

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

**District:** Allendale School District

**County:** Bergen

**Monitoring Dates:** May 20 and 24, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Jenifer Spear and Tracey Pettiford-Bugg

***Background Information:***

During the 2003–2004 school year, the **Allendale Public Schools** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Allendale Public Schools** 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 **Allendale Public Schools** 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.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus meeting for parents and community members at the Brookside Elementary School on October 26, 2004. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit. Additionally, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) completed a modified desk audit, including review of a representative sample of student records, as well as reviews of district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with child study team members and administrators. Interviews were conducted with parents by telephone. Based on these sources, OSEP staff determined that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan which will appropriately address all areas of need.

**District Strengths:**

The district is commended for primary and elementary programs that serve students with autism. Both classes utilize the ABLLS (The Assessment of Basic Language Skills) program which is an assessment tool, curriculum guide and skills tracking system for children with language delays. The programs offer students with Autism the opportunity to be educated within their community with other nondisabled peers.

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The district is also commended for the creation of two supplemental programs; Academic Study Skills and Study Skills. These programs are taught by the resource center teachers and are offered during the school day to all students who may require additional assistance with an academic subject or with organizational or study skills.

### **Data Summary:**

Based on a review of the data, the district reports a classification rate of 12.4% which includes students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech language services. This classification rate is considerably below the state average of 16.5%. The district is successfully implementing a variety of general education interventions such as Problem Based Learning for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, a double session of Language Arts for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, Basic Skills classes and a study skills and academic skills class which may be contributing to the low classification rate. Additionally, the district is successfully educating over 55% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day which is significantly higher than the state average of 41.6%. Another 37.8% of students are educated with general education students more than 40% of the school day.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:**

**Eligibility, Transition to Preschool and Graduation Requirements** were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

### **Section I: General Provisions**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of parent and staff training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of parent and staff training.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs and related services, goals and objectives, frequency, duration and location of services, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of development of a communication system between parents and school personnel,

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analysis of use of home tutors, length of day and year, transfer students, provision of services when teacher is absent, training substitutes for autistic program and expanding the social skills program. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of development of a communication system between parents and school personnel, length of day and year, provision of services when teacher is absent, training substitutes for autistic program and expanding social skill program.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, notice of meeting, written notice, notices in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, acceptance and rejection of reports and provision of independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of surrogate parents, acceptance and rejection of reports and provision of independent evaluations.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screening, and identification meetings, timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find 3-21 to include a preschool screening program for general education preschool programs, procedures for pre-referral interventions, written procedures for identification and eligibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of Child Find 3-21 to include a preschool screening program for general education preschool programs and written procedures for identification and eligibility.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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### ***Section VI: Evaluation:***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports signed and dated and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of evaluation procedures and evaluation requirements to determine eligibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of evaluation procedures and evaluation requirements to determine eligibility.

### ***Section VI: Re-Evaluation***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of planning meetings and participants and reevaluations completed by June 30 of student's last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of reevaluation timelines.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, ninety day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of annual review timelines, IEPs to parents and implementation of IEP services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of annual review timelines, IEPs to parents and implementation of IEP services.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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### **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of decision making process and least restrictive environment documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notification and participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities and general education access in district for students in preschool, students with multiple disabilities and emotional disabilities. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of notification and participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities and general education access in district for students in preschool, students with multiple disabilities and emotional disabilities.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section X: Transition to Post School**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age 14 transition service needs and links with the regional high school staff and CST for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of age 14 transition service needs and links with the regional high school staff and CST for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section XI: Discipline**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, manifestation determination, procedural safeguards and interim alternate educational setting.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of behavior improvement plans. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of behavior improvement plans.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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### **Section XII: Statewide Assessments**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of participation, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation and alternate proficiency assessments.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of procedure for determining participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of procedure for determining participation.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section XIV: Programs and Services**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of class sizes and waivers, age ranges and waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of dissemination of special education program information and inclusion of special education students in field trips and other school activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of dissemination of special education program information and inclusion of special education students in field trips and other school activities.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section XV: Student Records**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of access and requests, access sheets, maintenance of records and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of destruction of records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of destruction of records.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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### *Summary*

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the **Allendale Public Schools** on May 20 and 24, 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 commended 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 has brought about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. The district is further commended 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.

Based on a review of the data, the district reports a classification rate of 12.4% which includes students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech language services. This classification rate is considerably below the state average of 16.5%. The district is successfully implementing a variety of general education interventions such as Problem Based Learning for the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, a double session of Language Arts for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students, Basic Skills classes and a Study Skills and Academic Skills class which may be contributing to student success and the low classification rate. Additionally, the district is successfully educating over 55% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day which is significantly higher than the state average of 41.6%. Another 37.8% of students are educated with general education students more than 40% of the school day.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the on-site monitoring visit and individual parent interviews, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff. Parents were especially pleased with the many programs and services provided within the district that provides significant opportunities for placement within the mainstream setting. Many parents expressed satisfaction with their level of involvement in the IEP process and the receptiveness of the case managers and the Director of Special Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included, policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs and services, goals and objectives for related services, documentation of frequency, duration, and location of related services, facilities, certifications, consent, notice of meeting, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, referral process, direct referrals, health summaries, hearing and vision screening, identification meetings, participants and timelines, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, reevaluations completed by June 30 of student's last year in preschool, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, signatures of agreement and disagreement, IEP meetings, considerations and required statements, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content

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standards, age of majority, implementation dates, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, decision making process, least restrictive environment documentation, preschool transition planning conference, EIP to PSD by age 3, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational settings, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, IEP documentation, alternate proficiency assessment, IEP requirements at age 14, class sizes and waivers, age ranges and waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, consultation time, access and requests, access sheets, maintenance of records and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent training, development of a communication system between parents and school personnel, analysis of use of home tutors, length of day and year, transfer students, provision of services when teacher is absent, training substitutes for autistic program, expansion of social skills program, surrogate parents, provision of independent evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, Child Find 3-21 to include a preschool screening program for general education preschool programs, procedures for pre-referral interventions, written procedures for identification and eligibility, evaluation procedures, evaluation requirements to determine eligibility, three year timelines, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents prior to implementation, implementation of IEP services, notification of nonacademic and extracurricular activities, general education access within the district for students eligible for preschool, students with multiple disabilities and emotional disabilities, age 14 transition service needs, links with regional high school and CST for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, behavior improvement plans, procedure for determining participation in statewide assessments, dissemination of special education program information, inclusion of special education students in field trips and other school activities and destruction of records.

The on-site monitoring visit identified no additional areas of need.

During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the self-identified areas of parent and staff training, development of a communication system between parents and school personnel, length of day and year, provision of services when teacher is absent, training substitutes for autistic program, expanding social skill program, surrogate parents, acceptance and rejection of reports, provision of independent evaluations, Child Find 3-21 to include a preschool screening program for general education preschool programs, written procedures for identification and eligibility, evaluation procedures, evaluation requirements to determine eligibility, reevaluation timelines, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, implementation of IEP services, notification and participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities, general education access in district for students in preschool, students with multiple disabilities and emotional disabilities, age 14 transition service needs, links with the regional high school staff and CST for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students, behavior improvement plans, procedure for determining participation in statewide assessments, dissemination of special education programs, discrimination of special education students and destruction of records.

No revisions to the improvement plan will be necessary. As a result, the improvement plan submitted in June 2004 will be submitted for final approval. Verification of the completion of the remaining activities in the plan will be conducted by the County Office of Education.



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