

Washington State Auditor's Office
Special Report – Alternative Learning Experience

Naselle-Grays River Valley School District
No. 155
Pacific County

Audit Period
September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013

Report No. 1012236

Issue Date
July 21, 2014



Washington State Auditor
Troy Kelley

Independence • Respect • Integrity



Washington State Auditor Troy Kelley

July 21, 2014

Board of Directors
Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155
Naselle, Washington

Report on Alternative Learning Experience

We appreciate the opportunity to work in cooperation with your District to promote accountability, integrity and openness in government. The State Auditor's Office takes seriously our role to advocate for government accountability and transparency and to promote positive change.

Please find attached our report on Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155's compliance with alternative learning experience enrollment reporting rules. Thank you for working with us to ensure the efficient and effective use of public resources.

Sincerely,

TROY KELLEY
STATE AUDITOR

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Pacific County
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Audit Summary

Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155 Pacific County September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013

ABOUT THE ALTERNATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs are a form of basic K-12 public school education in Washington State. While students in traditional basic education attend classes on campus and have face-to-face contact with teachers and other staff, ALE students may spend most, or even all, of their time outside of a regular classroom setting.

Districts may build Internet-based educational programs that enroll students from anywhere in the state. Beside Internet programs, ALE can be accomplished through a contract between a student and district instructors, or through a parent-partner program in which parents participate in the design and teaching of the student's courses. These programs are different from homeschooling in that students remain part of the public school system and districts claiming funding are responsible for supervision, monitoring, assessing and evaluating the student's education.

Districts may count ALE students for funding when they report enrollment to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). In order to claim ALE students for funding, ALE programs must satisfy OSPI's requirement for courses of study leading to a high school diploma. Districts must: prepare detailed plans for each student; maintain regular contact with students; and evaluate student progress on a monthly basis. Districts must also keep detailed records to show they have met all of these requirements. In 2013 and 2012 the ALE funding provided by OSPI was reduced to 90 percent or 80 percent of the traditional basic education allocation rate based on student-instructor contact time.

ABOUT THE AUDIT

In 2013 the state Legislature passed ESSB 5946, requiring districts to receive biennial audits of their ALE courses. This report contains the results of our independent audit of ALE enrollment at Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155 from September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013.

We evaluated internal controls and performed audit procedures on the ALE activities of the District. We also determined whether the District complied with state laws and regulations over ALE enrollment.

In keeping with general auditing practices, we do not examine every transaction, activity or area. Instead, the areas examined were those representing the highest risk of noncompliance.

During the period under review, the District operated two ALE programs, which accounted for 51 percent of its total basic enrollment:

- Naselle Homelink Level Two is a parent-partnership program serving students in grades K-12. Students do not attend the District campus for any of their courses. The District provides the ALE program through an inter-district cooperative agreement with Valley School District's Columbia Virtual Academy. This program has operated for two years and nonresident students represent 97.5 percent of students reported for funding. The program reported 100 percent of students at the 80 percent basic education allocation (BEA) funding rate.
- Naselle Homelink Level One is a parent-partnership program serving students in grades 9-12. Students do not attend the District campus for any of their courses. The District provides the ALE program through an inter-district cooperative agreement with Valley School District's Columbia Virtual Academy. This program only operated in September and October and nonresident students represented 100 percent of students reported for funding. The program reported 100 percent of students at the 80 percent basic education allocation (BEA) funding rate.

RESULTS

The District complied with state laws and regulations regarding ALE enrollment, except where noted below. For the year ending August 31, 2013, the District received approximately \$3.1 million in combined enrollment and staff mix funding; approximately \$1.2 million of this was related to its ALE programs.

Naselle Homelink Level Two – The program reported 257.72 average annual full-time equivalents (AAFTE). Our audit tested a sample of 10 students and found one student underreported for one month. The program correctly reported students at 80 percent based on documented contact time.

- The District did not report one student for one month who was eligible to be counted for 80 percent funding.

The District was underfunded approximately \$462 based on our testing.

Naselle Homelink Level One – The program reported 14.48 average annual full-time equivalent (AAFTE). The District's internal controls were adequate to correctly report ALE enrollment. The District also complied with state laws and regulations regarding ALE.

In both programs, we identified weaknesses in two components of the written student learning plans.

- Plans state: “This course has been reviewed and approved by a team of certificated teachers who are highly qualified in this subject matter”. Plans are required by state regulation to specifically identify the Highly Qualified (HQ) teacher responsible for development of each core class.
- Plans do not clearly describe the estimated average hours of learning activity reported each month for enrollment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend the District:

- Identify the HQ teacher that developed each core academic course in the written student learning plan, as required by state regulations.
- Clearly document the estimated number of hours of enrollment each month the student is reported for funding.
- Work with OSPI to determine resolution of funding adjustments.

Description of the District

Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155

Pacific County

September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2013

ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Naselle-Grays River Valley School District No. 155 provides education and related services to approximately 573 kindergarten through 12th grade students in Pacific County. The District has one elementary school, one middle school, one alternative school and one high school.

An elected, five-member Board of Directors governs the District. The Board appoints a Superintendent to oversee the District's daily operations as well as its approximately 53 employees. For the year ending August 31, 2013, the District operated on an annual general fund budget of \$6,543,020.

DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

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AUDIT HISTORY

You can find current and past audit reports for the District on our website, www.sao.wa.gov.



ABOUT THE STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE

The State Auditor's Office is established in the state's Constitution and is part of the executive branch of state government. The State Auditor is elected by the citizens of Washington and serves four-year terms.

We work with our audit clients and citizens as an advocate for government accountability. As an elected agency, the State Auditor's Office has the independence necessary to objectively perform audits and investigations. Our audits are designed to comply with professional standards as well as to satisfy the requirements of federal, state, and local laws.

The State Auditor's Office employees are located around the state to deliver services effectively and efficiently.

Our audits look at financial information and compliance with state, federal and local laws on the part of all local governments, including schools, and all state agencies, including institutions of higher education. In addition, we conduct performance audits of state agencies and local governments and fraud, whistleblower and citizen hotline investigations.

The results of our work are widely distributed through a variety of reports, which are available on our Web site and through our free, electronic subscription service.

We take our role as partners in accountability seriously. We provide training and technical assistance to governments and have an extensive quality assurance program.

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