

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Northfield City School District

**County:** Atlantic

**Monitoring Dates:** June 1 & 2, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Cheryl Merical, Julia Wolfrom and Patricia Fair

### ***Background Information:***

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Northfield 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 Northfield 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 Northfield City School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an onsite 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 onsite 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 child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

### **Data Summary:**

During the 2005-2006 school year, the district's classification rate was 11.79%, which was lower than the state's average of 14.85%. Although a four year review of the classification rate data indicates a slight increase in district's overall classification rate, it has remained below the state average for all 4 years. During the same school year, the district educated 48.3% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate was higher than the state average of 42.0% for that year. In addition, 38.9% of students with disabilities in the 3-5 age range were in early childhood inclusive settings. This was above the state average of 26.6% for students with disabilities ages 3-5.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

### Sections Demonstrating Compliance

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 onsite 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:

- General Provisions
- Transition to Preschool
- Free Appropriate Public Education
- Discipline
- Procedural Safeguards
- Statewide Assessments
- Evaluation
- Programs & Services
- Reevaluation

### Sections Not Reviewed

This section was not reviewed by the New Jersey Department of Education during onsite monitoring because the district serves students from preschool through grade eight only. The district does not serve a population of students for whom these regulations apply:

- Graduation

### Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the remaining 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
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Find ages 3-21</li> <li>• Referral process</li> <li>• Pre-referral interventions</li> <li>• Direct referrals</li> <li>• Vision and hearing screenings</li> <li>• Identification meeting timelines</li> <li>• Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> <li>• Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)</li> </ul>

**New Jersey Department of Education  
Special Education Monitoring**

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Implementation dates</li> <li>• IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>• Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</li> <li>• Annual reviews completed by June 30 of students' last year in preschool</li> <li>• Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)</li> <li>• 90 day timelines</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of LRE decisions</li> <li>• Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs</li> <li>• Continuum of programs</li> <li>• Placement decisions based on students' individual needs</li> </ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"</li> <li>• Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services"</li> <li>• Identification of post-secondary liaison</li> <li>• Activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student's desired outcomes</li> </ul>

**New Jersey Department of Education  
Special Education Monitoring**

**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 implemented in all areas prior to the onsite visit. As a result, all of the following areas of need identified during the self-assessment were determined to be compliant.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area of Need</b>
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health summary – The health summary was not consistently completed prior to the identification meeting.</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents – A copy of evaluation reports was not always provided to the parent 10 days prior to the identification meeting.</li> </ul>
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components – The IEP did not include all the required considerations and components.</li> </ul>
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district – Consideration of participation in non academic/extracurricular activities was not documented.</li> </ul>
Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings – Students, age 14 and older, and agencies were not invited to meetings when transition planning was part of the IEP discussion.</li> </ul>

**Additional Areas of Need**

No additional areas of need were identified by the NJDOE during the onsite monitoring visit.

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

## Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Northfield City School District on June 1 and 2, 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 nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan to correct noncompliance. The district is further acknowledged for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

During the 2005-2006 school year, the district's classification rate was 11.79%, which was lower than the state's average of 14.85%. Although a four year review of the classification rate data indicates a slight increase in district's overall classification rate, it has remained below the state average for all 4 years. During the same school year, the district educated 48.3% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate was higher than the state average of 42.0% for that year. In addition, 38.9% of students with disabilities in the 3-5 age range were in early childhood inclusive settings. This was above the state average of 26.6% for students with disabilities ages 3-5.

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 onsite monitoring visit included:

- General Provisions
- Free Appropriate Public Education
- Procedural Safeguards
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs & Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- Child Find ages 3-21
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- Direct referrals
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- IEP meeting participants
- 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 of students' last year in preschool
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
- 90 day timelines
- Documentation of LRE decisions

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Continuum of programs
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
- Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"
- Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services"
- Identification of post-secondary liaison
- Activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student's desired outcomes

Areas of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the onsite monitoring visit by the NJDOE, included:

- Health summary
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents
- IEP required considerations and components
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district
- Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings

No additional areas of need were identified during the onsite visit. The district was determined compliant in all areas reviewed as part of the monitoring process. The district is expected to conduct ongoing administrative oversight, as well as provide training and technical assistance as needed, in response to changes in local procedures, federal and state regulations in order to maintain compliance.