

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Margate City School District

County: Atlantic

Monitoring Dates: April 11, 2006

Monitoring Team: Julia Wolfrom and Patricia Fair

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Margate City School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Margate City School District with an opportunity to evaluate strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment;
- The protection of procedural safeguards for students and their families;
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services resulting in positive student outcomes.

The self-assessment was designed to identify areas of strength, promising practices, areas that need improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Margate City School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan and to determine the progress in implementing the plan.

During the on-site visit, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitoring team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrator and speech-language specialists. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

In December 2005, the district reported a classification rate of 17.56% as compared to the state rate of 16.8% for that year. A total of 66% of students with disabilities, ages 6 through 21, were educated in general education settings for more than 80% of their school day. An additional 30.2% were educated in general education between 40 and 80% of the time.

As reported in December 2005, all preschool students with disabilities were educated in self-contained special education settings. Although a general education option was not available at the preschool level at the time of monitoring, the district planned to develop a general education preschool program for three-year-old and four-year-old children.

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Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

The self-assessment process required the district to review implementation of federal and state regulations categorized into 15 sections. Within each section, a number of areas were reviewed. The on-site monitoring visit involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the district in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant:

- Reevaluation
- Discipline
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Statewide Assessments
- Transition to Preschool
- Graduation
- Transition to Adult Life
- Programs & Services

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. These areas were reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of Individualized Education Program (IEP) implementation • Provision of programs • Provision of related services • Transfer procedures
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation without undue delay • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Content of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meetings • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child find ages 3-21 • Referral process • Pre-referral interventions • Direct referrals • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations • Educational impact statement (ESLS) • Standardized assessments • Functional assessments • Bilingual evaluations

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Evaluation (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESERS)
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability) • Copy of evaluation reports to parents
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP required considerations and components • Implementation dates • IEP provided to parent prior to implementation • Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP • Annual reviews completed by June 30 • 90-day timelines

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Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The improvement plan submitted by the district was determined to be sufficient to achieve compliance.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent training – Additional parent training in issues related to the special education process was needed. 	Improvement plan is sufficient
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access to IEPs) – A mechanism is needed to ensure that teachers have access to students' IEP goals and objectives for program planning. 	Improvement plan is sufficient

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Additional Areas of Need

The following areas were originally identified by the district's self-assessment committee as compliant, but were found to be noncompliant by the NJDOE, during the on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Improvement Plan
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Extended school year (ESY)—The district does not document a description of the ESY program if a student receives it and does not document a rationale as to why a student does not receive ESY.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that extended school year is documented for all students, regardless of the determination to receive the ESY program. The IEP must document a description of the program, including service dates and hours and goals and objectives, as well as a rationale if a student does not receive an extended school year program. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Procedural Safeguards	<p>Parental consent— Consent for assessments and for initial IEP implementation is obtained after the meetings are held for students who are evaluated for and eligible for speech and language services.</p> <p>Provision of notice of a meeting—The district does not consistently provide notice of a meeting for identification meetings, eligibility meetings and IEP meetings, although parents consistently attended meetings.</p>	<p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that parental consent is obtained prior to conducting any assessments and before implementing an initial IEP for students who have been evaluated for or are found eligible for speech and language services. These activities will ensure that parents understand and agree in writing to the implementation of the activity for which consent was obtained. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that written notice of a meeting is provided to parents for all required meetings. The district is referred to the sample notice forms available at www.state.nj.us/education. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>

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Section	Area	Improvement Plan
Procedural Safeguards (continued)	Provision of written notice—The district does not consistently provide written notice within 15 days after making a determination for all students.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that written notice is provided to parents after all meetings within 15 days of the meeting. These activities will ensure that parents are informed in writing of all decisions that were made at a meeting within the required timelines. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Location, Referral, and Identification (LRI)	Health summary/vision and hearing screenings—The district does not consistently obtain a health summary and a vision and hearing screening for students referred for special education and related services prior to the identification meeting.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that a health summary and a vision and hearing screening are completed for every student referred for special education and related services prior to the identification meeting and that results are forwarded to the child study team. These activities will ensure that all factors are considered when deciding whether or not to evaluate. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Evaluation	Written reports prepared by evaluators—Speech and language specialists do not consistently write reports for students evaluated for articulation, voice and fluency disorders.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that a written report is prepared for all students evaluated for speech and language services. These activities will ensure that information is available at the eligibility meeting in order to determine if the student meets eligibility criteria. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Eligibility	Meeting participants—A special education teacher does not consistently attend eligibility meetings.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that a special education teacher consistently attends eligibility meetings. These activities will ensure that eligibility is determined by a properly configured IEP team at an eligibility meeting. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Section	Area	Improvement Plan
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Meeting participants—A special education teacher does not consistently attend IEP meetings.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that a special education teacher consistently attends IEP meetings. These activities will ensure that decisions for students are determined by a properly configured IEP team at an IEP meeting. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Margate City School District on April 11, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is acknowledged for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. The district is further acknowledged for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the OSEP as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

In December 2005, the district reported a classification rate of 17.56% as compared to the state rate of 16.8% for that year. A total of 66% of students with disabilities, ages 6 through 21, were educated in general education settings for more than 80% of their school day. An additional 30.2% were educated in general education between 40 and 80% of the time.

As reported in December 2005, all preschool students with disabilities were educated in self-contained special education settings. Although a general education option was not available at the preschool level at the time of monitoring, the district planned to develop a general education preschool program for three-year-old and four-year-old children.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included:

- Reevaluation
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Transfer procedures
- Implementation without undue delay
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Content of written notice
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meetings
- Independent evaluations
- Child Find Ages 3-21
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- Direct Referrals
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Standardized Assessments
- Functional assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESERS)
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale for disagreement
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents
- IEP required considerations and components

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- Implementation dates
- IEP provided to parent prior to implementation
- Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP
- Annual reviews completed by June 30
- 90-day timelines

Areas of need identified by the district during self-assessment as noncompliant where the improvement plan developed by the district was determined to be sufficient included:

- Parent training
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Extended school year
- Parental consent
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Provision of written notice
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESLS)
- Eligibility meeting participants
- IEP meeting participants

The improvement plan submitted to OSEP has been reviewed and approved. The district is expected to implement the improvement activities described in the monitoring report to achieve compliance in all of the areas of need identified during self-assessment, and areas of need identified during the on-site visit, within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.