
Resource Management Division

2017/18 Distributed Learning Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 79 (COWICHAN VALLEY)

Cowichan Valley Distributed Learning
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 B.C. certified educators, including internet, other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing, and correspondence. DL takes place when a student is primarily at a distance from the teacher.

Since 2009/10 funding recoveries have been 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 4,090.8125 FTEs as at February 2018 for the 2017/18 school year. The Cowichan Valley Distributed Learning at School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley) reported a total of 38.5000 FTEs on their February 2018 enrolment.

Purpose

The purpose of the Distributed Learning 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 Cowichan Valley Distributed Learning School in School District No. 79 (Cowichan Valley) during the week of May 22, 2018. The total enrolment reported at February 16, 2018 was 38.5000 FTEs, of which 99 student files were reviewed.

Entry meetings were held with the Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer, Principal and Vice-Principal of Distributed Learning, and the District’s Careers Principal 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 DL 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. Due to commitments by some of the District’s administrative team, timelines were adjusted for the review of various components of the program to ensure persons responsible were available.

The audit team worked out of a large classroom within the School. Paper records were provided for each student included in the audit sample. 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. The documentation provided to the audit team was both thorough and complete.

An exit meeting was held with the DL Vice-Principal and the District’s Careers Principal. The Superintendent and Distributed Learning Principal joined via conference call. At the 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**

The Cowichan Valley Distributed Learning school is an option available to Kindergarten through to Grade 12 students, including adult learners. The majority of students live in the Cowichan Valley area.

The Kindergarten to Grade 9 students are learning at home with opportunities for face-to-face student/teacher engagement at the School. The Program is organized into ten week learning cycles. At the end of the ten-week cycle, student/parent and teacher meetings take place where the students are asked to present a portfolio of their learning. Student Learning Plans are revisited and updated to reflect any required changes or adaptations related to the learning goals.

For Grade 10 to 12 students all courses are delivered in an electronic communication manner and are self-paced. Some individuals are full time students enrolled only in distributed learning courses while others are cross enrolled taking one or two courses in addition to the educational programming at one of the District’s standard secondary schools. A full range of academic and elective courses are available in a paper-based format or online using Moodle. A learning lab is available for a portion of each weekday where students can drop in to meet with teachers to access computers or other resources.
Observations

The auditors found that:

- All student learning plans were dated and signed.
- All student assignments were marked with appropriate feedback from teachers.
- The majority of documents were dated when assignments were completed by the student. In some instances it was unclear when the assignment was submitted to the teacher and when the teacher marked the assignment.
- The School followed the District policy to verify that students along with their parent/guardian (where applicable) are ordinarily resident in British Columbia.
- Teacher-developed student learning plans (SLPs) for Kindergarten to Grade 9 students contained the curriculum learning standards with limited mention of resources and teacher comments. The plans contained a documented commitment by the parent. There was evidence of a wide range of work submitted by the student to the teacher, and the work provided as evidence of the student’s active participation in the program was dated.
- In most instances the Kindergarten to Grade 9 SLPs did not reflect the teacher’s plan for providing learning activities, the standards of performance expected of students and assessment strategies as required by the Distributed Learning Active Policy:
  - Evidence on site of a student learning plan on record, signed and dated by the teacher and parent (and by the student, if old enough to understand the plan), referring to these elements:
    - Curriculum learning standards and/or outcomes in the Guide for the program or course(s) or both
    - Required areas of student for the program or course(s) or both
    - The teacher’s plan for providing learning activities
    - Learning resources being used to complete the program or course(s) or both
    - Assessment strategies and standards of performance expected of the student.
- The evidence required to verify Ministry Authorised Elective Work Experience 12 as well as other Career Program options were well organized and accessible, indicating valuable educational services were being provided to students.
- The substantive student course activities provided as evidence of ‘active’ participation in many instances represented more than the required five percent of the course learning activities.
- There was one school-aged Grade 10 to 12 student claim that did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy or Form 1701 Reporting Instructions.
- All members of the teaching staff are currently certified with the Teacher Regulation Branch.
- The School is in accordance with the Distributed Learning-General Policy regarding financial reimbursements to third party providers.
- There was no evidence of financial assistance provided to parents for Internet access or connection.
- A number of students enrolled in the District’s Alternate Education Program under the age of 16 as of July 1 were claimed through the District’s DL program for career options and Work Experience 12. These students are not reported for funding by the Cowichan Valley Distributed Learning school until they have finished their courses.
- There is a comprehensive screening process prior to admission to the Cowichan Valley Distributed Learning School designed to maximize student success in the program.
Audit Sample Findings

The auditors found that:
• 0.1250 Grade 10 to 12 school-age FTE did not meet the requirements of the DL Active Policy nor in accordance with Form 1701 Instructions. There was no evidence to meet the participation criteria of the DL Active Policy. The Policy says: “The Ministry will only fund boards of education for distributed learning when specific criteria related to active participation are met.”

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:
• 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.
• The District ensure the DL staff provide Kindergarten to Grade 9 Student Learning Plans which reflect the teacher’s plan for providing learning activities for each student, the standards of performance expected of students, and assessment strategies as identified in the DL Active Policy.

Auditors’ Comments

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