

Counselors and Disproportionate Enrollment Trends in Classes and Programs

It is probably impossible to enumerate all the factors that directly or indirectly affect student choices in class or program selection. However, it is possible to identify some factors that may limit their choices. These factors may include eligibility criteria or course descriptions or content that fails to attract students. Other factors may include the type of counseling students receive, whether the teacher is welcoming and supportive, whether information is provided to all parents/guardians, whether only certain groups are actively encouraged, and of course peer pressure.

Counselors need to review enrollment trends in classes and programs and reflect upon any contributing factors, which may include those mentioned above. In order to accurately detect any trends or patterns based on protected group status, data from at least the past three years should be reviewed.

The counselor, in reviewing this data, should consider whether some groups are over-or underrepresented in certain classes or programs. This is referred to as disproportionate enrollment. Class and program data should be compared with overall enrollment data to determine if there is proportionate representation. The department suggests that any disparity greater than 5% be considered significant. Courses or programs that merit particular attention include advanced and/or advanced level classes, talented and gifted programs, work-based learning programs, career and technical (vocational) education classes and programs, individualized study classes, and special education programs.

Finally, the district should review factors that may contribute to any enrollment trends. For example, eligibility criteria should be evaluated, as well as how students and parents are informed of course or program opportunities. The district should also attempt to identify and consider any other factors that may appear to affect class and program enrollment.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Patterns or Trends

1. In responding to the following questions, disaggregate class and program data from the last three years on the basis of race, sex, disability and national origin, and compare with overall student enrollment data. Identify trends and patterns.
 - Are some groups under-or overrepresented in the special education programs?
 - Are some groups underrepresented in the gifted and talented programs?
 - Are some groups underrepresented in advanced and/or college preparatory classes?
 - Are some groups underrepresented in CTE education classes and programs?
 - Are some groups under-or overrepresented in any other class or program?
2. What types of data or information would improve the district's ability to evaluate trends and patterns in course and program enrollment?
3. What conclusions can be reached regarding enrollment trends in courses and programs?

Contributing Factors

4. In responding to the following questions, review the selection processes used in selecting or enrolling students for participation in programs and courses.
 - What is the selection process for placement in talented and gifted programs?
 - What is the selection process for placement in advanced and/or college preparatory classes?
 - What is the selection process for placement in CTE education classes and programs?
 - Is there any other criterion or prerequisite that is used that may contribute to the trends identified?
 - Do the courses offered lead all students to proficient and above performance on state tests?
5. How might the selection processes described above affect the participation and achievement of certain groups? How could they be more inclusive for all?
6. In responding to the following questions, review course descriptions or other forms of information about educational planning.
 - Would any description make a certain type of student feel unwelcome?
 - Does each description reflect a curriculum that is relevant and of interest to all types of students?
7. Do counselors demonstrate high expectations for all students and assist students in acquiring the resources and opportunities they need to succeed? If so, how is this demonstrated?
8. Do teachers demonstrate high expectations for all students and assist student in acquiring the resources and opportunities they need to succeed? If so, how is this demonstrated?
9. Are all students encouraged, welcomed into, and supported in advanced and/or college preparatory courses? Are accommodations available for students with special needs?
10. Are all students encouraged to take courses leading to proficient and above performance in the core academic areas?
11. How does the district involve and support parents in their child's learning? How does the district involve all parents?
12. Is information regarding course and program opportunities provided to parents/guardians? Is the information translated and provided in languages other than English? Is the information available in Braille or audio versions?
13. Are all areas of the school accessible to those with physical disabilities?
14. What factors has the district identified that may affect course and program participation?
15. What conclusions can be reached regarding the effectiveness of current practices in meeting established class and program enrollment goals?
16. Do counselors and teachers actively encourage students to consider higher wage, emerging and nontraditional career opportunities.
17. Do counselors and teachers actively develop students respect for human differences and promote cultural competence?

Recommendations

16. What are your recommendations for increasing class and program enrollment and achievement by underrepresented groups? How will these recommendations be implemented?

Adapted by Barbara Bitters, WDPI from Pupil Nondiscrimination Self Evaluation Guide
<http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sped/pndg-enroll.html>