

Welcome to our inaugural quarterly newsletter, which aims to inform and educate school administrators on the process of performing enrollment projections and other topics related to school demography.

Birth Data

When performing enrollment projections, the greatest predictor of kindergarten enrollment five years later is birth data. However, where does one look to get accurate data for a community? Would the local municipality have the data you are looking for? Well, the municipality may have birth data, but it may not be completely accurate. Often, a child's birth is categorized by zip code of the birth mother's residence. Unfortunately, as many municipalities share the same zip code, this leads to errors where births are attributed to the wrong municipality.

Fortunately, things have changed. Through the process of geocoding, which is similar to pin-mapping, births can be accurately attributed to the proper community according to the birth mother's street address. The New Jersey Center for Health Statistics <http://www.state.nj.us/health/chs/muni.htm> from the Department of Health and Senior Services uses this technology and is therefore the preferred source of New Jersey birth data, which is available from 1989-2005. The data is available by race for every municipality in the state. One caveat about using this data is that it is not up-to-date. As we have now entered into 2010, the most recent birth data is already 5 years old! This would mean having to estimate birth data from 2006-2009 when projecting enrollment through 2014. However, in our experience, it is still the most accurate data available for use in projecting enrollments.

In the year ahead, we will be talking about such topics such as computer mapping of student databases, housing turnover, and student yields from new housing starts. If you have a subject you would like us to write about, feel free to let us know.

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