

**Office of the Independent Monitor**  
*Study of the Accuracy of Home School Data for  
Students with Disabilities 2007-2008*

## **Background**

During the 2007-2008 school year, the Office of the Independent Monitor conducted a study to validate the accuracy of the District's home school data for students with disabilities. The results of this study will be used by the Independent Monitor in making a determination on the District's progress toward Outcome 8: Home School.

Outcome 8 contains several components. In summary, the outcome intends to increase the number of students with disabilities that attend their home school. The outcome's targets are stratified by two variables: disability type (SLD/SLI and all other disabilities) and specific school year or grade. The outcome consists of three parts. The first looks at students with SLD and SLI students in all grades. The second and third parts of the outcome aim to increase the number of students with all other disabilities that attend their home school and separates students by grade. The outcome was designed to promote the majority of movement to occur at the transition grades such as kindergarten, fifth and eighth grade.

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

## **Methodology**

The MCD defines a student's home school as any school a student with disabilities may attend if the student were not disabled. The study was designed to validate both the accuracy of the District's home school data to determine whether SWD are enrolled at their home school, and if the reason for attending their school was for purposes of meeting their individual needs related to their disability. It is important to note that home school data are derived from a combination of District's data systems and data fields, including: Welligent IEP system (page one); Student Information System (enrollment and permit fields); and, the Special Education Transportation Data System. The process for determining enrollment at home school and the reason for attending has been refined over the past five years by the OIM and District's Information Technology Division (ITD) based on a series of rules for filtering data fields.

Although it is important to utilize and review all sources of data that maintain enrollment information, multiple sources are likely to increase the possibility for discrepancies within the data. The validation study reviewed multiple data sources including information provided by school personnel.

To determine whether a SWD is attending a non-home school placement for reasons related to their disability, the OIM and District agreed to the following criteria: non-public school

placement; special education center placements; special education assignments or placements at District’s schools for the purpose of accessing a specific class or program otherwise not offered at their home school (i.e., non-residence schools); and non-voluntary discipline assignments referred as opportunity transfers and students attending Community Day Schools.

To validate the accuracy of the District’s home school data, the methodology of the study was guided by four research questions:

- 1.) Is the District’s data system accurate for determining home school enrollments for students with disabilities?
- 2.) Is the District’s data system accurate for reporting information regarding the reasons for attending a non-home school placement and/or home school placement, for students with disabilities?
- 3.) Do differences exist in the accuracy of the data for students with disabilities by disability type?
- 4.) Is the data accurate and reliable for making a determination for Outcome 8: Home schools?

**Sample Design**

The sample was designed to obtain a representative sample of students with disabilities based on attendance at a District school where the home school placement status may be in question, and based on the following variables: local district, disability type, and school level. The sample excluded students attending District schools where by definition the student’s placement is determined to be either a home school or special education placement. For example, charter schools are considered a student’s home school placement regardless of area of residence or disability status. In addition, students enrolled at non-public schools and special education centers are considered students not attending their home schools for reasons of a special education placement. These students were excluded from the population as the enrollment data are considered highly accurate since there exists a one-to-one correspondence of home school status and school of enrollment. Tables 1, 2, and 3 demonstrate the distribution of the home school sample.

Table 1: Home School Sample, by Disability Type

<b>Disability Type</b>	<b>Sample</b>	
	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
SLD-SLI	1,610	59.5%
ALL OTHERS	1,094	40.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2: Home School Sample, by Local District

<b>Sample</b>		
<b>District</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
1	699	25.9%
2	387	14.3%
3	289	10.7%
4	479	17.7%
5	161	6.0%
6	248	9.2%
7	261	9.7%
8	180	6.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3: Home School Sample, by School Level

<b>Sample</b>		
<b>School Level</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
Elementary	1,176	43.5%
Middle School	454	16.8%
High School	1,074	39.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Data Collection and Analyses

To determine the accuracy of the home school data, an instrument was developed (See Attachment A) and included the following data for validation: student demographic information; school of attendance; school of residence; reason for attending; Welligent page one reason for attending; SIS permit file reason for attending; and, Special Education transportation data.

Data were collected at school sites by trained research assistants. In addition to validating data obtained from the District’s data systems, information regarding enrollment and reasons for enrollment was obtained from school personnel including: school administrators responsible for special education, attendance office counselors or clerks, and special education clerks. During the pilot of the instrument, it became apparent that school personnel reports were required. In many instances school personnel knew the reason the student was attending their school, and were able to confirm data that was not accurately updated within the data systems. School personnel were also able to confirm that the student was not attending their home school, however, they were uncertain about the reason. These students were coded as unknowns. The data were then entered into a database developed by the OIM and sent to American Institutes for Research (AIR) for analyses.

## Findings

The study found that a considerable number of students with disabilities are attending a school that is not their school of residence; however, the reason for attending is unknown. The majority of students' whose reason for attending was unknown, did not appear to be enrolled at their respective school for reasons related to meeting their individual special education needs. Since the outcome requires the District's performance to be measured based on students with disabilities not attending their home school for reasons of meeting their special education needs, the data will be presented in two formats. The first will report findings based on students that are considered as unknowns as having a data match and considered attending their home schools. This method considers the original indicator (attending home school) and assumes that the unknown reason is not related to their special education need. Essentially, this method applies a reason thereby considering the original data indicator as accurate. Lastly, when discussing unknowns, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of students coded as unknowns are students that had conflicting data regarding home school; however, a decision was made based on the rules for filtering the various data indicators considering the student as attending their home school.

Since the reason for attending is an important factor for determining the District's performance, this approach to examining the data enables us to gauge the effect of the data's errors both ways. The findings will then be presented with students considered unknowns as non-matches and not attending their home school. This is a strict interpretation of the data indicator and applies a non-match status as it was confirmed by the school that the student is not attending a residence school. This analysis removes the implication of the reason for attending the non-residence school.

Both approaches are included as this may provide insight into the effect of the data errors for students with disabilities not attending their residence school for reasons unlikely to be related to their disabilities. This information may provide an alternative for looking at the overall home school data by developing a ratio that may be utilized for determining a population estimate of students not attending their home school.

It is important to reiterate that although the unknowns are considered non-matches when comparing the data indicators, the majority of these students are not considered attending their school for special education reasons. Furthermore, when examining matches, it is important to keep in mind that the data includes students identified within the sample as not attending a residence school for reasons related to their disabilities, and a confirmation of this status is also considered a match. Therefore, this data are not intended to indicate the number or percentage of students attending their home school.

Tables 4, 5 and 6 present the home school data with students with an unknown status for attending their home school reported as data matches and attending their home school.

Table 4 examines the accuracy of home school by local district. Local district 6 demonstrates the highest levels of matches (89.9%), while local district 7 (58.6%) and local district 8 (55.0%) noted the least frequent matches.

Table 4. Number and Percentage of Students with an Unknown Category considered as Matches, by Local District

Number of students with Matching Data	Match Yes		Match No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Local District 1	570	81.5%	129	18.5%	699	100%
Local District 2	305	78.8%	82	21.2%	387	100%
Local District 3	235	81.3%	54	18.7%	289	100%
Local District 4	403	84.1%	76	15.9%	479	100%
Local District 5	110	68.3%	51	31.7%	161	100%
Local District 6	223	89.9%	25	10.1%	248	100%
Local District 7	153	58.6%	108	41.4%	261	100%
Local District 8	99	55.0%	81	45.0%	180	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>77.6%</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings disaggregated by disability type demonstrate that students with eligibilities of SLD and/or SLI are more likely to have data matches than students with all other disabilities (Table 5). This may reflect that students with less intensive special education needs are more likely to be attending a school that is not their residence school for reasons unrelated to their disability.

Table 5. Number and Percentage of Students with an Unknown Category considered as Matches, by Disability Type

Number of students with Matching Data	Match Yes		Match No		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
All Others	820	75.0%	274	25.0%	1,094	100%
SLD-SLI	1,278	79.4%	332	20.6%	1,610	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>77.6%</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 demonstrates that elementary schools (71.9%) maintain lower levels of agreement of home school data than middle (78.0%) and high (83.6%) schools. This may indicate that higher rate of unknowns or non-matches attend non-residence schools at the secondary level. This would affect the data within this analysis as this would boost the number of matches to indicate a higher percentage of data matches at the secondary school level.

Table 6. Number and Percentage of Students with an Unknown Category considered as Matches, by School Level

Number of students with Matching Data	Match		Match		Total	
	Yes		No			
School Level	n	%	n	%	N	%
Elementary	846	71.9%	330	28.1%	1,176	100%
Middle	354	78.0%	100	22.0%	454	100%
High	898	83.6%	176	16.4%	1,074	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,098</b>	<b>77.6%</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>22.4%</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

Tables 7-9 present the home school data with unknowns considered as not matching or not attending their school of residence. This removes the assumption placed on those students considered as unknowns that the reason for attending a non-home school is related to their disability. The study found that when the reason for not attending their home school was not considered, there appears to be higher levels of disagreement within the District’s data systems.

Table 7 examines the data by local district and shows that local district 7 (34.5%) and local district 8 (41.7%) have the lowest levels of agreement while local district 6 (74.6%) and local district 1 (77.7%) have the highest level of agreement.

Table 7. Number and Percentage of Students with an Unknown Category considered as Non-matches, by Local District

Number of students with Matching Data	Match		Match		Total	
	Yes		No			
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Local District 1	543	77.7%	156	22.3%	699	100%
Local District 2	259	66.9%	128	33.1%	387	100%
Local District 3	165	57.1%	124	42.9%	289	100%
Local District 4	222	46.3%	257	53.7%	479	100%
Local District 5	76	47.2%	85	52.8%	161	100%
Local District 6	185	74.6%	63	25.4%	248	100%
Local District 7	90	34.5%	171	65.5%	261	100%
Local District 8	75	41.7%	105	58.3%	180	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>1,089</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8 demonstrates the accuracy of the home school data by disability type. As is noted, the data appears to have higher levels of disagreement for students with disabilities with eligibilities of SLD and SLI. This may be indicative of a larger percentage of students attending a non-residence school for reasons unrelated to their disability.

Table 8. Number and Percentage of Students with an Unknown Category considered as Non-matches, by Disability Type

Number of students with Matching Data	Match		Match		Total – N	
	Yes		No			
Disability Type	n	%	n	%	N	%
All Others	719	65.7%	375	34.3%	1,094	100%
SLD-SLI	896	55.7%	714	44.3%	1,610	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>1,089</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

It appears high school students have a slightly higher percentage of matches within the home school data for students with disabilities (Table 9).

Table 9. Number and Percentage of Students with an Unknown Category considered as Non-matches, by School Level

Number of students with Matching Data	Match		Match		Total – N	
	Yes		No			
School Level	n	%	n	%	N	%
Elementary	692	58.8%	484	41.2%	1,176	100%
Middle	259	57.0%	195	43.0%	454	100%
High	664	61.8%	410	38.2%	1,074	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>1,089</b>	<b>40.3%</b>	<b>2,704</b>	<b>100%</b>

The majority of students that are unknowns are students that have an indicator that identifies them attending their home school. For students with indicators that identify them as not attending their home school for reasons of special education, the data appears to be quite accurate. For those students with either special education and/or opportunity transfer indicators, there was a 96% level of agreement (Table 13).

Table 10. Number and Percentage of SWD with a Data Indicator of Not Attending Home School, by OIM Reason

OIM Reason	Students	Percentage
Opportunity Transfer	35	5.5%
Special Education	574	90.5%
Non-SPED	25	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>100%</b>

As noted, the majority of errors are observed for students with an indicator that considers them as students attending their school of residence. For these students, the primary source of error is from the page one of the Welligent. For students whose page one of Welligent stated that they were attending their school of residence, approximately 33% were attending their respective school for special education or disciplinary reasons (Table 11). This high degree of inaccurate

data may be a result of the time elements associated with the page one indicator for determining home school placement. Page one contains reason for attending home school and is captured at the time of the IEP. Page one does not reflect the recommended placement determined by the IEP team. This means that the data may have been accurate at the time of the IEP, however, at the time of the OIM review, the placement observed was that of a non-resident school.

Table 11. Number and Percentage of Students with Welligent School of Residence Indicators by OIM Reason

<b>OIM Reason</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Opportunity Transfer	62	4.7%
Special Education	376	28.2%
Non-SPED or Home school	893	67.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,331</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Summary and Recommendations

The study found inaccuracies within the District’s home school data; however, many of these discrepancies appear to be attributed to factors unrelated to the student’s disability. This means that although the study identified students with disabilities not attending their home schools as determined by District boundaries, in many cases they were not attending that school for purposes of access to a specific special education program or service. In many cases, schools would confirm that a student was not attending their home school, but were not certain as to the reason why the student was attending that school. Upon further inquiry, in many cases it was determined a child’s address had changed resulting in a different home school as determined by boundary areas. These changes were either unknown to school personnel or were known but students were granted informal permission to remain at that school without the required documentation or update within the District’s data system. In some cases new schools had opened or were set to open changing the boundary area of the student’s address resulting in the student no longer attending their home school. These circumstances are not considered related to the student’s disability and similar to those experienced by students without disabilities.

Another common source of error was related to out-of-date home school information from page one of the IEP. Page one of the IEP maintains information of the student’s school placement at the time of the IEP and may not reflect the recommended placement made by the IEP team and/or current placement. In some instances, page one of the IEP maintained inaccurate information related to the reason for the student attending that school. This may be due to a limitation of choices offered on page one of the IEP, as well as the lack of edits to prevent the inaccurate selection of the reason for attending that school.

Overall, despite the discrepancies found for students attending a school for reasons related to their disability, the data are fairly reliable for determining progress with Outcome 8. It is important to reiterate the multiple factors that may be associated with these discrepancies such as: multiple data systems that maintain enrollment information; high rates of student mobility; variations in practices at school sites for maintaining and updating enrollment data; the opening of new schools resulting in the restructuring of home school boundaries; and, limitations for



documenting reasons for attending a school within the District's Welligent data system. These factors present considerable challenges to an organization with the size and breadth of the LAUSD in maintaining accurate and up to date enrollment data. Despite these challenges, the District would benefit from improving the consistency for maintaining and updating enrollment information by school site personnel, as well as the application of the various enrollment permits offered by the District through a formal process as mandated by District policy.

Office of the Independent Monitor

Home School

District ID#	Last Name	First Name	Birthday	Grade	Eligibility:	IEP Date
0	D	D	4/26/1997	4	SLD	12/5/2007

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Attend School: LOYOLA VILLAGE EL      Att Loc: 5014      Att District: 3

Res School: 61ST ST EL      Res Loc: 6808      Res District: 7

Home School Reason: WELL RES <> WELL ATT /MAGNET

Page 1 Reason: MAGNET      School Permit:

District Indicator:       OIM Indicator:       Transportation Permit:

TS Attend:      TS Res:      District Permit:

Trans Match:

Determination:

<input type="checkbox"/> Attending Home School	<input type="checkbox"/> Exit	<input type="checkbox"/> Withdraw	<input type="checkbox"/> Drop
<input type="checkbox"/> Not Attending Home School			

OIM\_Reason:l

<input type="checkbox"/> Capacity <input type="checkbox"/> Charter <input type="checkbox"/> Child Care <input type="checkbox"/> Magnet <input type="checkbox"/> Open Enrollment <input type="checkbox"/> Permit <input type="checkbox"/> PWT <input type="checkbox"/> Residence <input type="checkbox"/> School of Choice <hr/> <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity <input type="checkbox"/> Special Education	Comments:
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