



**Ministry of Education
Resource Management Division**

2020/21 Special Education Enrolment Audit

AUDIT REPORT

SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 28 (Quesnel)

2020/21 SPECIAL EDUCATION ENROLMENT AUDIT REPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 28 (Quesnel)

Background

The Ministry of Education funds boards of education based on their 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).

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.

In the 2020/21 school year, school boards reported 34,264 students enrolled in the low incidence supplemental special education funding categories at September 30, 2020. School District No. 28 (Quesnel) reported 232 students in the supplemental special education funding categories as of September 30, 2020. For the purpose of this compliance audit, School District No. 28 (Quesnel) reported four student claims in the Physically Dependent Category (Code A), one student claim reported in the Deafblind Category (Code B), 13 student claims in the Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disability Category (Code C), 48 student claims in the Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment Category (Code D), eight student claims in the Deaf or Hard of Hearing Category (Code F), 91 student claims in the Autism Spectrum Disorder Category (Code G), and 67 student claims in the Intensive Behavior Intervention/Serious Mental Illness Category (Code H).

Workplace and travel restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for the Ministry of Education, public school boards and independent school authorities to transition to digital remote evidence verification during the 2020/21 school year. Due to the remote procedures undertaken, much of the evidence was based on anecdotal explanations when evidence submitted required further clarification.

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 \(April 2016\)*](#).

Description of the Audit Process

A remote Special Education enrolment audit was conducted in School District No. 28 (Quesnel) during the week of February 22, 2021.

An entry meeting was held via Zoom on February 22, 2021 with the Superintendent and the District Principal of Student Support Services. Daily meetings with the District Principal of Student Support Services were held to present preliminary findings and to seek clarification related to the contents of files.

A sample of four student files reported in the Physically Dependent category (Code A), one student file in the Deafblind (Code B), two student files in Moderate to Profound Intellectual Disabilities (Code C), 26 student files in Physical Disability or Chronic Health Impairment (Code D), two student files in Deaf or Hard of Hearing (Code F), five student files in Autism Spectrum Disorder (Code G), and 25 student files in Intensive Behavior Interventions/Serious Mental Illness (Code H) in the special needs categories were reviewed and evaluated to determine if the students in these categories were accurately reported on Form 1701.

Despite the impact that the current pandemic has had on many facets of education, the District gave evidence of the ability to offer full programs to support the students through face-to-face instruction or through the District's Distributed Learning (DL) school. The District is to be commended for the systems put in place to:

- track behaviour in elementary schools;
- track student progress by the early literacy team;
- review files to ensure that students were claimed in the correct category; and,
- ensure students were receiving appropriate and timely supports, and their technology needs were being met.

The IEP form used in the District's elementary schools clearly explained the current functioning level of the student and contained SMART goals and objectives. There was evidence of clear and differing measurement strategies, and the provision of appropriate and robust services. It was also clear when a goal had been accomplished. The District used the generic non-credit code XSIEP (created for Grade 8-12 and SU students - Ref. Form 1701) on the elementary report cards to indicate that the student was being graded on progress towards the IEP goal.

The District Principal of Student Support Services was able to provide the audit team with evidence when clarification was required. Daily meetings of the audit progress via Zoom were held with the Principal.

An exit meeting was held via Zoom with the Superintendent and the District Principal of Student Support Services on February 25, 2021. The auditors reviewed the purpose of the audit, explained the audit reporting process, reported their findings, clarified any outstanding issues, discussed reclassifications for the 2020/21 school year, and expressed appreciation for the assistance provided.

Observations

There were no recommended for reclassifications for the student claims reported in Code A, Code B, Code C, Code F, Code G or Code H.

Of the 26 student files reviewed by the auditors in Code D:

- one student was recommended for reclassification to Learning Disabilities (Code Q).

The auditors found that:

- Evidence verified one Code D claim reported by the District met the criteria for Code Q. There was evidence of a specific learning disorder as diagnosed in a report by a registered school psychologist, dated January 2020. There was a severe range of impairment in both reading skills and writing skills with student receiving intensive speech/language service since Kindergarten. The School was providing support through the resource teacher and an Education Assistant in the classroom. While there had been several attempts by the school staff to engage the family in accessing medical assessments for the student, as of the Form 1701 claim date of September 30, 2020 there was no evidence of a medical diagnosis. To meet audit criteria for Code D, as per the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines the student must have documentation of a medical diagnosis in one or more of the following areas: nervous system impairment that impacts movement or mobility; musculoskeletal condition; and/or a chronic health impairment that seriously impacts the students' education and achievement.
- At the District's McNaughton Alternate Education facility there was evidence provided to indicate effective, student centred services being provided. While there was evidence presented of quality relationships with several community agencies who provide on-site services to students, the following was identified during the review for this facility:
 - Notes from the intake process, indicating supports needed by the student, were not complete for many students.
 - In many cases the IEP goals were not specific to the diagnosis and/or the behavioral challenges of the student.
 - The report cards did not reference IEP goals.
 - A clear, consistent process for tracking outside agency supports was not evident.

Recommendations

The auditors recommend that:

- The District staff ensure students are claimed in the educational category that best reflects the type and intensity of educational interventions and supports needed as per the Special Education Manual of Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, including those claimed in the Physical Disability/Chronic Health Impairment (Code D).
- The District staff ensure intake forms for students at McNaughton Alternate Education Program are completed in their entirety.
- The District staff ensure all student IEP goals, including the IEPs for those students at McNaughton Alternate Education Program, relate to the category in which the student is claimed and that progress towards those goals is reported in the report card.

- The District staff develop a system for clear, complete and dated tracking of service provision for the students reported in the McNaughton Alternate Education Program.

Auditors' Comments

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