

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Avon School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: February 14, 2006

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair and Cheryl Merical

Background Information:

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

Data Summary:

A review of data provided by the district indicates that 151 students were enrolled in the Avon School District during the 2004-2005 school year. Twenty-three students were classified as eligible for special education and related services. The district's classification rate for the 2004-2005 school year was 15.23% as compared to the state classification rate of 14.61%. During the same school year, the district educated 57.9% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day as compared to the state average of 41.5%. The district educates 3 preschool students in special education settings.

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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:

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs & Services

Areas not Applicable

The areas of out-of-district student participation in graduation activities and written notice of graduation were areas not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students for whom these regulations apply.

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 • Provision of related services • Transfer procedures
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meeting • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral process • Direct Referrals • Health summary • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations • Standardized assessments

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Eligibility criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • IEP required considerations and components • Implementation dates • Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP • Annual reviews completed by June 30 • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) • 90-day timelines
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs • Continuum of programs • Placement decisions based on students' individual needs

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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 district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Content of notice of a meeting – Notice of a meeting does not contain all required components. 	X		
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-referral interventions – The district does not maintain documentation of interventions attempted and the effectiveness of the interventions. The district must address new documentation requirements as per N.J.A.C. 6A:14, effective September 5, 2006. ▪ Vision and hearing screenings – Although vision and hearing screenings are completed, they are not provided in time for consideration at the identification meetings. 	X X		
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP provided to parent prior to implementation – Parents receive IEPs after they are typed, which could be after implementation. 	X		
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of LRE decisions – The district is inconsistent in the procedure they use to address the required considerations in IEPs. 	X		
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP requirements – Avon is a K-8 School District and has not been addressing the specific graduation requirements for students who will turn 14 during the implementation period of their IEPs. 	X		

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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	Activity
FAPE	Extended School Year (ESY) – ESY is not considered and documented for all students.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that ESY is considered for all students. The implementation of these activities will result in the discussion of the need for ESY. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.
Procedural Safeguards	Content of written notice – Written notice does not document description of options considered/ rejected and description of factors used in making the decision or all components of Short Procedural Safeguards Statement (SPSS).	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that written notice and SPSS include all the required components. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are fully informed of the decisions made at the meetings and the factors considered in making the decisions. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities. The district is advised to review the sample notice forms developed by the NJDOE and available at www.state.nj.us/education .
Evaluation	Functional assessments – Evaluation reports do not include all parts of a functional assessment. Educational impact statement (ESLS) – Speech and language evaluations do not include an educational impact statement from the	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that functional assessments contain all the required components. The implementation of these activities will ensure that reports contain sufficient information upon which eligibility determinations can be made. The plan must include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities. The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that speech and language evaluations include a summary of the educational impact statement. The implementation of these activities will ensure that reports contain sufficient information upon which eligibility decisions can be made. The plan must include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.

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	classroom teacher.	
Eligibility	Copy of evaluation reports to parents – The district does not document that parents receive evaluation reports 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that parents receive evaluation reports 10 days prior to eligibility meetings. These activities must include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the plan. Procedures must address a method of documenting that reports were sent.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Avon School District on February 14, 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 that will ensure the correction of non-compliance. 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.

A review of data indicates that 151 students were enrolled in the Avon School District during the 2004-2005 school year. Twenty-three students were classified as eligible for special education and related services. The district's classification rate for the 2004-2005 school year was 15.23% as compared to the state classification rate of 14.61%. During the same school year, the district educated 57.9% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day as compared to the state average of 41.5%. The district educates 3 preschool students in special education settings.

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

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

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- 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
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meeting
- Independent evaluations
- Child Find Ages 3-21
- Referral process
- Direct Referrals
- Health summary
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Meeting participants (IEP and Eligibility)
- Eligibility Criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)

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- IEP required considerations and components
- Implementation dates
- Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP
- Annual reviews completed by June 30
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
- 90 day timelines
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Continuum of programs
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs

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

- Content of notice of a meeting
- Pre-referral interventions
- Vision and hearing screenings
- IEP provided to parent prior to implementation
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- IEP requirements for graduation

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

- Extended school year
- Content of written notice
- Provision of written notice
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Functional assessments
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents

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