



January 3, 2014

Ref: 170909

To: Board of Education Chairs
Federation of Independent Schools Associations of BC (FISA)

Re: Changes to Distributed Learning

The following change is being implemented for Public and Independent Distributed Learning (DL) Schools in 2013/14.

As of February 2014, the Ministry of Education is capping the reimbursements DL schools make available to third party service providers for learning support materials or resources to learners. Under the new policy, schools may provide a maximum of \$600 for each full time public or independent DL student in Kindergarten through Grade 12. Exceptions to this cap are:

- a. supporting students with special needs in levels 1, 2 and 3; and categories K,P,Q,R, in achieving the goals in their Individual Education Plans;
- b. career technical centre program courses;
- c. post secondary transition program courses and;
- d. a portion of Internet access costs if required to participate in a DL program or course.

Many distributed learning (DL) schools around the province provide resource/service allocation funds so that DL students have access to educational services that are not easily delivered through DL.

For example, a brick and mortar Physical Education curriculum might include swimming, while a Fine Arts curriculum could include a music program. Third-party services enable a DL student to access similar learning, e.g. swimming or music lessons. In practice, access to third-party services has led to competition between schools for DL students based on the amount of money provided for third-party resources/services.

The amount DL schools provide for third party services has traditionally not been set by the Ministry of Education in either public or independent schools. While DL schools do not pay parents directly, many DL schools (public and independent) offer up to \$1,200 in “resource/service credits” for enrolled students in grades K–9. These credits support school-approved third-party services and resources that assist students in meeting Ministry curricular outcomes. Other DL schools do not provide any third-party and resource funds; all services and materials are provided by the DL school.

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Requirements regarding reimbursements are set out in Ministry policy.

Public distributed learning schools:

- <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=9C4ADF7DFC1444F489CB95728B4D72F1&title=Distributed%20Learning%20%u2013%20General>)

Independent distributed learning schools:

- <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=162BCF5F7EDC422094CD12684B1D3A5C&title=Independent%20School%20Distributed%20Learning> and in the independent school DL agreements.

These requirements are generally parallel. Boards of education and independent school authorities are required to ensure that third party services are:

- part of the student's educational program, as documented in the student learning plan developed by a certified teacher,
- directly reimbursed by the board or authority to the resource/service provider.

The \$600 per student cap will reduce the pressure on DL schools to compete based on the amount of money provided for third-party resource/services. In addition, a larger portion of the operating grant will remain with the school or District to offer stronger school-based DL programs.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Wood', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Rob Wood
Deputy Minister

pc: All Superintendent of Schools