

The District of Columbia State Education Office

Census of Student Enrollment of the District of Columbia Public Schools and Public Charter Schools



As of October 5, 2001

TCBA

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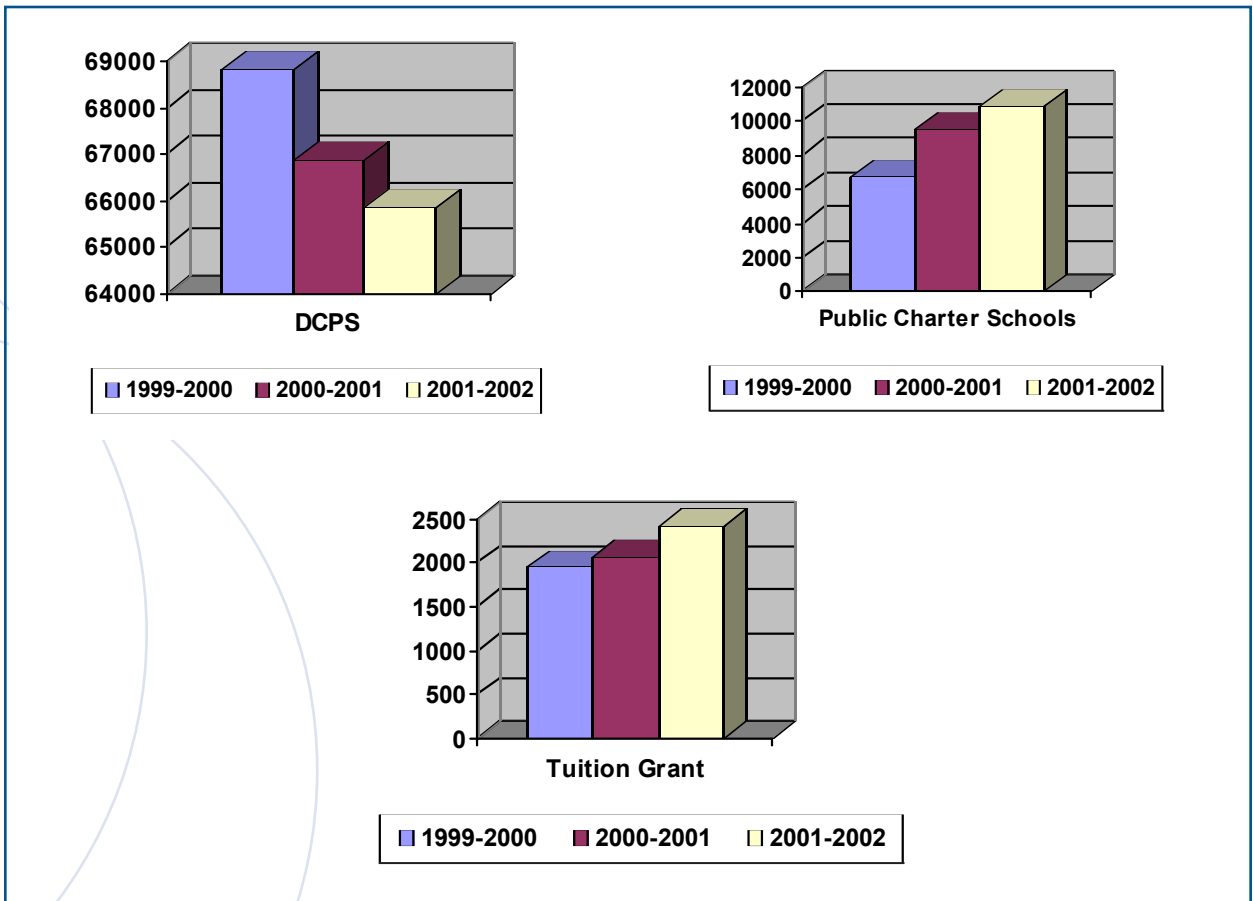
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Executive Summary

Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio & Associates, P.C. (TCBA) was retained by the D.C. State Education Office (the SEO) to conduct a full census of the October 5, 2001, student enrollment for the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and public charter schools in the District of Columbia.

This was the fifth year that TCBA conducted the enrollment audit; however, it was the first year that the audit included a 100% verification of student enrollment and residency files. As in prior years, we found only minor differences from the enrollment figures published by DCPS or submitted by the public charter schools. While there has been marked improvement at the public charter schools, the growing number of students attending public charter schools makes it imperative that these schools have the automated tools necessary to monitor enrollment, attendance, and residency. In addition, the number of special education students being placed in non-DCPS schools (Tuition Grant) has increased almost 25% over the past two years. Our confirmation process identified significant discrepancies in DCPS records for this student population. The following charts depict the migration of students from DCPS to public charter schools over the past three years as well as the growth in Tuition Grant students.

Chart 1: 3-Year Enrollment Trend



Residency verification continues to be an issue. There were 1,732 students included in the enrollment count for whom proof of residency provided by the schools was inadequate or unavailable. However, for the majority of these students, the student information system showed that proper residency documentation had been obtained. This signifies weaknesses in both the procedures for obtaining valid proof as well as the procedures for maintaining accurate student information.

A report such as this typically brings attention to discrepancies and improper adherence to policies. However, we would like to note that a number of schools had no or few enrollment or residency issues remaining after the resolution process, signifying good administrative practices and cooperation with the census process.

We appreciate the cooperation we have received from the SEO, DCPS personnel, and staff at the public charter schools. It was an exciting opportunity to participate in the District's first enrollment census.

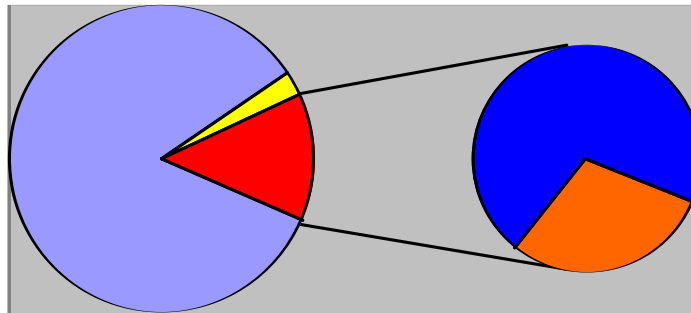
Census Highlights

Thompson, Cobb, Bazilio & Associates, P.C. (TCBA) was retained by the D.C. State Education Office to conduct a census of the annual student enrollment count of the DCPS and public charter schools in the District of Columbia for the School Year (SY) 2001-2002 as of October 5, 2001. The census included a 100% verification of all students enrolled in DCPS and public charter schools. In addition to the enrollment verification, TCBA reviewed each student file to ensure that there is proper documentation to support residency, special education and English language proficiency designations.

Enrollment

Our actual student count as of October 5, 2001, was 78,694. Chart 2 (*below*) depicts the allocation of the total enrollment. Attachments 1 and 2 provide the detail by grade for each type of school and each individual school, respectively.

Chart 2: Allocation of Total Enrollment



■ DCPS ■ Tuition Grant ■ PCS - BOE ■ PCS - PCSB

Table 1 (*on the following page*) shows the enrollment count for DCPS schools and tuition grant students compared to the Official Membership Report and for public charter schools compared to the enrollment information submitted to their chartering authorities. DCPS established criteria through various memoranda and guidelines for determining and reporting membership. Our census was conducted with reference to these procedures as they applied to both DCPS and the public charter schools. The enrollment counts shown in the table have not been adjusted for students who had not proven residency. See Table 2 for the breakdown of students' residency status. Attachments 3 and 4 provide the detail comparison by grade for each type of school and each individual school, respectively.

Table 1: Enrollment Comparison

	Students Present	Absent and Counted	Total	Membership Report	Difference
DCPS Schools	57,052	8,769	65,821	66,030	(209)
BOE Public Charter Schools	2,402	561	2,963	3,041	(78)
PCSB Public Charter Schools	5,979	1,737	7,716	7,798	(82)
Total Public Schools	65,433	11,067	76,500	76,869	(369)
Tuition Grant			2,194	2,419	(225)
Total			78,694	79,288	(594)

Residency

We reviewed the District Residency Verification Form (Residency Form) for every student included in the census, to the extent available. During the initial review, we identified students for whom we had not seen adequate residency documentation. The schools were given an opportunity to provide the missing information. Table 2 summarizes the final results of the residency review. The "Unresolved" column includes students for whom we were not provided the necessary documentation to make a determination of residency status. The enrollment totals shown in Table 1 have not been adjusted for residency. Attachment 5 provides the detail by school.

Table 2: Residency

	Resident	Non-Resident	Unresolved	Total (a)
DCPS Schools	64,250	47	1,524	65,821
BOE Public Charter Schools	2,880		83	2,963
PCSB Public Charter Schools	7,591		125	7,716
Total	74,721	47	1,732	76,500

(a) Residency documentation was not reviewed for Tuition Grant students; therefore, they are not included in Table 2.

We identified 47 students as Nonresidents, all of whom are paying tuition. Of the 47, however, two had Residency Forms on file indicating that the required proof of District residency had been provided even though the address on the Annual Student Enrollment Form was other than the District. Because the two students are paying tuition, the completed Residency Forms suggest improper form completion rather than violation of the residency policy. Table 3 is a summary of the tuition assessments for the 47 identified nonresident students.

Table 3: Tuition Assessments

Grade	Number of Students	Tuition Assessed (per DCPS)
Pre-Kindergarten	2	\$10,226
Kindergarten	3	15,339
1st	2	12,036
2nd	2	12,036
4th	2	12,036
5th	1	6,018
9th	9	59,634
10th	15	92,400
11th	6	36,960
12th	5	30,800
Total	47	\$287,485

Non-DCPS Day and Residential Programs

Students with special needs who have been placed in schools outside of DCPS, including day and residential programs and surrounding counties, are referred to as Tuition Grant students. Using school information provided by the DCPS Division of Special Education, we sent letters to each of the non-DCPS schools requesting enrollment information as of October 5, 2001. Table 4 summarizes the results. Attachment 6 provides the summary by school.

Table 4: Tuition Grant Confirmation Results

	Per SIS	Confirmed Count
Confirmations Received:		
Agrees with SIS	1,999	1,999
Does Not Agree with SIS (b)	338	
Additional Students		201
Duplicates (a)	(4)	(3)
Confirms Not Received	86	
Total Tuition Grant Students Reported	2,419	2,197
Federally Funded (b)	(53)	(3)
Total Tuition Grant Students	2,366	2,194

- (a) There were four duplicates in SIS data showing students at both a DCPS school and a non-DCPS school. The confirmation results also revealed two other students identified as being enrolled at different non-DCPS schools and one at a public charter school.
- (b) Tuition for 53 students attending Kendall-Gaulladet school is federally funded, so they should not be included in the number reported for students in non-DCPS schools for which DCPS is paying tuition. Three of the 53 were included on the confirmation received from the school.

The results of the confirmation process highlight significant discrepancies between the records of DCPS and records maintained by the individual schools. TCBA sent confirmation requests to 174 schools servicing a total of 2,419 students. Although we made repeated requests, both in writing and by telephone, we did not receive responses from 19 of those schools, representing 86 students according to SIS. For the confirmations received, we compared each student reported as attending that school to the student data in SIS. For the initial comparison, we assumed the confirmation received from the school to be complete and accurate. We then provided the list of discrepancies to the DCPS Division of Special Education for resolution. Using information provided by the DCPS Division of Special Education, we adjusted the census accordingly. For instance, although the letters sent to the schools requested enrollment data at October 5, 2001, some schools provided the enrollment at the date of their response. Using enrollment dates provided by the Division of Special Education, we eliminated students enrolled after October 5th. After adjustment there were 338 students in SIS who did not appear on the confirmations received from the assigned tuition grant schools. Conversely, there were 201 students listed on the confirmations who were not in SIS. Of the 201, two were found at another non-DCPS school and one at a charter school. Therefore, there is a possibility that DCPS may be being billed for 198 students for whom they do not have record of placement. The DCPS Division of Special Education has been working to clean up the SIS

records and reconcile the results with the enrollment rosters we received from the schools. That process is on-going.

These issues are not merely a matter of data tracking. They impact all of the following:

- **Fiscal.** DCPS may be paying for students who have not been properly placed or have withdrawn from school. The confirmation results indicated that the schools have students enrolled that are not recorded in SIS (201) as well as students in SIS that may not be attending the schools (338). The number of discrepancies noted suggests that the billings from the schools are not being reconciled to the records maintained by the DCPS Division of Special Education.
- **Operational.** DCPS records of student placements do not appear accurate. We understand that there can be frequent movement of students among schools, but practices must be in place to track these movements.
- **Strategic.** Special education costs are one of the major components of the DCPS budget. As DCPS moves forward with developing strategic plans to reduce the costs and improve performance, an accurate counting of student placement and related cost is critical.

Recommendations

Many of the discrepancies and anomalies that we discovered during the census can be addressed through a few comprehensive recommendations.

1. Residency continues to be an issue in the District. The DCPS Office of the Superintendent issued a directive dated May 25, 2001, directing schools not to keep copies of the residency proofs; therefore, the audit process is limited to determining if the school has completed the required form. However, the fact that a completed form is on file does not guarantee that valid proof was provided. The DCPS Residency Office estimated that there are 50 children each year proven, through investigation, not to be residents and that all of them have completed Residency Forms on file. Once identified, these students will either be withdrawn or assessed tuition. Depending upon the point in the school year that these students are identified, there could be lost revenue, or cost reduction, potential of over \$300,000 (approximately \$6,000 per student).

To strengthen the residency verification process, we offer the following recommendations:

- a. Verify residency through an automated matching of information available in systems throughout the District, e.g. Office of Tax and Revenue, Department of Human Services, Unemployment Compensation, etc. While the residency of all students may not be able to be verified through a cross-check, it will

substantially reduce the number that must be verified manually. Further, it would reduce the burden on parents and school administrators.

- b. Outsource the process. The primary flaw in the residency process is that the schools are not motivated to turn away students — just the opposite. Higher enrollment equals higher funding. In addition, residency verification is perceived as an added burden on the school administrations, so at some schools it may not receive the required attention. Outsourcing the process would be a means to eliminate the possible conflict of interest and reduce the burden on the schools.
- c. If current law permits and privacy issues are resolved, the directive could be changed to require schools to maintain copies of the residency proof provided by the parent. This will allow for a more thorough audit of adherence to the established residency rules.

The first two recommendations can be combined whereby the majority of students would be verified through an automated cross-check with the remainder of the verifications being outsourced. This combination will increase the reliability of the residency verification process and reduce the overall cost of the enrollment audit.

2. According to staff in the DCPS Division of Special Education, some of the discrepancies noted in the tuition grant confirmations could be a result of there being two different systems, SIS and SETS (Special Education Tracking System). Although the systems interface, it is possible for SETS to report a student to be located at a particular school while SIS may report that same student at a different school. However, in order for this to happen, a duplicate student record would have to have been created, which would be detected on the duplicate student ID report that is generated monthly.

More likely, SIS/SETS is not updated on a timely basis to reflect placement changes. A Special Education Counselor is assigned to each non-DCPS school to monitor the student assignments. The number of discrepancies suggests that the monitoring process needs to be strengthened. We were also told that the Special Education Counselor approves each invoice prior to payment being made to the school. Again, the large number of discrepancies suggests that this is not occurring on a regular basis.

We recommend the following:

- a. Update SIS/SETS to provide a current, accurate accounting of student placements;
- b. Have regular (no less than monthly) reconciliation reports of SIS and SETS data reviewed by the Special Education Director;

- c. Conduct a complete audit of the last six months of invoices submitted by and paid to non-DCPS schools to ensure that the students for whom DCPS is paying tuition have been properly placed and are being properly billed for;
 - d. Conduct a thorough review of the processes and controls over tracking, monitoring, and payment of students placed in non-DCPS schools;
 - e. Develop a process with adequate checks-and-balances to ensure that invoices are reviewed on a monthly basis, prior to payment, to verify that the invoices accurately reflect the student placements; and
 - f. Develop an internal audit process whereby the students attending the non-DCPS schools are physically verified and reconciled to SETS.
3. Bring the public charter schools onto SIS or network them onto a consolidated student information system. Most of the public charter schools maintain student data - enrollment, attendance, grades — manually or with basic spreadsheets. Therefore, many of the public charter schools do not have the automated tools to monitor attendance, generate enrollment reports, etc. Several of the schools only update the enrollment information quarterly. We understand that public charter school autonomy is a primary concern. However, the public charter schools could be set up on SIS with security protections so that DCPS has only limited access to the data. In our interviews with public charter school principals, the majority stated that there would be benefits to being on SIS, including:
 - a. Improving the transfer process of students between public charter schools and DCPS;
 - b. Allowing the public charter schools to directly assign student identification numbers;
 - c. Eliminating students being carried on both DCPS and public charter school enrollments; and
 - d. Providing the public charter schools with a system tool to maintain vital student data.

If, because of autonomy issues, the public charter schools cannot be brought onto DCPS' SIS, the chartering authorities should pursue the possibility of networking all of the public charter schools onto a uniform, automated student information system. While this step would not resolve the conflicts in data between the public charter schools and DCPS, it would provide the public charter schools with the necessary tools to maintain student data and monitor student performance in a more efficient and effective manner.

We recommend that the SEO convene a representative group to identify and implement the most appropriate mechanism to resolve data problems.

4. The funding level for special education students is not consistent with the levels recorded on the Individual Education Plan (IEP). There are three systems for assigning level on the current IEPs - alphabetic, numeric, and percentage. However, none of these levels equates to the funding level used by the DC Office of Budget. We recommend that the SEO work with DCPS to ensure that codes used on the IEP to indicate level of service are consistent with levels used in the Uniform Per Student Funding Formula. This is critical to the budget development process.

5. SIS tracks attendance on an exception basis; only days when a student is other than "Present" are captured in SIS. Therefore, if a student has perfect attendance, the SIS attendance screen will be blank. This does not provide the schools with adequate information to monitor attendance. For instance, the same blank screen could indicate that the student was never included on any attendance rosters (not assigned a homeroom) or that the student was a no-show. During the census, we identified five students shown as attending both a DCPS and a public charter school. They were physically verified at the charter school. However, when we contacted the DCPS school, we were told by the person responsible for maintaining SIS that the students were attending that school based upon the attendance records, which showed several breaks in the absences indicating that the student was present on those days. We eventually learned that the days assumed to indicate that the student was present were, more likely, days when attendance was not captured. If SIS is down or the scanners jam, attendance may not be processed for that day. Because of the exception based system, students are assumed to be present on days when attendance was not captured.

Aside from the role that attendance monitoring plays in student performance, there are funding issues. DCPS policy requires that students absent for 20 consecutive days be withdrawn. This policy is not enforced because, in part, SIS may not be providing a true record of absences. Students are being carried in enrollment who have actually transferred to other schools. While this would be detected in SIS if they transferred to another DCPS school (a duplicate record would be created), there is no means for detecting students who transferred to a public charter school or a school outside of the District. There were 28 students with duplicate records in SIS. When we combined the SIS records with the enrollment rosters provided by the public charter schools, we identified an additional 95 students with the same ID listed as enrolled in both DCPS and public charter schools or two public charter schools. One student was listed as enrolled in three schools.

We recommend that SIS be modified, if possible, to account for all days, present and absent. We understand that SIS will be replaced in SY 2003 - 2004 and that it will capture only the days present. While from a control and accountability standpoint, this would be an improvement, a false "Absent" is really no better than a false "Present". With absenteeism being such a problem in the District, accurate attendance tracking is vital.

6. Additional training and standard practices are needed for SIS. We found that the information in SIS is not standardized. Each school is responsible for maintaining SIS; however, there is not consistency. For instance, the Admission Date in the student's master record can be the day that the student first enrolled in any DCPS school, the first day that the student enrolled in a specific DCPS school, the day that the information was input, or the first day of the school year. Similarly, withdrawal and transfer dates may be the actual day of withdrawal or transfer but they might also be the date that the information was input into SIS. Without standard data parameters, SIS cannot be relied upon to provide accurate, consistent information. There are policies, but the school staff need to be trained on those policies and the training needs to be reinforced. In addition, some school staff said that there are no manuals available.

Census Procedures

To perform the census, we obtained the SIS download of active students on October 5, 2001. For public charter schools, we obtained each school's enrollment roster that was submitted to its chartering authority for enrollment on October 5, 2001. Collectively, the SIS download and the public charter school rosters are referred to as "Enrollment Data".

Enrollment

Our procedures for determining the number of students enrolled and attending public schools were as follows:

1. Using the Enrollment Data, we organized each school by homeroom. There are no standard policies throughout the District with regard to the use of homerooms. Therefore, schools use different groupings for reporting the counts, such as homeroom, first period, group advisory, etc. For purposes of this report, all count groupings are referred to as homerooms.
2. A complete packet was developed for each school. This packet consisted of separate envelopes for each homeroom containing a Homeroom Roster of the students in the classroom, a set of nametags with barcodes (Student Roll Call Form), and Student Addition Forms.
3. Upon arrival at each homeroom, we asked the teacher to call out names from the Homeroom Roster as we simultaneously issued the student a bar-coded nametag and asked the student to verify the accuracy of the information (name, date of birth, identification number, grade and sex) on the nametag. Changes to student information, especially grades, were noted on the Roster. The Principal verified any grade changes.
4. A physical head count of all students present in class was taken. Upon completion of the roll call, we reconciled the number of students physically counted to the number from the roll call (taking into account both absent and newly added students). The teacher signed the Roster confirming that the count took place.
5. The purpose of conducting the roll call was to identify the following populations of students:
 - a. Students present on the day of the count who were shown as enrolled in the school's records on October 5;
 - b. Students shown by the school's records to be enrolled on October 5 but who were absent on the day of the count;
 - c. Students shown by the school's records to be enrolled on October 5 but who, in fact, withdrew or transferred out prior to October 5; and
 - d. Students present on the day of the count who were not shown in the records as enrolled on October

Students in categories b. through d. required the following additional procedures:

1. For students noted as absent, we reviewed the teachers' roll book or/and the attendance reports in SIS for documentation that students absent on the day of the count had a history of attendance. In accordance with DCPS and public charter school policy, a student is considered active if they attend class within the prior 20 school days.
2. For students noted as withdrawn or transferred out, we reviewed the information in SIS (or applicable public charter school records) to determine the dates of withdrawal or transfer and a record of attendance prior to October 5, 2001. We also reviewed transfer/withdrawal and enrollment forms.
3. For students in the classroom that were not included in the Enrollment Data, we had the teacher or student fill out a Student Addition Form (which includes the same information as the name tags) and also added the student to the Roster. The information provided on the Student Addition Form was reconciled with the enrollment form and SIS (attendance and student master record), and we determined whether to add the student to the October 5th enrollment.

After reviewing the data collected, we determined the total number of students who were present and for whom acceptable evidence of membership on October 5, 2001, was obtained. Students for whom acceptable alternate evidence was not provided were not included in the count totals. Students not included in the count include:

- Students included in the Enrollment Data for whom sufficient evidence was not provided by the school to support either the enrollment or transfer status;
- Students included in the Enrollment Data who had never reported or had no record of attendance for the 20 consecutive school days prior to October 5, 2001, based on the school records and/or discussions with teachers and principals; or
- Students with unresolved duplicate student identification number (ID) issues generated from a computer-assisted search of the October 5, 2001, Enrollment Data.

File Reviews

We conducted a review of every student file to determine whether documentation existed to support residency, special education and English proficiency designations.

1. For residency verification, we reviewed the Student Residency Verification Form to determine whether the appropriate proofs of residency had been obtained. Because the schools had been directed not to keep copies of proofs, only the residency verification form could be reviewed. This limited our audit procedures to determining if the form was in the file and if it a) identified that the proper number and types of proof had been

- reviewed, b) was complete, and c) was signed by a school official. A Waiver Form completed by the DCPS Student Residency Office was also accepted as proof of residency.
2. For special education verification, we reviewed the front page of the Individual Education Plan (IEP) to determine those students for whom an assessment of special needs had been performed. See Attachment 7 for the summary of students with IEP's on file.
 3. For English proficiency verification, we reviewed the Language Minority Student Enrollment Report prepared by the Bilingual Office of DCPS. For English proficiency verification, each charter school administered its own language testing based on both oral and written English, and thus had its own report or form which we reviewed to determine the students' levels. See Attachment 8 for a summary of the number of students at each school with English proficiency needs.

Tuition Grant

We obtained the October 5, 2001, SIS database of students in Tuition Grant schools. We sent letters to each of the schools requesting enrollment information as of October 5, 2001. Based upon the confirmation responses, we determined the number of students enrolled at each of the schools. For the initial comparison, we assumed the confirmation received from the school to be complete and accurate. We then provided the list of discrepancies to the DCPS Division of Special Education for resolution. Using information provided by the Division of Special Education, we adjusted the census accordingly. For instance, although the letters sent to the schools requested enrollment data at October 5, 2001, some schools provided the enrollment at the date of their response. Using enrollment dates provided by the DCPS Division of Special Education, we eliminated students enrolled after October 5th. See Attachment 6 for the adjusted confirmed count by school.

Resolution Process

After completing the initial accumulation of data, we held an exit conference with the principal of each school to review the results. We provided each principal with a report of potential discrepancies and provided him/her an opportunity to resolve the items. Each report listed students for whom there were discrepancies in the following categories:

- ***Duplicate Students*** — A student was identified in DCPS or a public charter school with the same Student Identification Number.
- ***Enrollment*** — There was not sufficient evidence to determine if the student was enrolled and attending on October 5, 2001.
- ***New Student*** — A student was physically present during the count who was not included in the October 5, 2001, Enrollment Data, but there was not sufficient evidence to determine the date of enrollment.
- ***Residency*** — The Residency Form was found to be incomplete or missing.
- ***Special Education*** — A student was identified in the Enrollment Data as being a special education student, but no IEP was available for review.

- **English Proficiency** — A difference was noted between the English proficiency level carried in the Enrollment Data and the information taken from the Language Minority Student Enrollment Report or applicable charter school documentation.

In addition to the report, we gave each principal instructions as to the documentation needed to resolve each type of discrepancy, and we allowed them one week to provide the documentation. We reviewed the documentation provided and adjusted the census results accordingly.

Process Review

In conducting the SY 2001-2002 audit, TCBA reviewed the membership counting methodology used by DCPS and the public charter schools. We reviewed the findings and recommendations presented in the 2000- 2001 audit report, identified which recommendations had been implemented, and determined which findings and recommendations were still valid. In the course of discussions with staff from individual schools and school district personnel, we also identified new findings, which could alter, either negatively or positively, the membership counts.

The methodology used to perform the process review for SY 2001-2002 was as follows:

- Findings and recommendations from the previous report were reviewed.
- Policies and procedures for DCPS schools and charter schools were reviewed.
- An interview protocol was developed which included findings and recommendations from previous reviews.
- Interviews were conducted with DCPS personnel from select schools, Management Information Services, Office of Residency, Special Education, as well as with the principals at most of the public charter schools.
- Information gathered was used to validate prior year findings; develop new findings; identify which recommendations were implemented, which recommendations were still valid, which recommendations were no longer valid, and any new recommendations that should be added.
- Since team members were also conducting actual membership counts, any additional information on procedures, findings, and recommendations was used to add to or support the results from the interviews.

In order to understand and evaluate the effectiveness of the current processes, we incorporated the following review techniques:

- **Interviewing.** Interviews were held to discuss the enrollment, attendance, residency verification, SIS updating and monitoring processes and procedures. We conducted interviews with SIS administrators, DCPS Information Systems personnel, and DCPS and public charter school staff.

- **Analytical review.** The October 5, 2001, Enrollment Data was analyzed for logic patterns, inconsistencies, duplications, etc.
- **Audit correlation.** We correlated the information obtained during the audit of the membership count with information gathered during the above processes.

Observations

Residency

Proof of Residency Missing for Some Enrolled Students. Of the 76,500 students included in TCBA's enrollment count of students in pre-school, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, grades 1-12, and non-grade level programs in DCPS and public charter schools, a total of 1,732 students' residency status was classified as "unresolved." In some cases, although the Residency Forms were on file, they were missing vital information such as the check-off for the required proof or the school official's signature. Incomplete information caused the student to be included in the "Unresolved" category. A total of 1,524 students in DCPS and 208 students in public charter schools did not have the completed documentation required to prove residency. See Attachment 5 for a report of the residency file review results by school.

SIS not Used as a Resource for Identifying Nonresident Students. The DCPS Residency Office does not use SIS as a tool for identifying potential nonresident students. In analyzing the SIS data that we were provided by DCPS we identified 144 students with addresses other than the District. Of these, 20 had a residency code of "R", indicating District residency.

Policy Not Adhered to for Withdrawing Students. The guidelines require that students for whom the required proofs of residency had not been obtained prior to the official membership date, or within 10 days after the enrollment date, were to have been withdrawn from school and excluded from the count. We found that some schools changed these students to inactive status in SIS, thereby excluding them from the count, but allowed the student to remain in class. These students were added to the enrollment conducted by TCBA. Others schools simply ignored the policy and included the students in the enrollment count.

According to the DCPS Student Residency Office, an average of 50 students are eventually identified as non-residents each year, although all of them usually have completed Residency Forms on file indicating that the schools saw adequate proof of residency in the District of Columbia. This shows that there are still loopholes in the current policy.

Attendance and Enrollment

For students who were absent on the day of the count, we relied on enrollment and attendance documentation to determine whether the students should be counted as enrolled on October 5, 2001. After the resolution process, there remained 523 students who had been excluded because we were unable to make a determination due to ambiguous or unavailable information. Of the 523 excluded students, 171 had been excluded because the students were determined to be enrolled in another school.

Students Absent On the Day of the Count. Absenteeism continues to be high in some of the schools despite marked improvements in procedures for taking attendance over the years. During the count,

students were absent from their homerooms for several reasons e.g. regular absences, field trips and loitering out of homerooms. DCPS policy is to withdraw any student that has been absent for 20 consecutive days. Our findings indicate that this was not always complied with.

Table 5 summarizes the absentee rate for schools on the day that we performed the student counts.

Table 5: Absenteeism Rates

School Type	Total in Enrollment Data	Absent on the Day of the Count	Percentage
Alternative	165	75	45.45%
Elementary	42,618	3,947	9.26%
Junior High	4,951	605	12.22%
Middle School	4,601	631	13.71%
Senior High	12,735	3,600	28.27%
Special Education	996	239	24.00%
Total DCPS	66,066	9,097	13.77%
Public Charter Schools - BOE	3,041	640	21.05%
Public Charter School - PCPS	7,798	1,827	23.43%
Total Charter	10,839	2,467	22.76%

Note: Absentee rates are based on the Enrollment Data as provided rather than the final census totals in order to include the absent students for whom we did not have adequate evidence of enrollment. Therefore, these totals will not agree to the reported census totals.

Schools significantly outside of the averages shown on the previous page are:

School Type	Total in Enrollment Data	Absent on the Day of the Count	Percentage
DCPS			
Oak Hill Academy	120	59	49.17%
Ferebee - Hope	341	132	38.71%
Terrell JHS	286	74	25.87%
Evans Middle	321	94	29.28%
Anacostia SHS	769	351	45.64%
Ballou SHS	1,027	670	65.24%
Ballou Stay	404	242	59.90%
Eastern	1,191	299	25.11%
Moore Academy	256	142	55.47%
Phelps CSHS	283	101	35.69%
Roosevelt	761	213	27.99%
Spingarn Center	24	15	62.50%
Washington Center	59	32	54.24%
Rose	26	19	73.08%
Public Charter Schools			
Booker T. Washington— Evening Program	93	66	70.97%
Jos-Arz	37	19	51.35%
Options PCS	132	47	35.61%
Richard Milburn— Carver	49	23	46.94%
Richard Milburn— Reabaut	91	43	47.25%
Techworld PCS	248	71	28.63%
The Next Step	60	19	31.67%
Carlos Rosario—AM	235	105	44.68%
Carlos Rosario—PM	131	57	43.51%
Edison Friendship— Woodson	703	254	36.13%
Marriott Hospitality	177	74	41.81%
Southeast Academy	623	258	41.41%

Attendance Not Recorded Daily. In researching how a student can appear to be in attendance at two different schools, we were told that schools may not record attendance in SIS daily. Because of scanner failures, SIS being down, or workload, the attendance sheets may not be input. Therefore, because SIS records attendance on an exception basis, all students would appear to be present on these days.

We recommend that DCPS, and the public charter schools, investigate a more effective means for gathering attendance information. Recording attendance every day rather than on the exception basis will provide better information for attendance monitoring and enrollment. Also, DCPS could expand the use of student ID cards to make attendance and enrollment data more accurate and efficiently obtained. Since they are barcoded, they can be used to scan attendance and enrollment.

Attendance Information Not Up To Date for Charter Schools. Not only do public charter schools not have a standardized system for maintaining student records, many were missing necessary information such as enrollment dates and forms and attendance records.

SIS Maintenance

Prior Student Membership Audit Findings. Since DCPS did not procure the new SIS in the SY 2000-2001, the anticipated implementation of significant solutions to multiple gaps in information and procedures has yet to occur. DCPS currently plans to implement a new system called ALEXIS in SY 2003-2004. The following recommendations from the previous Student Membership Audits can be implemented when the new system is in place:

- Create a new student identifier having up to five fields of student identifying data that must be entered into the student's record to greatly reduce or eliminate duplicate student identifiers and records. Under the current SIS, a student can be entered twice as long as the school number is different, allowing duplications to occur when a student transfers to another DCPS school.
- Have error checking capability on certain fields to notify the data entry person if the data being entered into a particular field is out of limits or not applicable. Error checking is limited to fields with defined codes, e.g., gender, race, birth date and unique homeroom numbers associated to particular schools. Although the error checking does not ensure the information being entered is correct, it should ensure the data being entered is within a certain range or an "accepted" value.
- SIS does not track changes made to student data. School staff stated that a method of tracking changes made to student records was desirable. It is unclear that the new software would provide that desired capability. SIS should be able to generate a report or log detailing all changes made to the Student Master Record of the student's complete history in DCPS schools e.g. name, address, school, dates, grade/school year and special needs services.

SIS Information Not Up To Date. Several fields in the SIS Student Master Record were not up to date, such as the student status, admission date, transfer date, withdrawal date, previous school and transfer to school code, schedule changed date, residency and special education.

- The admission, withdrawal and transfer dates did not follow a logical sequence. If the transferred student's schedule was not manually deleted, then a later “schedule changed date” would be automatically generated in the Master Student Record.
- Schools were inconsistent with the date used as the Admission Date. Some used the date the student enters/starts, the first day of school, the date the application was completed/submitted, or the date information is entered into the SIS. Ideally, it should be the date the child started the school year at a particular school, but this is not always the case.
- The student status presented the student as active, although the dates showed the student had obviously transferred or withdrawn.
- SIS still has the glitch whereby "inactive" students with schedules are automatically switched back to "active" during the grading process. This creates a duplicate student in SIS.
- In several situations where the student had attended more than one school, both the previous school and transfer school codes were blank.
- Residency codes are not accurately maintained. Using the Enrollment Data, we extracted the residency code for the students included in the final count. All public charter school students were assigned a code of “R”. Any student included in the final count who was not in the Enrollment Data would have no residency code assigned.

SIS Residency Code	Total Students
R - Resident	75,490
N - Nonresident	50
P - Residency Verification Pending (Due 10 days after enrollment)	84
E - Extended Pending Beyond 10 Days	39
X - Ward of the State	309
Blank - Has not proven residency	528
Total Students per Census	76,500

Of the 50 students reported in SIS as nonresidents, only 47 are paying tuition. We found the remaining three to have verification of District residency on file.

- The DCPS October 5th SIS data had 19 students with no homeroom assigned. The homeroom is the basis for the enrollment count at the schools.
- Attendance records in several schools were highly unreliable.
- During the Exit Conference, we requested copies from SIS of both the Student Master Record and Attendance records. For public charter schools, we requested the enrollment forms and attendance records. Several schools, both DCPS and public charter, were uncooperative and failed to provide these records.

Duplicate Student Identification (ID) Numbers. DCPS produces monthly reports of duplicate student identification numbers within SIS, indicating that the student appears in more than one school. This usually occurs when a student has transferred, but the old school does not record the transfer properly or timely. The monthly reports are reviewed and corrections made by the schools. When we received the SIS data, there were 28 duplicates. Additionally, there were 95 students with duplicate ID numbers when the SIS database and the public charter school rosters were combined. The high number of duplicate student IDs indicates that not all public charter schools are acquiring student IDs from DCPS. Students transferring to charter schools from schools other than DCPS schools do not always receive a DCPS student ID number. In some cases, students receive a charter school student ID number that is unique to that school. This charter school ID number would not remain with the student if the student transfers to another school. Without a single student ID number, there is a greater opportunity for the double counting of students.

Identifying Duplicate Students. A method does not exist either between public charter schools or between public charter schools and DCPS to check for possible double counted students. Because the public charter schools each use a separate system, automated or manual, to track enrollment, there is not a feasible method for ensuring that students are not counted at both a public charter school and a DCPS school or two charter schools. The enrollment count would not necessarily identify these duplicates because of the policy that a student is to be counted so long as they attended even one day during the last 20 days.

In reviewing the Enrollment Data, we identified 95 students with the same name and ID number enrolled in both a DCPS school and a public charter school or two public charter schools. Further analysis identified 31 students with different ID numbers but who were, in fact, the same person, enrolled in both a DCPS school and a public charter school or two public charter schools. Having different ID numbers for the same person can occur because some public charter schools do not obtain DCPS IDs, a DCPS ID is obtained but for a different student, or there is a typographical error.

In addition to the 31 students definitely identified as duplicates, we identified other students with different ID numbers who are likely the same person based on the dates of birth being the same and the names similar. For instance, there may be a John Doe and a John T. Doe with the same birth date, but different ID numbers. Because there are no standards for data input within DCPS or among the charter schools, it is not possible to determine if these students are duplicates without further research.

Standards of practice should be developed which include:

- Inputting the student’s full, formal name;
- Comparing the student’s date of birth, parent’s name, and address to current students prior to issuing a new ID number; and
- Requiring all public charter school students be assigned a DCPS ID number.

Special Education

Data Integrity Concerns for Special Education Students. In the census results, we have reported the total number of students for whom we saw IEPs and for whom we saw evidence of assessment of English proficiency. In comparing the results of our review with the Enrollment Data, numerous discrepancies were noted.

As discussed previously, there are a significant number of students placed in non-DCPS schools that have not been entered into SIS/SETS. Of these, the DCPS Division of Special Education has identified students that have been properly placed but simply not entered as well as students for whom they have no record of placement.

Special Education Services. Although the DCPS policy is not to provide special education services without an IEP, several schools stated they provided services for 30, 90 or 120 days.

Administrative Practices

Incomplete Annual Student Enrollment Forms. We observed that the section on the Annual Student Enrollment Form to be completed by the school was often either incomplete or left totally blank. This section provides critical information on the date of enrollment, special education and residency, and student identification numbers. We also observed that some forms were missing both parent signature and date.

Not all students who withdraw or transfer complete the required forms as some simply stop attending one school and start at another.

We observed that public charter schools do not have a standard enrollment form.

The actual day the student started attending classes at a particular school should be recorded.

Inconsistent Dates. In reviewing the enrollment and residency documentation, we noted inconsistencies in the dates that are used. In one example, the parent completed and signed the enrollment form on October 12; the school noted the enrollment date as September 4; the Residency Form was dated December 5; and the SIS Admission Date was October 19. With the various date discrepancies, the enrollment forms and SIS do not always provide adequate evidence of the date of enrollment.