Codebook Describing Student Assignment Information for School Districts

(Applicable for grades K to 5)

This codebook describes data that were collected from school district web pages in May of 2012. The data describe assignment student policies and related factors. The unit of analysis is a school district. Data were collected data for the largest 350 school districts in the United States (where size is determined by the number of public school students enrolled in the district as determined by the 2009-2010 Common Core of Data).

Assignment policies may differ by school level. Therefore, data are coded separately for elementary, middle and high schools. This document and the corresponding data file contain data for elementary schools only. Data for higher grade levels have yet to be organized. Some school districts do not serve elementary school students. These are “secondary” level school districts that serve middle and/or high school students. Data for these districts are missing in this file.

Research staff copied text describing each school district’s student assignment policies into a word processor (i.e., Word). This text was copied from school districts’ web pages. SABINS staff read these documents (and conducted follow-up web searches) and developed variables and variable categories from them. Original documents are available on the SABINS web and are stored in a compressed file. Each folder in the file contains information for a specific school district.

It is important to note that the absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence. For example, staff conducted an exhaustive search of a given school district’s web page, looking for documents or text indicating that a school district strove to achieve racial balance within its attendance zones. Despite a thorough search, staff may not have found such information for a given school district (i.e., there was the absence of evidence). This does not mean that the school district ***did not*** want to achieve racial balance when it delineated its attendance zones—merely that no written documents were found that indicated that the district strove to achieve racial balance.

Moreover, if a give school district has a written statement indicating that it strives to achieve racial balance when it delineates its attendance zones, this does not mean that the district prioritizes racial balance over other consideration (e.g., transportation costs). Nor does a written statement indicate how thoroughly a given district actually achieved racial balance across its zones, its declarations notwithstanding.

All fields are numeric except LEAID (string 7) and Q1B\_E (string 254)

Variables and categories are as follows:

**LEAID** Local education authority identification (i.e., a unique identification code for each school district derived from the U.S. Department of Education).

**Fields Q1A\_E\_1 to Q1A\_E\_4:**

**Describe mechanisms that a school district used to assign elementary school students to schools. If a school district does not have a value for any variable Q1A\_E\_1 through Q1A\_E\_4 then SABINS staff were unable to identify an assignment policy on the school district’s web page.**

**Note that school districts can have multiple assignment policies. For example, a school district can have attendance zones but students may allow children to select a school outside of the attendance zone in which they live.**

**Q1A\_E\_1** A mechanism for school assignment was traditional attendance zones. In most cases, traditional attendance zones consist of a situation in one school serves one zone. This coding scheme allows for the possibility that one school could serve several boundaries or one boundary can be served by several schools. If a school district’s web page does not explicitly state that it assigns students to schools using attendance zones—but a map of attendance exists in the SABINS spatial database, then the district was coded as 1.

1=yes

0=otherwise

**Q1A\_E\_2** An open enrollment policy allowing students to attend any school within a district (or any school within a sub-region within a district). A district typically has a policy that requires parents to select a school within the district. If the district requires parents to select a school but also has attendance zones, parents within the attendance zone are often given priority to enroll in the school.

**Q1A\_E\_3** A lottery system in which parents select their preferred schools in order of importance but receive a final assignment through a lottery system.

**Q1A\_E\_4** The school district has final authority to assign a student to a school.

**Q1B\_E** A sentence or two describing a district’s assignment policies.

**Fields Q1C\_E\_1 to Q1C\_E\_17:**

**Document the written policies describing the factors a school district considers when it develops its school attendance zones.**

**Examples:**

A) St. Louis City, MO: “The school attendance areas are based on the projected size of the student population, their age, school building capacity, pupil-teacher ratios, and the number and location of available school buildings.”

B) Greenville, SC: “Minimizing a school’s high concentration of students of poverty (as measured by the number of Free and Reduced Meals) and avoiding a high concentration of low performing students at a school.”

C) Beaverton, OR: “In planning and developing an adjustment of attendance area boundaries, the superintendent first shall consider the following primary criteria: availability of space, proximity to school, safety, and neighborhood unity. Whenever possible, neighborhood areas, particularly at the elementary level, should be retained within a single attendance boundary. The superintendent also shall consider transportation costs, student body composition, staffing patterns, feeder school alignment, and the efficient and economical utilization of the buildings.”

D) Miami-Dade, FL: “reduction or elimination of racial isolation to the extent practicable.”

For variables Q1C\_E\_1 to Q1C\_3\_17:

0=no mention

1=yes

**Q1C\_E\_1** School enrollment data (i.e., number of many students enrolled in the school serving a zone or zones).

**Q1C\_E\_2** Facility capacity and design (e.g., seating capacity, lunch room capacity).

**Q1C\_E\_3** School feeder patterns / compact student attendance

**Q1C\_E\_4** Federal or state court mandate to desegregate

**Q1C\_E\_5** Community input

**Q1C\_E\_6** Student safety

**Q1C\_E\_7** Transportation costs

**Q1C\_E\_8** Community and neighborhood identity

**Q1C\_E\_9** Geographic features of the district, including traffic patterns

**Q1C\_E\_10** Magnet and charter schools

**Q1C\_E\_11** Consistency between municipal boundaries and high school boundaries

**Q1C\_E\_12** Pupil-teacher ratios

**Q1C\_E\_13** Minimizing a school’s high concentration of impoverished students

**Q1C\_E\_14** Avoiding a high concentration of low-performing students at a single school

**Q1C\_E\_15** Proximity to school (i.e., how close the school is to areas of a zone).

**Q1C\_E\_16** Reduction or elimination of racial isolation

**Q1C\_E\_17** Other

**Variable Q2\_E describes whether the district states that it strives to create racially balanced schools.**

0=No or no mention

1=yes (voluntary)

2=yes (legally required)

3=(other, mention)

**Fields Q2B\_E\_0 to Q2B\_E\_7:**

**Describe the mechanisms or written policies a district uses to create racially balanced schools.**

For variables Q2B\_E\_0 to Q2B\_E\_7:

0=no mention

1=yes

**Q2B\_E\_0** not clear / not specified

**Q2B\_E\_1** magnet (interdistrict)

**Q2B\_E\_2** voluntary desegregation transfer (interdistrict)

**Q2B\_E\_3** intradistrict magnet transfer

**Q2B\_E\_4** intradistrict voluntary desegregation transfer

**Q2B\_E\_5** school assignment (busing)

**Q2B\_E\_6** create racially balanced attendance areas

**Q2B\_E\_7** school choice

**Q3\_E\_1** Does the district claim to make attempts to create economically balanced schools?

0=no mention

1=yes

**Q4\_E\_1** Does the district claim to make attempts to reduce school overcrowding?

0=no mention

1=yes

**Fields Q5\_E\_1 to Q5\_E\_10:**

**Describe the existence of transfer policies *unrelated* to racial and economic segregation.**

For variables Q5\_E\_1 to Q5\_E\_10:

0=no mention

1=yes

**Q5\_E\_1** overcrowding

**Q5\_E\_2** hardship (access to after school care)

**Q5\_E\_3** hardship (parents’ work locations)

**Q5\_E\_4** hardship (medical or psychological)

**Q5\_E\_5** hardship (other)

**Q5\_E\_6** priority to low-income children for school improvement

**Q5\_E\_7** children of employees

**Q5\_E\_8** case-by-case determination

**Q5\_E\_9** change of residence

**Q5\_E\_10** sibling related

**Fields Q5A\_E\_1 to Q5A\_E\_7:**

**Factors that a district claimed it considered when approving open enrollment applications.**

For variables Q5A\_E\_1 to Q5A\_E\_7:

0=no mention

1=yes

**Q5A\_E\_1**  racial diversity

**Q5A\_E\_2**  socio-economic diversity

**Q5A\_E\_3**  diversity (no mention of race or class)

**Q5A\_E\_4**  sufficient space in the receiving school

**Q5A\_E\_5**  disability

**Q5A\_E\_6**  sibling preference

**Q5A\_E\_7**  children of employees

**Q6\_E\_1** Does the school district have schools that students can leave due to NCLB rules?

0=no

1=yes

**Fields Q7\_E\_1** Indicates that the school district has a diversity committee (where diversity could refer to race, class or other characteristics).

0=no

1=yes