



# Washington State Auditor's Office

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## Special Report Alternative Learning Experience **Colville School District No. 115**

Stevens County

**For the period September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014**

**Published August 3, 2015**

**Report No. 1014755**





## Washington State Auditor's Office

August 3, 2015

Board of Directors  
Colville School District No. 115  
Colville, Washington

### Report on Alternative Learning Experience

Thank you for the opportunity to work with you to promote accountability, integrity and openness in government. The State Auditor's Office takes seriously our role of providing state and local governments with assurance and accountability as the independent auditor of public accounts. In this way, we strive to help government work better, cost less, deliver higher value and earn greater public trust.

Independent audits provide essential accountability and transparency for District operations. This information is valuable to management, the governing body and public stakeholders when assessing the government's stewardship of public resources.

The attached comprises our report on the District's compliance with alternative learning experience enrollment reporting rules. Our independent audit report describes the overall results and conclusions for areas we examined. We appreciate the opportunity to work with your staff and we value your cooperation during the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Jan M. Jutte".

JAN M. JUTTE, CPA, CGFM  
ACTING STATE AUDITOR  
OLYMPIA, WA

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## AUDIT SUMMARY

### Results in brief

District operations complied with applicable state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures regarding alternative learning experience (ALE) enrollment. For the year ending, August 31, 2014 the District received approximately \$10.2 million in combined enrollment and staff mix funding; approximately \$420,000 of this was related to its ALE programs.

- Panorama – The program reported 82.08 average annual full-time equivalent (AAFTE). Procedures performed over this program were limited to considering internal controls the District has in place to assure compliance with reporting requirements. Nothing came to our attention to cause us to believe the District did not comply with reporting requirements.

### About alternative learning experience programs

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. Besides 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.

During the period under review, the District operated one ALE program, which accounted for 4.6 percent of its total basic student enrollment:

- Panorama is a program serving students in grades K-12. Students in grades K-8 are on the District campus, while students in grades 9-12 are online for most of their courses. The program has operated for six years and nonresident students represent 15.6 percent of the students reported for funding.

## About the audit

Per RCW 28A.232.010, school districts must receive biennial audits of their ALE program. This report contains the results of our independent audit of ALE enrollment at Colville School District No. 115 from September 1, 2013 through August 31, 2014.

Management is responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable ALE requirements. This includes the design, implementation and maintenance of internal controls relevant to these objectives.

Our audit involved performing procedures to obtain evidence about the District's compliance with state laws and regulations and its own policies and procedures, and internal controls over such matters, with regard to its ALE program.

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.

## STATUS OF PRIOR AUDIT FINDINGS

This schedule presents the status of findings reported in prior audit periods. The status listed below is the representation of the Colville School District. The State Auditor's Office has reviewed the status as presented by the District.

<b>Audit Period:</b> 9/1/2009 to 8/31/2011	<b>Report Ref. No.:</b> 1008851	<b>Finding Ref. No.:</b> 1
<b>Finding Caption:</b> The District lacked adequate controls over enrollment reporting for its Alternative Learning Experience program.		
<b>Background:</b> Alternative Learning Experience (ALE)  The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) establishes the rules and provides instructions on Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) enrollment reporting for state funding. ALE is an individualized course of study a school district conducts. It can claim its students for basic education funding provided it complies with state regulations. OSPI establishes rules and provides guidance to districts on how to report ALE enrollment. District management is responsible for designing and following internal controls as well as retaining documentation to ensure this reporting is accurate.  Columbia Virtual Academy  The District is among 13 school districts across the state that operates its ALE program through the Columbia Virtual Academy. The District participates in the Academy through an inter-local agreement with Valley School District.  The agreement states that the Valley School District Superintendent will administer the Academy, which develops instructional materials and provides instructors based on the educational needs of participating districts.  Each participating district is responsible for reporting enrollment to OSPI for funding purposes, supervising student progress, and compliance with ALE rules and regulations.		
<b>Status of Corrective Action: (check one)</b> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fully Corrected</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Partially Corrected</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> No Corrective Action Taken</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Finding is considered no longer valid</div> </div>		
<b>Corrective Action Taken:</b> <i>The District worked with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's Audit Resolution Office to resolve the issues identified and repaid apportionment funding of \$48,180 related to this finding. The audit issues listed above have been resolved.</i>  <i>Item #1 - State regulation requires that districts report only actively enrolled students for funding. The District reported a student that temporarily moved to another state.</i>		

Action taken: The District accepts and serves students in our ALE program ONLY if they live in Washington State, within our district boundaries or have the appropriate CHOICE paperwork in place and can meet FACE to FACE on a weekly basis. The District only serves students who can meet all three criteria listed.

Item #2 - Reimbursements were made for expenditures that were not directly related to and supported by the written student learning plan. We identified student reimbursements for expenditures that occurred after the plan end date.

Action taken: The District makes NO reimbursements.

Item #3 - The District's written ALE policy did not contain all criteria required in state regulations. State regulations also require school boards at districts claiming ALE funding to annually review and adopt written policies in an open public meeting. The District did not.

Action taken: The District's current policy contains all criteria required in state regulations. In the June school board meeting of each year, the board annually reviews and adopts written policies in an open public meeting.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE DISTRICT

Colville School District No. 115, located in Stevens County, serves approximately 1,845 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. The District operates one high school, one junior high school, three elementary schools, an alternative high school and a developmental preschool.

An elected, five-member Board of Directors governs the District. The Board appoints management to oversee the District's daily operations as well as over 200 full- and part-time employees.

Contact information related to this report	
Address:	Colville School District No. 115 217 S. Hofstetter Colville, WA 99114
Contact:	Fred McCurdy, Business Manager
Phone:	(509) 684-7856
Website:	<a href="http://www.colsd.org">www.colsd.org</a>

### Audit history

You can find current and past audit reports for the District at <http://portal.sao.wa.gov/ReportSearch>.



## 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 to achieve our vision of government that works for citizens, by helping governments work better, cost less, deliver higher value, and earn greater public trust.

In fulfilling our mission to hold state and local governments accountable for the use of public resources, we also hold ourselves accountable by continually improving our audit quality and operational efficiency and developing highly engaged and committed employees.

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.

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 as well as [fraud](#), state [whistleblower](#) and [citizen hotline](#) investigations.

The results of our work are widely distributed through a variety of reports, which are available on our [website](#) and through our free, electronic [subscription](#) service.

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

Contact information for the State Auditor's Office	
<b>Deputy Director for Communications</b>	Thomas Shapley <a href="mailto:Thomas.Shapley@sao.wa.gov">Thomas.Shapley@sao.wa.gov</a> (360) 902-0367
<b>Public Records requests</b>	<a href="mailto:PublicRecords@sao.wa.gov">PublicRecords@sao.wa.gov</a>
<b>Main telephone</b>	(360) 902-0370
<b>Toll-free Citizen Hotline</b>	(866) 902-3900
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.sao.wa.gov">www.sao.wa.gov</a>