

Office of the Independent Monitor

October 24, 2012

*Study of the Accuracy of District Data on Placement
in the Least Restrictive Environment 2011-2012*

Outcome 7A focuses on students with disabilities (SWD) other than specific learning disability (SLD), speech and language impairment (SLI) and other health impaired (OHI). This outcome requires the District to increase the number of SWD in the general education setting to 40% or more of the school day. Since time in the general education setting is maintained within the Welligent system based on the time spent in special education, 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 day¹.

Outcome 7A: Placement of Students with Disabilities (Ages 6-18) with All Other Eligibilities excluding SLI, SLD and OHI. The District will demonstrate a ratio of not less than 51% of students placed in the combined categories of 0-20% and 21-60%, and not more than 49% of students placed in the 61-100% category utilizing instructional minutes as the methodology. In determining whether the District has achieved this outcome, any fraction percentage of .51 or above shall be rounded up to its nearest whole number.

This study examines the accuracy of the District's least restrictive environment (LRE) data used to determine the District's progress on Outcome 7A. The study was guided by the following research 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 discrepancies between the percent of time in special education documented in Welligent and in the student schedule data impact the overall calculation of percent of time in special education for Outcome 7?

Methodology

IEP data on the percentage of time in special education were retrieved for students with all other disabilities in the Welligent system. The Welligent data were verified against the percentage of time found in the students' most current IEP² (if different) and classroom schedules detailing the time spent in special education. This information was then compared to determine if any discrepancies between the two resulted in a change between the time categories associated with this outcome (e.g., more than 60% or less than 60%). This year, the District required schools to compare IEP LRE times with class schedules of all students. This data was collected on a

¹ For the purpose of the Modified Consent Decree (MCD), time in the LRE is for instructional time only. This differs from both federal and state definitions of LRE time, which consist of three time categories (0-20%, 21-60% and 61-100%) and include non-instructional time such as recess and lunch.

² In some instances, students have an IEP in the school file that differs from the Welligent data, which is retrieved at a set point prior to sampling. To accommodate for the timeframe between the sampling and file review, information is obtained from the updated IEP, as this may reflect the LRE time more accurately.

validation form and returned to the District and was an additional data source utilized to examine discrepancies between the IEP LRE time and classroom schedules.

Sample Design

The study consisted of two samples drawn in February 2012 and April 2012. The samples were stratified by four variables: disability type, LRE time category, local school district and school level. The study oversampled both for students with a percentage of time of less than 60% in special education and those with a time between 56-60%. This was done because previous studies identified trends in the number of students with inaccurate data for this category and time range as reported by Welligent. Therefore, the oversampling allowed more focus on these areas to better determine the impact on the District’s performance on this outcome. It also identified improvements in category matches for students who had newer IEPs as a result of the District’s validation efforts.

Tables 1 and 2 show the final distributions of the overall LRE sample (n=1,616) across local school districts and school type. Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of schools (n=581) by school type.

Table 1: Distribution of Students with All Other Disabilities by Local District

Local School District	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
1	203	12.6
2	210	13.0
3	176	10.9
4	185	11.5
5	154	9.5
6	110	6.8
7	131	8.1
8	181	11.2
NPS	145	9.0
R – Charter	70	4.3
S – Options	3	0.2
T – I Division	48	3.0
Total	1,616	100.0

Table 2. School Level Distribution of Students with All Other Disabilities by School Level

School Level	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Elementary	790	48.9
Middle	299	18.5
High	266	16.5
Special Centers	118	7.3
NPS	143	8.9
Total	1,616	100.0

Table 3: Number of Schools in Analysis by Local District

Local School District	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools
1	72	12.4
2	73	12.6
3	72	12.4
4	73	10.0
5	58	10.0
6	35	6.0
7	38	6.5
8	59	10.2
NPS	44	7.6
R – Charter	36	6.2
S – Options	1	0.2
T – I Division	20	3.4
Total	581	100.0

Table 4. Number of Schools in Analysis by School Level

School Level	Number of Schools	Percentage of Schools
Elementary	353	60.8
Middle	83	14.3
High	89	15.3
Special Centers	14	2.4
NPS	42	7.2
Total	581	100.0

Table 5 shows the distribution of students in the sample and overall population by LRE category. As noted above, students who spend less time than 60% in special education were oversampled.

Table 5. Proportions of Students in Sample and Population by LRE Placement Category

School Level	Sample		Population	
	N	%	N	%
Less than 60% in SPED	1,045	64.7	8,779	50.7
More than 60% in SPED	571	35.3	8,519	49.3
Total	1,616	100.0	17,298	100.0

Data Collection and Analysis

Data including student demographic information and the percentage of time in the special education setting were uploaded centrally and placed on a data collection instrument developed by the OIM (Attachment A). The data were verified through a review of the students' most current IEP and the IEP identified at the time of the sampling. Classroom schedules detailing the time spent either in the general or special education setting and a roster of special education teachers also were collected. Additionally, validation forms were requested from the District for students in the sample.

Collected data were used to create student files. Each file contained a report on the number of instructional weekly minutes reported by school staff, a completed data collection instrument, validation form (if available) and each student's schedule. Data from these sources were analyzed to determine the total number of special education minutes each student received, and then transferred to a data summary sheet (Attachment B). Each student file was reviewed twice by two separate reviewers in order to establish inter-rater reliability and to ensure consistency of schedule and IEP data analyses. This information was then entered into a database and sent to the American Institutes for Research (AIR) for analysis.

Findings

To determine if the LRE data were reliable when evaluating the District’s performance on this outcome, data were analyzed to examine if inaccuracies found between the Welligent System and students’ class schedules impacted the number of students in each LRE time category. Since the two LRE categories are based on a broad range of time (e.g., less than 60%) in the special education setting, inaccuracies may exist that have no impact on the District’s performance.

Information of exact data matches demonstrates the accuracy of the Welligent LRE data. To determine the extent of exact matches, the LRE Welligent data were compared to both the most current IEP and class schedules. While it may be expected that the Welligent data and classroom schedule match, there are many variables that limit such correspondence. The highest levels of exact agreement are noted between the LRE data reported by Welligent at the time of the sampling and the most current IEP (66.9%) (Table 6). This finding shows that approximately one-third of the IEPs in the Welligent system were updated since the time of sampling. This demonstrates the dynamic nature of LRE data and its impact on time as IEP meetings are held daily and the system is constantly updated. Exact matches were considerably lower between the Welligent data and class schedules (32.7%) and IEP and class schedules (31.8%). To clarify, these findings indicate a low level of a one-to-one correspondence with the specific time reported in the Welligent data and class schedules, and is not indicative of a category match.

Table 6. Number and Percentages of Students with LRE Time Exact Matches by Welligent, IEP and School Schedule

Exact Matches	Welligent ³ – IEP ⁴		Welligent – Schedule		IEP – Schedule	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Matches	1,081	66.9	524	32.7	510	31.8
Non-Matches	535	33.1	1,078	67.3	1,092	68.2
Total	1,616	100.0	1,602*	100.0	1,602*	100.0

* 14 students were missing percentage of time from the schedule.

As noted above, information between the LRE data from the Welligent system and schedules have the lowest rates of exact matches. This occurs because of two primary reasons. The first is related to minor programming nuances at schools which limit the ability of achieving an exact match. This means that in some cases, LRE time is an estimated fixed percent. For example, 60% of time may translate into 58% when programming factors are considered. Secondary schools may have class periods that differ in length (e.g., 54 minutes, 58 minutes, 64 minutes) and an equivalent number of periods during the day (five). Due to these minor differences, the total number of minutes may not translate exactly into the percentage entered into the Welligent IEP.

The second reason is due to non-programmatic inaccuracies between the Welligent IEP data system and the class schedule. This means that schools may enter an LRE percent of time in the Welligent system that varies considerably from the time reported on the class schedule. For

³ Welligent refers to the LRE time obtained from IEPs at the time of the sampling.

⁴ IEP refers to the LRE time obtained from the student’s most recent IEP held after the sample date.

example, the Welligent system will report a student in the special education setting for 40% of the time while the class schedule shows that a student is in the special education setting for 80% of the time. This factor is the primary area of focus for determining if the inaccuracies within the Welligent IEP system impact the District’s performance on this outcome. To reduce the impact of this factor and improve performance, the District required schools to conduct a discrepancy analysis on the validation form and identify students with category discrepancies. For these students, schools were instructed to either program classes to reflect the IEP, or change the IEP to align with the schedule. The impact of this effort on the accuracy of the Welligent data will be discussed below.

To determine whether the Welligent data on time spent in the special education setting were reliable for making a determination of Outcome 7A, the discrepancies must not result in a shift in category. For example, if data from the Welligent system indicate 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% of 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 and thereby would have no impact on the performance of the outcome.

To account for minor programming differences, percent of time was examined by time categories (less than 60% and more than 60%) and the information source. When the LRE time data were compared by category and source, class schedules indicate considerably fewer students are placed in special education settings for less than 60% of the day than what the Welligent and IEP (newer IEPs) sources represent (39.8% schedules vs. 64.7% Welligent and 66.0% IEP) (Table 7). This means that approximately one-third of the students reported by Welligent as being in the special education setting for less than 60% of the day had schedules that placed them in the 60% or more category. This finding is indicative of the overall impact the inaccuracies have on utilizing the Welligent LRE data when determining the District’s performance on Outcome 7A.

Table 7. Number and Percentages of Students in Two Reporting Categories by Information Source

	Welligent		IEP		Schedule	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 60%	1,045	64.7	1,066	66.0	638	39.8
More than 60%	571	35.3	550	34.0	964	60.2
Total	1,616	100.0	1,616	100.0	1,602*	100.0

*14 students were missing percentage of time from the schedule.

Table 8 shows how placement information matched by reporting categories. While agreement was high for data found between IEPs, when compared to schedules, agreements were noted for slightly over half of the records observed (IEP-Schedule, 55.4%, Less than 60% and 51.2%, more than 60%). This shows that many records within Welligent contain inaccuracies with the LRE time when compared to class schedules.

Table 8. Number and Percentages of Students in Two Reporting Categories Placement Information by Information Source

Category Matches	Information Match		
	Welligent-IEP	Welligent-Schedule	IEP-Schedule
Less than 60%	1,008 of 1,130	602 of 1,072	604 of 1,091
More than 60%	513 of 608	530 of 1,000	511 of 998
Less than 60%	91.4%	56.2%	55.4%
More than 60%	84.4%	53.0%	51.2%

To better identify where the areas of agreement are higher, LRE data were examined using the federal reporting categories. These categories better show both ends of integration, since students spending time of less than 20% in the special education setting typically receive minimal supports such as resource specialist program (RSP) or designated instructional services (DIS). Students in the more than 60% category usually spend the majority of their day in the special day program classroom. Those students with between 20%-60% indicated on their IEPs are students with various levels of integration, as some may receive RSP support while others may be in a special day program with a couple of periods of general education integration.

Table 9 shows that students in the special education setting of less than 20% have higher levels of agreements between the Welligent, IEP and class schedules. Of the 424 students in the sample with an LRE time in this category, 383 students had schedules reflecting this level of integration with a 90.3% level of agreement. This means that the data have higher levels of accuracy for students who spend a significant time in the general education setting. For those students who spend the majority of their day in a special day program, an additional 393 (68.8%) had schedules showing time in the special education setting of more than 60%. The majority of these students had LRE times between 20-60% in their IEPs. Therefore, the highest levels of inaccuracies were for students within this time range.

Of the 621 students in the sample showing Welligent time in this category, only 255 (41.0%) had schedules reflecting placement within this range. This is important since inaccuracies within the data in this range may have a larger impact on the performance of this outcome. Overall, this analysis shows that the majority of data inaccuracies exist within the 20-60% time category.

Table 9. Number and Percentages of Students in the Federal Reporting LRE Categories by Information Source

Time	Source					
	Welligent		IEP		Schedule	
Less than 20%	424	26.2	437	27.0	383	23.9
Between 20 than 60%	621	38.4	629	38.9	255	15.9
More than 60%	571	35.3	550	34.0	964	60.2
Total	1,616	100.0	1,616	100.0	1,602*	100.0

*14 students were missing percentage of time from the schedule.

Table 10 breaks down the category matches by the federal reporting categories. This illustrates the high level of agreement between IEPs and Schedules (82.5%) for students in the less than 20% category, and shows the high level of inaccuracies that impact those in the 20-60% category with less than one-third showing a category match between the most recent IEPs and schedules (29.3%).

Table 10. Number and Percentages of Students in the Federal Reporting Categories Placement Information by Information Source

Category Matches	Information Match		
	Welligent-IEP	Welligent-Schedule	IEP-Schedule
Less than 20%	397 of 464	362 of 439	369 of 447
Between 20 than 60%	573 of 677	193 of 680	199 of 680
More than 60%	513 of 608	530 of 1,000	487 of 998
Less than 20%	85.6%	82.8%	82.5%
Between 20 than 60%	84.6%	28.4%	29.3%
More than 60%	84.4%	53.0%	51.2%

As noted earlier, inaccuracies may be due to two primary factors, one of which is that schools simply enter an arbitrary LRE time to meet this outcome. In past years, a statement within the Welligent system required IEP teams to acknowledge when a student's LRE time exceeded 60% or more in special education. While this statement was removed two years ago, the study continues to find evidence that schools report LRE times within the 56%-60% range while student schedules showed higher amounts of time in the special education classroom.

Table 11 examines the LRE data of students with Welligent times in the range of 56-60% to determine if these practices continued to exist or if these discrepancies were due to minor programming factors. If the Welligent IEP stated an LRE time of 56% and the classroom schedule reflected 62% in the special education setting, this discrepancy may be attributed to minor programming variables. However, if the same student had a classroom schedule that

reflected 82% of the day in the special education setting, this may be the result of inaccurate reporting.

Of the 504 students whose IEP indicated an LRE time in the range of 56-60% in the special education setting, 149 (29.6%) had class schedules with a percent of time of less than 60%, while an additional 28 students (5.6%) had times between 60-63%⁵. This is a slight improvement from last year, considering that 54.7% of the students in the sample have schedules of less than 71% in special education, meaning many are being integrated in general education for at least 30% of the instructional day.

Moreover, the schedules of 45.2% of the students showed time in the special education setting for over 71% of the day. While this is a decrease from last year (60.2%), these discrepancies continue to demonstrate that schools continue to enter an LRE time of less than 60% without considering the student's classroom schedule.

Table 11. Number and Percentage of Students with a Percent of LRE Time of 56-60% in the Special Education Setting Reported by Welligent by Percent of LRE Time Reported on Schedule

Percent of time in special education according to schedule						
	60% or less	More than 60% to less than 63%	63% to less than 71%	71% to less than 81%	81% or greater	Total Over 60%
56-60% time in special education according to IEP						
N=504	149	28	99	92	136	355
%	29.6	5.6	18.2	18.2	27.0	70.4

To better examine the accuracy of the data and placement of students in the general education setting, the data were analyzed after removing students from non-public schools and special education centers. Since these students attend schools that have populations that consist of 100% of students with disabilities, the removal of these students provides a clearer picture of student placement on campuses where students have an opportunity for integration.

The data indicate that less than half (47.6%) of students attending general education campuses have placements in special education for less than 60% of the instructional day. This means these students are participating in the general education program for 40% or more of the day. However, the data highlight the discrepancy between LRE time in the most recent IEP and class schedule for students in the less than 60% category (IEP 77.4% vs. Schedule 47.6%).

⁵ A 63% threshold was used to account for minor programming differences.

Table 12. Number and Percentages of Students in Two Reporting Categories by Information Source (Excluding NPS and SPED)

	Welligent		IEP		Schedule	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than 60%	1,035	76.4	1,049	77.4	638	47.6
More than 60%	320	23.6	306	22.6	703	52.4
Total	1,355	100.0	1,355	100.0	1,341*	100.0

*14 students were missing percentage of time from the schedule.

To gain insight into the data inaccuracies and LRE placement by school level, the data were analyzed to compare elementary, middle and high schools (Table 13). The data show that Welligent reported higher levels of integration (60% or less) for high (80.6%) and middle (78.2%) school students compared to elementary (76.0%) students. Similarly, students in high schools had a higher rate of schedules that showed placement in special education settings for 60% or less of the day than middle and elementary school students (high 56.6% vs. 49.8% middle and 43.4% elementary school). This finding indicates that data inaccuracies continue to be observed at all school levels, with elementary schools demonstrating higher discrepancies.

Table 13. Number and Percentages of Students in Two Reporting Categories By Information Source (Excludes NPS and SPED centers)

	Elementary		Middle		High	
	IEP	Schedule	IEP	Schedule	IEP	Schedule
Less than 60%	600	340	208	131	241	167
More than 60%	190	443	58	132	65	58
Total N	790	783	266	263	299	295
Less than 60%	76.0%	43.4%	78.2%	49.8%	81.0%	56.4%
More than 60%	24.1%	56.6%	21.8%	50.2%	19.0%	43.6%
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Validation Efforts

During the 2011-2012 school year, the District engaged in efforts to validate the LRE data on students' IEPs. This consisted of requiring all schools to examine the LRE time in the IEP compared to the students' classroom schedules. If discrepancies between an IEP and schedule were found, schools were instructed to either make changes to a student's schedule to align with the IEP, or to hold an IEP and change the LRE time to reflect the student's program. For example, if the IEP indicated a student was in special education for 30% of the day, and the schedule showed placement for 70% of the day, schools were required to correct this discrepancy by aligning the schedule or holding an IEP meeting to change the LRE time to reflect placement.

The following analysis focuses on cases where a validation form was received or for those with a newer IEP than the original sample⁶. This was done to determine if the validation efforts had an impact on improving the quality of the data. It is important to point out that a validation form may have been completed and returned prior to another IEP being held. This means schools may have acknowledged a discrepancy, but may not have had an opportunity during the study’s timeframe to align the LRE time.

Table 14 shows the category matches for students with a validation form and those with newer IEPs. The data indicate that category matches increased once a newer IEP was held. For students in the less than 60% group, the validation group had a match rate of 54.9% while those with newer IEPs increased to 65.2%. Moreover, those in the more than 60% category increased from 35.2% (validation group) to 56.1% (Newer IEP). This finding indicates that these efforts resulted in changes to the students’ LRE time in the IEP to show a more restrictive placement than reported in the previous IEP. This finding confirms the premise that schools enter a lower LRE time in the IEP which may be motivated by the desire to meet the target of the outcome.

Table 14. Number and Percentages of Students in the Federal Reporting Categories Placement Information by Information Source

Category Matches	Information Match	
	IEP-schedule: Validation Group	IEP-Schedule: Newer IEP Group
Less than 60%	474 of 864	304 of 486
More than 60%	212 of 602	233 of 415
Less than 60%	54.9%	65.2%
More than 60%	35.2%	56.1%

To obtain a clearer view of the improvements in data accuracy, the following analysis breaks down category matches of LRE time by federal reporting categories. The data indicate that discrepancies continue to be concentrated for students who are in special education settings of 20-60% and more than 60%. Improvement was noted for students in the more than 60% category, 35.2% (validation group) to 56.1% (newer IEP group). However, despite having had a newer IEP, only approximately one-third of the students in special education between 20-60% of the instructional day had IEPs and schedules that matched within this range. This finding suggests that schools continue to inaccurately enter an LRE time in the IEP that does not reflect a student’s more restrictive placement.

⁶ This includes cases with newer IEPs that did not have a validation form returned. These were included to determine the effect of the outreach and notification to schools for aligning IEPs and schedules.

Table 15. Number and Percentages of Students in the Federal Reporting Categories Placement Information by Information Source

Category Matches	Information Match	
	IEP-Schedule: Validation Group	IEP-Schedule: Newer IEP Group
Less than 20%	281 of 331	184 of 219
Between 20 than 60%	163 of 563	97 of 290
More than 60%	212 of 602	233 of 415
Less than 20%	84.9%	84.0%
Between 20 than 60%	28.9%	33.4%
More than 60%	35.2%	56.1%

Summary

The findings of this validation study continue to show that the Welligent LRE data are unreliable for making a determination for this outcome. However, some improvement was noted in the accuracy of data for students with newer IEPs, particularly for those in more restrictive settings of more than 60%. While this finding does not help the District in its efforts to make progress toward the outcome, it does show a step in the right direction for aligning what is agreed upon in the IEP and the student’s instructional program.

While the District’s commitment to addressing and resolving these data discrepancies is commendable, additional efforts are required during the 2012-2013 school year. The District took a sound approach to correcting this data by requiring schools to appropriately place students regardless of the time indicated in the IEP, unless it was deemed appropriate. The District should continue to require schools to compare the LRE time and class schedules to further improve the accuracy of the Welligent data. The District should consider revising the IEP document or process to better document the instructional classes where students will be in the general education setting.

Least Restrictive Environment

Student in Other

Page 1

District ID#	Last Name	First Name	Birthday	Grade	Current IEP Date 6/17/2011	IEP Date if different:
Attend School: FLOURNOY EL		Local District: 7		Carlson Student:		
IEP Meeting Location: _____						

Page 4

Eligibility: AUT Eligibility if different: _____

FAPE PT2

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"/>	_____	_____	_____

FAPE PT1

Page 8 Missing Welligent Percent of Time: Curent Percent of Time:

FAPE PT3

Gen Ed RSP SDC (Minutes per Week): _____ DIS Gen Ed/Inclusion % of time: _____

FAPE PT4

In MDO Study

Sample: 2/1/2012

LRE Data Summary Sheet (2011-2012)

Name of Student: _____

Eligibility: _____

School: _____

Check if different from instrument

IEP Date: _____

Check if different from instrument

Grade: _____

If information is not available, please mark N/A

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

Elementary and Pre-K

_____ Total # of SPED Minutes in IEP
For SDP Total = IEP FAPE Pt.1+2+3+4

IEP FAPE

Total # Pt.2 _____
Total # Pt.1&3 _____
Total # Pt. 4 _____

_____ Total # of SPED Minutes from Schedule
Total # SPED = SDP Classroom/RSP + DIS

Total # SDP Classroom _____
Total # DIS _____
Total # RSP _____

Secondary – Middle and High School

_____ Total # of SPED Minutes in IEP
For SDP Total = IEP FAPE Pt.1+2+3+4

IEP FAPE

Total # Pt.2 _____
Total # Pt.1&3 _____
Total # Pt.4 _____

_____ Total # of SPED Minutes from Schedule
Total # Minutes = [(# Periods x length of period +
(Total HR min x 5)]

Length of Period _____
of Sped periods _____
Mins Hr x 5 _____
DIS excluding APE _____

_____ Total % **OIM Schedule** (Schedule minutes/Policy Minutes)

_____ Total % **OIM Welligent** (Directly from IEP)

_____ Total % **OIM Current** (IEP minutes/Policy Minutes)

_____ Total % **District Current** (Directly from instrument)

_____ Total % **District Validation Welligent** (Section I) _____ minutes

_____ Total % **District Validation Schedule** (Section III) _____ minutes

_____ Action Not Required
_____ Action Required

_____ Prescription appears to be incorrect due to a blank field in the minutes