

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

**District:** School District of the Chathams

**County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** September 16, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Vanessa Leonard and Nicole Buten

***Background Information:***

During the 2004–2005 school year, the School District of the Chathams conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the School District of the Chathams 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 School District of the Chathams 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 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 administrators, speech therapists and child study team members. 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 58.3% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. However, the district has placed nearly all preschool aged students with disabilities in restrictive settings such as the district's self-contained classes. The district has identified the need to increase the percentage of preschool aged students in the general education setting with appropriate supplementary aids and services as an area of concern. The district has written an improvement plan to inservice the child study team on general education options for preschool aged students with disabilities.

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**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:

**General Provisions, Location, Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Preschool Transition, Discipline and Statewide Assessment.**

**Areas Demonstrating Compliance**

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation</li> <li>• Provision of programs</li> <li>• Provision of related services</li> </ul>
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"> <li>• Consent</li> <li>• Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>• Provision of notice of a meeting</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Provision of written notice</li> <li>• Content of written notice</li> <li>• Notices in native language</li> <li>• Interpreters at meeting</li> <li>• Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Eligibility - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Eligibility Criteria</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP required considerations and components</li> <li>• Implementation dates</li> <li>• IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>• Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</li> <li>• Annual reviews completed by June 30</li> <li>• Teachers are informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/ access)</li> <li>• 90-day timelines</li> </ul>

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<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of LRE decisions</li> <li>• Continuum of programs</li> <li>• Placement decisions based on students' individual needs</li> <li>• Opportunities for students ages 6-21 to access the general education curriculum.</li> </ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"</li> <li>• Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services"</li> <li>• Identification of post-secondary liaison</li> <li>• Agency invitation to IEP meetings</li> <li>• Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes</li> </ul>
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP requirements</li> <li>• Out-of-district student participation</li> </ul>
Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class size</li> <li>• Age range</li> <li>• Common Planning Time</li> </ul>

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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	Improvement Plan				Improvement plan has been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
		Sufficient	Needs Revision*			
			P	T	O	
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transfer Procedures-There is a procedure in place for students coming into the district with an interim IEP.</li> </ul>					X
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Signature of agreement/disagreement-There is a procedure for documentation of agreement/disagreement.</li> </ul>					X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copies of evaluation reports to the parents–Copies of reports are provided 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.</li> </ul>					X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Speech therapist referrals-There is a policy for speech therapists to refer students to the child study team when other disabilities are suspected.</li> </ul>					X
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting participants for shared time students. For shared time students in vocational settings, shared time staff is consistently invited to meetings.</li> </ul>					X

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Section	Area	Improvement Plan				Improvement plan has been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
		Sufficient	Needs Revision*			
			P	T	O	
Least Restrictive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Non-academic/extracurricular activities for out-of-district students. Families of out-of-district students are notified of in-district activities.</li> <li>▪ LRE options for preschool aged students. There is a lack of CST experience in coordinating services between district and general education preschools.</li> </ul>	X				X
Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documentation of group sizes for speech-IEP now delineate whether speech services are being provided individually or in a group.</li> </ul>					X

\*P=The district must develop procedures to ensure compliance.  
T=The district must establish timelines to ensure timely implementation of procedures.  
O=The district must develop an oversight mechanism to ensure implementation of procedures.

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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-Regression/Recoupment is not documented in the IEP for students eligible for special education and related services or students eligible for speech language services.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities ensure that consideration of regression and recoupment are documented in the IEPs of all students. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that the appropriate criteria are used and documented when determining the need for ESY.
Procedural Safeguards	Content of notice of a meeting- Notices do not contain a statement notifying parents and adult students that they may invite someone who is knowledgeable about their child/themselves to meetings.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities that ensure parents and adult students are knowledgeable of their rights. These activities should include revising district notices to include the statement that parents and adult students may invite another person who is knowledgeable about their child/themselves to the meetings and that parents may bring their child if they feel it is appropriate.
Eligibility	Statement of eligibility for Severe Learning Disability (SLD)- The statement of eligibility for SLD does not include the required components.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the <i>Statement of Eligibility for the Specific Learning Disability</i> contains all of the required components. The statement of eligibility for SLD does not contain the following information " <i>the term SLD does not apply to students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.</i> " Activities to reach compliance must include procedures, in-service and administrative oversight.
Transition to Adult Life	Student invitations- Students do not receive invitations to transition meetings.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities that ensure that student invitations are received by all students when the IEP meeting involves transition to adult life. Copies of invitations will also be kept in the students file. These activities must include procedures and administrative oversight.

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### ***Summary***

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the School District of the Chathams on September 16, 2004. 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 conducted a review of programs and procedures during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify most of the areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change.

For the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 58.3% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. A review of the district data indicated that the classification rate for preschool aged students is well above the state average. The district acknowledged that although general education access for preschoolers is problematic, the improvement plan includes activities to address the issue.

During interviews conducted with parents by telephone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Parents agreed that their children were receiving programs and services identified in the IEP. Two parents of students receiving speech therapy expressed the desire for more frequent progress reporting. The district currently offers speech progress reports four times a year.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Location, Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Preschool Transition, Discipline and Statewide Assessment.

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, provision of related services, consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, identification meetings, provision of written notice, content of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, IEP required considerations and components, 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<sup>th</sup> and inform teachers of their responsibilities (knowledge and/ access), 90-day timelines, documentation of LRE decisions, general education access for students ages 6-21, continuum of programs, placement decisions based on students' individual needs, beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs", beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services", identification of post-secondary liaison, agency invitation to IEP meetings, activities/annual goals/benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes, IEP requirements for graduation, out-of-district student participation in graduation ceremonies, class size, age range and common planning time.

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 transfer procedures, signature of agreement/disagreement, copy of evaluation reports to parents, speech therapist referrals, meeting participants for shared time students, non-academic/extracurricular activities for out-of-district students, written notice of graduation, documentation of group sizes for speech.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified an area of need regarding least restrictive environment for preschool aged students.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding extended school year, content of notice of a meeting, statement of eligibility for severe learning disability and student invitations.

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