

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Brielle Borough School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: November 2 and 3, 2005

Monitoring Team: Caryl Carthew

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Brielle Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Brielle Borough 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 Brielle Borough 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) 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 administrator, building principal, 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 the data submitted by the Brielle Borough School as a result of the self-assessment process indicates that the school's classification rate for 2004 was 8% (97). This rate has been consistent over the last several years and is significantly below the state average. Data from 2004 also indicates that for students age 6-21, approximately 72% (64) of students with disabilities were placed in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day. Additionally, 16% (14) of students with disabilities were placed in general education between 40% and 60% of the school day. These rates have remained consistent over the last three years and are considerably above the state average. The district further reports that for 2004, no preschool students with disabilities

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were receiving services full-time in general education. The majority of students (80%-12 students) were receiving services in a special education preschool setting. This has remained fairly consistent over the last three years; however, students have received services in a combination part-time special education and general education program when appropriate. Staff members report that 14% (1) of the preschool students for the current school year attend a part-time special education and general education preschool program. Further interviews with staff members and parents and a review of individualized education programs (IEPs) indicate that a continuum of options is considered for preschool students with disabilities.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant: **General Provisions, Transition to Preschool, 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 ▪ Extended school year ▪ Provision of programs
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 ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of notice of a meeting ▪ Content of notice of a meeting (ESERS) ▪ Content of written notice (ESERS) ▪ Notices in native language ▪ Interpreters at meeting ▪ 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 ▪ Pre-referral interventions ▪ Direct Referrals ▪ Health summary
Evaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) ▪ Standardized Assessments ▪ Functional assessments ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
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 ▪ 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 ▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESERS) ▪ Statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability)
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - For students who may be ESLs or ESERS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESERS) ▪ 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 ▪ 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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Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs”—there is a need to develop a procedure for determining student interests and preferences to assist in transition planning. The improvement plan must be revised to include an oversight mechanism to ensure continued compliance. 		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
Procedural Safeguards	Content of notice of a meeting (ESLS)—notice of a meeting does not inform parents of their right to invite other persons having expertise regarding their child to meetings.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of a meeting includes a statement of the parent's right to invite others with expertise regarding their child to meetings. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that notice of a meeting for ESLS students include all the required components.
	Content of written notice (ESLS)—When students are evaluated for speech-language services, written notice of the IEP is provided, however, notice of eligibility is not provided.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that written notice of eligibility, including all the required components, is provided for ESLS students. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that written notice of eligibility, including all the required components, is provided.
LRI	Vision and hearing screenings—vision and hearing screenings are not consistently conducted prior to the identification meeting for students referred for an initial evaluation.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that vision and hearing screenings are conducted prior to identification meetings. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that vision and hearing screenings are conducted when required.
Evaluation	Multi-disciplinary evaluations—Preschool students referred for evaluation do not consistently	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a minimum of two child study team evaluations are conducted for preschool students referred for an initial evaluation. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that multi-disciplinary evaluations are

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Section	Area	Activity
	<p>have the required number of evaluations. In some cases, the speech-language evaluation is being considered as one of the two minimum required evaluations.</p>	<p>conducted for preschool students.</p>
Reevaluation	<p>Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESLS)—When ESLS students are considered for dismissal, a reevaluation planning meeting is not conducted.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that reevaluation planning meetings are conducted and written notice of those decisions are provided to parents when students are being considered for dismissal from speech-language services and that notice informs the parents of their right to request an assessment when it is determined that no additional assessments are warranted. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that reevaluations are conducted when a change in eligibility is considered.</p>
Eligibility	<p>Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESLS)—When eligibility determinations are made for ESLS students, parents are not informed if the participants at the eligibility are in agreement with the determination</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that parents of ESLS students are informed whether participants at the eligibility conference agree or disagree with the eligibility determination, and if they disagree, parents are provided with a rationale. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that signatures of agreement and/or disagreement are provided to parents.</p>
	<p>Eligibility Criteria—When preschool students with disabilities are reevaluated prior to exiting the preschool program,</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that eligibility categories are determined only after all required assessments have been completed. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that all information regarding eligibility is considered prior to making a change in classification.</p>

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Section	Area	Activity
	reevaluation planning meetings are conducted and evaluation plans are developed; however the eligibility category is changed prior to conducting the evaluations.	
LRE	Documentation of LRE decisions—LRE page of the IEP does not appropriately address the questions for consideration and are not always individualized.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that documentation of LRE decisions adequately address the questions and are completed on an individualized basis. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that LRE decisions are documented on an individualized basis.
Transition to Adult Life	Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings—Students who will be turning 14 are not included in transition planning.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that students are invited to IEP meetings to discuss transition planning if they will be turning 14 during the implementation period of the IEP. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that students participate in transition planning when required.
Graduation	IEP requirements—IEPs do not address graduation requirements when the students are turning 14.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs include graduation requirements by the time students turn 14. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that IEPs include graduation requirements.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Brielle Borough School District on November 2 and 3, 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 with some revision 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.

A review of the data submitted by the Brielle Borough School as a result of the self-assessment process indicates that the school's classification rate has consistently remained below the state average. Placement data for students ages 6-21 indicate that students are placed in general education at a rate that is above the state average. Although data suggests that preschool students are education primarily in special education settings, on-site monitoring determined that a continuum of options is considered for preschool students with disabilities.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed a level of satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. However, parents also expressed concerns regarding the limitations of a part-time child study team and the difficulties with communication and scheduling meetings around the availability of the team. This was identified by the district during self-assessment and is addressed in the improvement plan. Parent expressed additional concerns regarding provision of programs, individualized decision-making, and access to general education programs.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Transition to Preschool, 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 individualized education program (IEP) implementation, extended school year, provision of programs, consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, content of notice of a meeting, content of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meeting, independent evaluations, child find ages 3-21, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, educational impact statement for students eligible for speech-language services (ESLS), standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS), reevaluation timelines, reevaluation planning meeting participants, reevaluations prior to age 5, procedures when parental consent for reevaluation cannot be obtained, documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent, eligibility meeting participants, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESERS), statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability), IEP meeting participants, IEP required considerations and components (ESERS), 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, 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

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students educated outside of the district, opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs, continuum of programs and placement decisions based on students' individual needs.

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 provision of written notice (ESERS).

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding provision of related services, transfer procedures (ESLS), meetings, referrals process, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP required considerations and components (ESLS), and statements of "transition service needs."

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding content of notice of a meeting and written notice (ESLS), vision and hearing screenings, multi-disciplinary evaluations, reevaluation when a change of eligibility is considered (ESLS), eligibility criteria, signatures of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESLS), documentation of least restrictive environment (LRE) decisions, student and agency invitation to meetings and IEP graduation requirements.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Brielle Borough School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.