

Office of the Independent Monitor
*Study of the Accuracy of District Data on Placement in the
Least Restrictive Environment 2007-08*

Outcome 7 focuses on students in the low to moderate incidence disability categories such as autism and mental retardation. These students comprise approximately 30% of the Los Angeles Unified School District's special education population. Outcome 7 requires the District to increase the number of students with disabilities in the general education setting to 40% or more of their school day. The findings are presented in two categories: students in the special education setting for 60% or less of the day, and those in the special education setting for more than 60% of their day.

Outcome 7: Placement of Students with Disabilities (ages 6-22) with All Other Disabilities

By June 30, 2006, the District will demonstrate a ratio of not less than 52% of students placed in the combined categories of 0-20% and 21-60% and not more than 48% students placed in the 61-100% category according to Federal placement reporting requirements.

This study validates the accuracy of the District's LRE data for making a determination of the District's progress on Outcome 7.

2007-2008 LRE Year Three Study

This study was a continuation of the year 2006-2007 study. The study was guided by the following research questions and methodology.

Research Questions

The 2006-2007 study focused on the following questions:

1. Are there discrepancies between the percent of time in special education calculated from information on the IEP and the percent of time in special education calculated from the number of special education minutes in a student's schedule?
2. Do any discrepancies between the percent of time in special education in Welligent and in the student schedule data have any impact on the overall calculation of percent of time in special education for Outcome 7?

Methodology

The methodology was consistent with that utilized during the 2006-2007 study. To summarize, IEP data on the percentage of time in special education was retrieved at the central level for students with all other disabilities in the Welligent system. This data was verified at the school site against the percentage of time found in the students IEP and classroom schedule detailing the time spent in the special education or general education setting. When available, Welligent IEP service logs were also collected and utilized to confirm time in the special education setting. The percent of time derived from a schedule analysis was compared to the percentage of time derived from the analysis of IEP information and the percentage of time reported by the Welligent

system. Lastly, this information is then matched to determine if any discrepancies between the IEP and classroom schedule results in a change of the time categories associated with the consent decree.

Sample Design

During the 2007-2008 school year, the LRE study consisted of two samples drawn in February and April 2008. The LRE sample is representative of students with disabilities eligible with all other disabilities (non-SLD/non-SLI) by local school district and school level. Tables 1 and 2 show the final distributions of the overall LRE sample (N=1,522) across local school districts and school type.

Table 1: Distribution of Students with All Other Disabilities in LRE Sample

| Local School District | Number of Students | Percentage of Students |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | 195 | 12.8% |
| 2 | 170 | 11.1% |
| 3 | 165 | 10.8% |
| 4 | 122 | 8.0% |
| 5 | 136 | 8.9% |
| 6 | 58 | 3.8% |
| 7 | 154 | 10.1% |
| 8 | 144 | 9.5% |
| R | 378 | 24.8% |
| Total | 1,522 | 100% |

Table 2. School Level Distribution of Students with All Other Disabilities in LRE Sample

| School Level | Number of Students | Percentage of Students |
|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Elementary | 806 | 52.9% |
| Middle | 306 | 20.1% |
| High | 281 | 18.5% |
| Special Centers | 129 | 8.5% |
| Total | 1,522 | 100.0% |

Data Collection and Analysis

Data including student demographic information and the percentage of time in the special education setting was uploaded centrally and placed on an instrument developed by the OIM (Attachment A). This data were verified at the school site through a review of the student's IEP. Classroom schedules detailing the time spent either in the general or special education setting, Welligent service logs, and a roster of special education teachers were also collected.

Data were collected by trained research assistants at the school site. Data collected from the schools were used to create student files. Each file was expected to contain: a report on the number of instructional minutes reported by school staff, a completed data collection instrument

and the student’s classroom/class or other available schedules such as Welligent service logs. Data from these sources were then analyzed to determine the total number of special education minutes each student received and then were transferred to a data summary sheet (Attachment B). Each student file was reviewed three times by three separate reviewers in order to establish inter-rater reliability and ensure consistency of schedule and IEP data analysis. This information was then entered into an LRE database and sent to the American Institutes for Research for analyses.

Findings

This section examines whether the information on the percent of time in Welligent matches the percent of time information derived from the students’ IEPs and school schedules. The matches reported are based on percent of time data obtained at the school site. This may differ from the percentage of time obtained centrally, since the IEP information observed at the time of the review may be from a more recent IEP.

Table 3 illustrates these matches and discrepancies. The Welligent-IEP column shows the discrepancies found between the percentage of time obtained at the time of the sample (Welligent) and that obtained at the time of the IEP review (IEP). This column shows that 34% the percent of item found at the IEP school site review did not match the percent of time obtained in the sample (Welligent). The second column demonstrates a comparison of the percentage of time obtained at the time of the sample (Welligent) and the most current student placement based on the classroom schedule (Schedule). This column shows that based on a comparison of the Welligent data, 34% matched the percent of time reported within the student schedule. The third column is considered the most integral to the match analysis, as it compares the student’s most recent percentage of time from the IEP observed at the school site and the student’s current daily schedule. This comparison yields approximately 41% matches between the percentage of time and the student’s schedule.

Table 3. Number and Percentages of Students with LRE Time Matches by, Welligent, IEP and School Schedule

| Exact Matches | Welligent – IEP | | Welligent – Schedule | | IEP - Schedule | |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Matches | 1,001 | 65.8% | 515 | 34.0% | 615 | 40.6% |
| Non-Matches | 521 | 34.2% | 998 | 66.0% | 898 | 59.4% |
| Total N | 1,522 | 100% | 1,513 | 100% | 1,513 | 100% |

It is important to note that the accuracy of data regarding time in the special education setting is dependent on several factors that may make achieving a one-to-one correspondence between time indicated in the IEP and student schedule difficult. This is easier to achieve for students that attend secondary school with fixed schedules based on classroom periods. Therefore, a reasonable amount of error is to be expected. For the purposes of Outcome 7, the accuracy of the LRE data are measured by the percent time categories spent in the general education setting (60% or more and Less than 60%). This means for measuring the District’s progress with Outcome 7, we examine data matches based on time categories.

Essentially, the outcomes require the District to increase the rate of students with disabilities who fall into the 60% or less category, or in other words, increase the percentage of time students with low incidence disabilities spend in the general education classroom. It is important to note that to determine whether the Welligent data on time spent in the special education setting is reliable for making a determination of Outcome 7, the discrepancies must be large enough to result in a shift in category. For example, if data from the Welligent system indicates that a student is in the special education setting for 45% of the instructional time, the student is considered to fall into the 60% or less category. For a shift in category to occur, the same student’s schedule would have to show an additional 15% more time in the special education setting to affect the District’s performance on the outcome. A discrepancy of less than 15% would result in the student remaining in the 60% or less category.

To determine if the discrepancies found between the Welligent system and the students’ actual time by classroom schedule had an affect on the overall performance toward the outcomes, an analysis was conducted to determine the reliability of the data by the one primary variable: the appropriate reporting categories (60 % or less and more than 60%). Again, it is important to note that this analysis does not look at exact matches, therefore allowing for variations in schedules and discrepancies. Essentially, this analysis only captures students with discrepancies large enough to place them into a different category.

Table 4 shows that for all students, the Welligent IEP accurately represented 86% of students in the sample. This means that out of 1,046 students in the sample with 60% or less category we found discrepancies for 170 students that shifted them into the category of more than 60%. Of the 476 students in the sample with Welligent data indicating placement in special education for more than 60% of the day, we found discrepancies for 48 students that shifted them into the 60% or less category. As is noted, discrepancies are observed for both categories. This movement has been consistently noted yearly, and has a minimal effect on the overall number and percentage of students in the respective categories.

Table 4. Number of Students in Welligent by Category with a Category Change
Based on Schedule Information - All students

| Schedule Information | Welligent Database | | Total |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|
| | 60 % or Less | More than 60% | |
| Less than 60% | 876 | 48 | |
| More than 60% | 170 | 428 | |
| Percentage of Category Matches | 83.7% | 89.9% | 85.6% |
| Total Sample | 1,046 | 476 | 1,522 |

During the data analyses, a pattern was noted of specific schools reporting a percentage of time in the special education setting within a range (56-59%) slightly below the outcome target of 60%, for many of the students in the sample attending that school. To determine if this pattern was reflective of practice promoted by District policy, an additional analysis was included for this study (Table 5). First, the analysis identified schools with two or more students in the sample with the same percentage of time listed in the IEP (i.e., 59%). This analysis yielded a total of 15 schools and 60 students. The second analysis looked at the percentage of time for each student and compared the percentage of time reported by their school schedule. For those students in the

category of less than 60% (N=60) of time in special education, five had exact matches and 16 had discrepancies that did not change their categories status meaning they remained in the 60% or less category. The remaining 39 students shifted categories as their schedules noted time in the special education setting of more than 60%. Of these students, 13 had a schedule with a percentage of time within 60-62%, while 3 more were within the 63-70% range.

As illustrated, the amount of schools and students identified within this analysis and the range of discrepancies are considered reasonable and do not appear indicative of a generalized misinterpretation of a District policy and/or a misrepresentation of time entered into the Welligent IEP system.

Table 5. Number and Percentage of Students with a Percent of LRE Time of 59% or less in the Special Education Setting reported by Welligent by, Percent of LRE Time based on Schedule

| Percent of Time (range) from Schedule | n | % |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| <59% | 21 | 35% |
| 60%-62% | 13 | 22% |
| 63%-70% | 3 | 5% |
| 71%-80% | 14 | 23% |
| >81% | 9 | 15% |
| Total | 60 | 100% |

Summary

Overall, the LRE data for the District continues to improve. Although the data continues to contain errors in the reporting categories, the majority of these errors have a minimal effect on the percentage of students in each time category. The study highlights the importance of time as a variable in determining the percentage of time students spend in the special education setting. This calculation is further complicated by IEPs that may have occurred for students months prior to the visit, and whose change in grade also resulted in a change in school level. For example, a 5th grade students attending an elementary school in 2006-2007, for whom an IEP was held in May of that year, would have had an IEP and percentage of time reflecting that IEP for the most part of the 2007-2008 year. This would have been further affected by the change in school level and the difference (increase) in the number of instructional minutes required.

Least Restrictive Environment

Student in LRE

Page 1
 District ID# _____ Last Name _____ First Name _____ Birthday 10/14/1996 Grade 6 Current IEP Date 10/18/2007 IEP Date if different: _____
 Attend School: _____ Local District: 1 Instructional Setting: AC
 IEP Meeting Location: _____

Page 4
 Eligibility: MDO Eligibility if different: _____

Page 5

| Performance area | Wk | Freq | Total | Month | Freq | Total | Minutes outside Gen Ed |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------|-------|--------------------------|-------|-------|------------------------|
| 1 _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 2 _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 3 _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 4 _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 5 _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Page 8
 Page 8 Missing Welligent Percent of Time:
 Gen Ed RSP SDC (Minutes per Week): _____ DIS Gen Ed/Inclusion % of time: _____

Page 12

1. # of Weekly District Policy Total School Minutes
 2. # of Weekly Total School Minutes School Report

Initial Evaluations

Student in Evaluation

Calendar Track Break in Calendar

| Assessment Plan | Page 10 | Notification Form | Due Date | # of Days | 0-60 | 61-75 | 76-90 | Over 90 |
|---------------------------------------|---|--|--|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sent Date | Meeting Date | Resched Date | <input type="text" value="11/6/2007"/> | <input type="text" value="41"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text" value="41"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Plan Date | Signature Date | Ajusted Due Date | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="text" value="9/6/2007"/> | <input type="text" value="10/18/2007"/> | <input type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | | | | | | |
| <input type="text" value="9/7/2007"/> | <input type="text" value="11/2/2007"/> | <input type="text" value="11/6/2007"/> | | | | | | |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | | | | | | |

Comments if rescheduled

Data Summary Sheet

Name of Student: _____

School: _____

Grade: _____

If information is not available, please mark N/A

_____ Total # of Instructional Minutes in LAUSD policy for this student

_____ Total # of Instructional Minutes from School Reports for this student

Elementary and Pre-K

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| _____ Total # of SPED Minutes in IEP (Add special education minutes from p. 5 + p. 8/ Default to p.12) | Total # p.5 Total # p.8 Total # p.12 | _____ _____ _____ |
|---|--|-------------------------|

| | | |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| _____ Total # of SPED Minutes from Schedule (Total special education minutes in Elementary Classroom +DIS or from RSP + DIS Schedule) | Total # Classroom Total # DIS Total # RSP | _____ _____ _____ |
|---|---|-------------------------|

Secondary – Middle and High School

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| _____ Total # of SPED Minutes in IEP (Add special education minutes from p. 5 + p. 8/ Default to p.12) | Total # p.5 Total # p.8 Total # p.12 | _____ _____ _____ |
|---|--|-------------------------|

| | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| _____ Total # of SPED Minutes from Schedule (Count # special education periods/multiply by # of minutes in a of period) | Length of Period # of Sped periods DIS excluding APE | _____ _____ _____ |
|---|--|-------------------------|

| | |
|--|--|
| _____ Percent SPED time from IEP (IEP minutes/Policy minutes) | _____ Percent SPED Time from Schedule (Schedule minutes/Policy Minutes) |
|--|--|

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|
| _____ Total SIS | _____ Total Welligent |
|-----------------|-----------------------|