

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Ventnor School District

County: Atlantic

Monitoring Dates: November 1 and 2, 2005

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair and Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Ventnor School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Ventnor 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 Ventnor 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, 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 administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004 – 2005 school year, the district educated 62.8% of students with disabilities in the general education setting more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. The district classification rate is 9.46% which is significantly lower than the state average of 16.57%. The district educates 91.7% of students age 3-5 in the general education setting which is significantly higher than the state average of 14.6%

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

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:

- General Provisions
- Evaluation
- Eligibility
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas 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
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Interpreters at meeting • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Pre-referral interventions • Identification meeting participants
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered • Planning meeting participants • Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained • Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • IEP required considerations and components • 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

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of “needed transition services”• Identification of post-secondary liaison• Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student’s desired outcomes
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Age range

**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 district must revise the improvement plan for any area where there is an 'X' in the 'Needs Revision' column.

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer procedures – Procedures are not being implemented. 			X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of related services – The district needs more service providers to meet the needs of the students. 	X		
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision and hearing screenings – The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because the timelines identified for completion of activities have not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates. 		X	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification meeting timelines – The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because the timelines identified for completion of activities have not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates. 		X	
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 3 year timelines – The district identified that reevaluations are not consistently conducted within 3 years of last date of eligibility. 	X		
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meetings are held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and /or revise the IEP – IEP meetings are not held prior to making IEP changes. 	X		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge and access to IEPs – Teachers are not aware of content of IEPs. 	X		
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and agency invitation – The district identified that student and agencies are not invited to IEP meetings where transition will be discussed. 			X

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

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	Activity
FAPE	Extended School Year (ESY) – The IEP does not contain a description of extended school year programs.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs contain a description of extended school year programs. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents have knowledge of the type of program provided. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.
Procedural Safeguards	Provision of Written Notice – When a student is found ineligible for special education and related services, written notice is not provided.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that following the eligibility meeting written notice is provided when a student is not found eligible for special education and related services. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are fully informed of decisions made regarding the student. These activities must include procedures, in-services training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.
	Provision of Written Notice in Native Language – Written Notice is not provided in native language.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that written notice is provided in the native language of the parent. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are fully informed of decisions made regarding students' special education needs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.
	Content of Written Notice – Short Procedural Safeguard Statement (SPSS) is not consistently provided.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a copy of SPSS is consistently provided when required. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are informed and the means by which a copy of a description of the procedural safeguards can be obtained. These activities must include in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.

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

Section	Area	Activity
LRI	Referral process and Identification Meeting – Teachers are not able to make direct referral to CST and if a referral is made to the CST, an identification meeting is not conducted. The referral is sent back to the I&RS committee.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that there is a mechanism in place to enable teachers to make a direct referral to the CST and, the ensure that an identification meeting for that child is held within 20 days of receipt of the referral. Implementation of these activities will ensure that direct referral is possible if necessary. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.
Reevaluation	Reevaluation prior to age 5 – Preschool students are not consistently reevaluated by June 30 of the year they are turning five.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that preschool students are reevaluated by June 30 th of the year they are turning five. This will ensure if a student continues to be a student with a disability, the student shall be classified according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-35(c) or 3.6 (a). These activities must include in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.
IEP	Implementation Dates – IEP implementation dates do not include beginning and ending dates for extended school year.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that implementation of the IEP includes the length of the extended school year. This will ensure that students receive their programs and services according to their IEPs. These activities must include procedures, in-services training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.
Transition to Adult Life	Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs” – IEP does not include courses of study for those students who will be turning 14 within the timeframe within the existing IEP.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs for students beginning at age 14 include courses of study in the statement of transition service needs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that the IEPs include all required transition components.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Ventnor School District on November 1 and 2, 2005. 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 that with some revision will bring about systemic change.

A review of district data indicated the district classification rate is significantly lower than the state average. The district's rate for education students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% for the day is significantly higher than the state average, however program options are limited across all grade levels. This will be addressed in the district's improvement plan. The district should be commended for the high rate of preschool students who are education in the general education setting.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff. All parents interviewed reported good communication with teachers who keep them informed regarding their children's progress.

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

- General Provisions
- Evaluation
- Eligibility
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation.

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
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Interpreters at meeting
- Independent evaluations
- Child Find Ages 3-21
- Pre-referral interventions
- Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered
- Planning meeting participants
- Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained
- Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
- Meeting participants
- IEP required considerations and components
- 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
- Child study team participation in transition planning conference
- IEPs for preschool students with disabilities implemented no later than age 3

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of “needed transition services
- Identification of post-secondary liaison
- Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings
- Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student’s desired outcomes
- Age range
- Group size
- Common planning time

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE include:

- Transfer procedures
- Student and agency invitation
- Class size

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding:

- IEP meetings not held prior to making IEP changes
- Provision of related services
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Identification meeting timelines
- Three-year timeline
- Teacher knowledge and access to IEPs

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

- Extended school year
- Written notice
- Referral process
- Reevaluation prior to age 5
- IEP implementation dates
- Age 14 transition service needs

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Ventnor School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address those areas that require revisions.