

Office of the Independent Monitor

Study of the Accuracy of District Data on Student Suspensions 2007-2008

During the 2007-2008 school year, the Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM) conducted a study to validate the accuracy of the District's suspension data for students with disabilities (SWD). The results of this study will be used by the Independent Monitor (IM) in making a determination on the District's progress toward Outcome 5: Suspension, and is summarized below:

Outcome 5: Suspension contains two primary components. The first is the reduction of long-term suspensions (defined as 6 or more days) for students with disabilities. The second is aimed to reduce the overall suspension rate of students with disabilities while also reducing the proportion of suspensions for students with disabilities compared to their non-disabled peers (risk ratio).

The focus of this study was to validate the accuracy of the District's suspension data for students with disabilities. The study primarily aimed to determine the levels of agreement or matches between the data reported centrally and that maintained at the school level. The study will present the findings of the data matches found within the suspension data by the following variables: local district, disability type, school level.

Methodology

Suspension data are maintained primarily within the District's Student Information System (SIS). The District's suspension file contains specific information for each student suspended in the District. The data includes the date of the suspension, number of days suspended for each infraction, and the reason for suspension. It is important to note, that although the SIS is the primary database for suspension data, some of the District's charter schools are an exception as some maintain separate data systems. These schools are considered non-connected sites and provide suspension data to the District which is then entered into a separate database.

To validate the accuracy of the District's data system, the methodology of the study was guided by two questions:

1. Is the District's data system accurately reporting information (date, number of days and reason) of student suspension for students with disabilities?
2. Is the data accurate and reliable for making a determination for Outcome 5: Suspensions?

During the 2007-2008 school year, the OIM developed an instrument (see Attachment A) to validate the accuracy of the District's suspension data for students with disabilities. The instrument was piloted at three District schools prior to the sample being drawn.

Sample Design

The sample was designed to obtain a representative sample of students with disabilities based on the following variables: local district, disability type, and school level. Tables 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate the population of SWD suspended and sample distribution. It is important to point out, that the population of SWD reflects those suspensions that had occurred at the time of the data extract utilized for sample selection dated April 15, 2008.

Table 1. Distribution of Population of SWD Suspended and in Sample, by Local District

Local School District	Population		Sample	
	N	%	N	%
1	910	12.5%	86	8.5%
2	769	10.6%	84	8.3%
3	1,236	17.0%	185	18.2%
4	645	8.9%	60	5.9%
5	952	13.1%	150	14.8%
6	335	4.6%	40	3.9%
7	1,051	14.4%	156	15.4%
8	1,082	14.9%	196	19.3%
R	297	4.1%	57	5.6%
Total	7,277	100%	1,014	100%

Table 2. Distribution of Population of SWD Suspended and in Sample, by School Type

School Type	Population		Sample	
	N	%	N	%
Elementary	919	12.6%	109	10.7%
Middle	3,164	43.5%	374	36.9%
High	3,181	43.7%	531	52.4%
Special Centers	13	0.2%	0	0.0%
Total	7,277	100%	1,014	100%

Table 3. Distribution of Population of SWD Suspended, by Disability Type

Disability Type	Population		Sample	
	N	%	N	%
SLD-SLI	5,672	77.9%	809	79.8%
Others	1,605	22.1%	205	20.2%
Total	7,277	100%	1,014	100%

Data Collection and Analyses

Data were collected at school sites by trained research assistants. The instrument contained the following information to be validated at the school site: student demographic information, date of suspension, number of days of suspension, and reason for suspension. Matching and discrepant information was recorded on the instrument. The data was then entered into a database developed by the OIM and sent to the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for analyses.

Findings

Table 4 examines the accuracy of suspension data by local district. The study found high levels of agreement for all of the local districts with the exception of charter schools (District R). This may be primarily due to the utilization of different data systems by some charter schools to maintain student level data, including suspension data. As aforementioned, the school’s data were transferred into a separate database. This process may result in data entry or data transfer errors and may explain the lower rates of agreement between charter and schools in local districts 1-8.

Table 4. Number and Percentage of Matching Records, by Local District

Number of students with Matching Data	Date of Suspension		Number of Days of Suspension		Reason for Suspension		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Local District 1	83	96.5%	83	96.5%	83	96.5%	86	100%
Local District 2	83	98.8%	83	98.8%	83	98.8%	84	100%
Local District 3	175	94.6%	175	94.6%	174	94.1%	185	100%
Local District 4	59	98.3%	59	98.3%	59	98.3%	60	100%
Local District 5	149	99.3%	149	99.3%	150	100%	150	100%
Local District 6	38	95.0%	39	97.5%	39	97.5%	40	100%
Local District 7	155	99.4%	156	100%	156	100%	156	100%
Local District 8	182	92.9%	182	92.9%	182	92.9%	196	100%
Charters – R	50	87.7%	49	86.0%	50	87.7%	57	100%
	974	96.1%	975	96.2%	976	96.3%	1,014	100%

The suspension data examined by disability type (Table 5) demonstrates a high level of agreement for all three variables (date of suspension, number of days suspended, and reason for suspension).

Table 5. Number and Percentage of Matching Records, by Disability Type

Number of students with Matching Data	Date of Suspension		Number of Days of Suspension		Reason for Suspension		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
All Others	198	96.6%	198	96.6%	198	96.6%	205	100%
SLD-SLI	776	95.9%	777	96.0%	778	96.2%	809	100%
	974	96.1%	975	96.2%	976	96.3%	1,014	100%

Table 6 demonstrates high levels of agreement for secondary schools (middle and high). While elementary schools demonstrated lower levels of agreement; this may be primarily a result of students attending non-connected charter schools.

Table 6. Number and Percentage of Matching Records, by School Level

Number of students with Matching Data	Date of Suspension		Number of Days of Suspension		Reason for Suspension		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	N	%
Elementary	96	88.1%	97	89.0%	97	89.0%	109	100%
Middle	362	96.8%	362	96.8%	362	96.8%	374	100%
High	516	97.2%	516	97.2%	517	97.4%	531	100%
	974	96.1%	975	96.2%	976	96.3%	1,014	100%

Summary and Recommendations

Overall, the District’s suspension data for students with disabilities is accurate and reliable for determining the Districts progress with Outcome 5. The study found high levels of agreement (96%) within the suspension data for students with disabilities in the following areas: date of suspension; number of days suspended; and reason for suspensions. It is important to note that this level of accuracy may be due to the primary utilization of the Student Information System for maintaining suspension data. In addition, this data are entered and maintained in one field, thereby promoting higher levels of accuracy. With only one source for maintaining suspension data, the probability of achieving a one-to-one correspondence is likely. The study also found that non-connected sites had lower rates of agreement (approximately 87%). However, it is important to note that the enrollment of students with disabilities at non-connected sites is low thereby minimizing the overall effect of these discrepancies found within the data.

Office of the Independent Monitor

Suspension Study

School: PORTER MS

Loc Code: 8354

District: 1

District ID#	Last Name	First Name	Birthday	Grade	Eligibility:
0	N	O	5/11/1995	7	ED
Suspension Date	Correct Date	Days of Suspension	Correct Days	Reason	Correct Reason
9/24/2007	<input type="text"/>	1	<input type="text"/>	11	<input type="text"/>