

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Bass River

County: Burlington

Monitoring Dates: October 11, 2005

Monitoring Team: Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Bass River School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Bass River 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 Bass River School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a monitoring visit 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 NJDOE 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. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 55% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. Additionally, no students with disabilities attended school in private or public schools outside of the district compared to the state average of 6%.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education during the monitoring process as compliant:

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Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant.

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
Procedural Safeguards– For students who may be eligible for speech and language services (ESLS) or eligible for special education and related services (ESERS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consent (ESERS) ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS) ▪ Meetings (ESERS) ▪ Provision of written notice ▪ Notices in native language ▪ Interpreters at meetings ▪ Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 ▪ Referral process ▪ Pre-referral interventions ▪ Direct Referrals ▪ Health summary ▪ Vision and hearing screenings ▪ Identification meeting timelines ▪ Identification meeting participants
Evaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations ▪ Functional assessments (ESERS) ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESERS)
Reevaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS) ▪ Timelines ▪ Planning meeting participants (ESERS) ▪ Reevaluations prior to age 5 ▪ Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained ▪ Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
Eligibility- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants (ESERS) ▪ Eligibility Criteria ▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESERS) ▪ Statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability) ▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
<p>Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - For students who may be ESLs or ESERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants (ESERS) ▪ Implementation dates ▪ IEP provided to parents prior to implementation ▪ 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

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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 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
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent Training—The district cited a lack of resources as the barrier for providing parent training. The plan must be revised to reflect compliance because the timelines identified for completion of activities has not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates. 		X	
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Goals and Objectives for Related Services—Goals and objectives are not consistently included in IEPs. ▪ Transfer Procedures—The district has no written procedures for students who transfer into the district. The plan must be revised to reflect compliance because the timelines identified for completion of activities has not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates. 	X	X	X
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written Notice-content – Written notices do not contain a description of options considered or rejected and why they were rejected. The plan must be revised to reflect compliance because the timelines identified for completion of activities has not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates. 		X	
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Standardized Assessments—The district does not have a written description of tests used. 	X		X

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Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP considerations and components— Goals and objectives are not consistently included in IEPs for science and social studies. The plan must be revised to reflect compliance because the timelines identified for completion of activities has not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates. 		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 New Jersey Department of Education during the on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Activity
FAPE	Extended School Year (ESY)—No description or dates of program if receiving ESY and no rationale if not receiving ESY.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that extended school year is discussed and considered for all students with IEPs and that the result of the discussion is documented in all IEPs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that extended school year is discussed and documented by a properly configured IEP team at IEP meetings.
Procedural Safeguards	<p>Consent (ESLS)—Written consent is not consistently maintained in the files.</p> <p>Provision of Notice of a Meeting (ESLS)—Notice of meeting for reevaluation planning meetings and eligibility meetings is not consistently provided.</p> <p>Components of Notice of a Meeting—The district’s notice of a meeting does not inform parents of their right to invite others with expertise</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that parental consent for initial evaluation, initial implementation of the IEP, reevaluation, and release of student records for students is obtained and documented in student files. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that the all areas of parental consent are documented.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of a meeting is provided to parents for all meetings, specifically reevaluation planning meetings and eligibility meetings. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and oversight to ensure that notice of a meeting is provided to all students eligible for speech and language services.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of a meeting includes all of the required components. The district is advised to adopt notice of meeting letters developed by the New Jersey Department of Education. These activities must include in-service training and oversight to ensure that notice of a meeting includes all of the required components.</p>

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Section	Area	Activity
Procedural Safeguards (Continued)	<p>for an annual review meeting, eligibility meeting or IEP meeting.</p> <p>Meetings (ESLS)—No documentation of an evaluation plan or an eligibility statement in student files.</p> <p>Provision of Written Notice (ESLS)—No written notice after a meeting is provided to the parent.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the required meetings are held for students evaluated and eligible for speech and language services. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and oversight to ensure that meetings are held for students eligible for speech and language services.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that written notice is provided to the parent after the identification planning meeting, eligibility meeting, IEP meeting, reevaluation planning meeting, and annual review meeting. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and oversight to ensure that written notice is provided for students eligible for speech and language services.</p>
Evaluation-ESLS	<p>Educational Impact Statement, Functional Assessments, Written Reports—The district does not provide or document written reports or evaluations conducted by the speech-language specialist in student files.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that students referred for speech and language services are evaluated and that a written report is prepared for each student. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and oversight to ensure that a written report is prepared for each student, includes all components of the functional assessment, and all required written report components.</p>
Eligibility	<p>Eligibility Meeting/Participants/ Signature of Agreement and/or Disagreement Rationale/ Copy of Evaluation Reports to Parents (ESLS)—</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that an eligibility meeting is held for all students evaluated for speech and language services and that the required participants attend the meeting. The eligibility conference report must include the required components. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and oversight to ensure continued compliance.</p>

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Section	Area	Activity
Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	Meeting Participants (ESLS)—A general education teacher does not consistently attend IEP meetings.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the required participants attend IEP meetings. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and oversight to ensure continued compliance.

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Summary

A monitoring visit for special education was conducted in the Bass River School District on October 11, 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 will bring about systemic change. 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.

The district is commended for its inclusive practices which have resulted in the education of a significant number of students with special needs in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day for school aged students. Additional data regarding participation in the statewide assessments indicates a high percentage of students with disabilities participating in the NJASK 4 Math and Language Arts sections and NJASK 3 Language Arts section. The district has seven preschool students with special needs educated in a public early childhood setting, and the district has no students with special needs placed in out-of-district programs at this time.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Parents reported that their children have made significant progress academically and emotionally through Bass River's programs and services.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included oversight of IEP implementation, provision of programs, consent for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS), implementation without undue delay, provision and content of notice of a meeting (ESERS), meetings (ESERS), provision of written notice (ESERS), notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find ages 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments (ESERS), written reports (ESERS), reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS), timelines, planning meeting participants (ESERS), reevaluations prior to age five, parental consent for reevaluation, eligibility meeting participants (ESERS), eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement rationale (ESERS), statement of eligibility for severe learning disability, copies of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS), IEP meeting participants (ESERS), IEP provided to parents prior to implementation, implementation dates, meetings held annually, annual reviews completed by June 30, teacher knowledge and access, and 90-day timelines.

An area of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE is goals and objectives for related services and standardized assessments.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, transfer procedures, content of written notice, and IEP considerations and components.

The monitoring visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding extended school year, consent for students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS), provision and content of notice of a meeting (ESLS), meetings (ESLS), educational impact statement (ESLS), functional assessments (ESLS), written reports (ESLS), reevaluation when a change in eligibility is considered (ESLS), planning meeting participants (ESLS), eligibility meeting participants (ESLS), signature of agreement and/or disagreement (ESLS), copies of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS), and IEP meeting participants (ESLS).

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Bass River School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.