



MONTANA LEGISLATIVE AUDIT DIVISION

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

AIM: Security of Student Information

Office of Public Instruction

FEBRUARY 2010 09DP-10 IS AUDIT SUMMARY

Introduction

In 2005, the 59th Montana Legislature defined a basic system of free quality public education that included the requirement to assess and track student achievement (20-9-309(2)(g), MCA). The legislature appropriated funding to the Office of Public Instruction (OPI) to develop and implement a statewide student achievement system that provides timely and accurate information about the performance of Montana's K-12 students and schools. In response, OPI implemented the Achievement in Montana (AIM) system to administer education information and support accountability at the local school districts and state level. This audit originated out of concerns about the security of a state controlled database containing personally identifiable student information.

AIM is designed to track a wide variety of student data including enrollment and demographics information. Montana school districts collect and store information on students in accordance with federal regulations such as the No Child Left Behind Act, Education Data Exchange Network reporting, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). There are also state requirements for data reporting, including calculation of average number belonging for school funding, registration for student assessment, and graduate and dropout rates. In AIM, local school district personnel enter each student's primary data just once. The data is then uploaded to the State Edition for reporting. A student's record contains the student's legal name, gender, birth data, race/ethnicity, and types of educational services received.

Audit Findings

The primary focus of this audit was to ensure the security of student data from the input process at the district level, to the reporting and analysis processes performed by OPI. AIM is critical to OPI's ability to maintain and report Montana student data. As such, it is imperative the system is completely storing, processing, and reporting student data.

System and Security

controls in place to maintain AIM data integrity

Based on our work, we conclude OPI has successfully implemented a statewide student information system. We identified system and security controls in place to maintain AIM data security and integrity. We reviewed controls over data entry to ensure consistency of data, as well as delivered processing controls ensuring AIM data validity. We reconstructed baseline reports and compared the output with delivered reporting functionality to ensure AIM is generating accurate reports. While controls are in place, we identified areas in the management of user accounts in AIM where OPI could improve. Specifically, OPI should establish procedures for reviewing all user accounts and related privileges in the State Edition of AIM.