

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

**District:** Delanco Township School District                      **County:** Burlington

**Monitoring Dates:** February 15 and 16, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Julia Harmelin and Ken Richards

***Background Information:***

During the 2003– 2004 school year, the Delanco Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Delanco Township 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 Delanco Township 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.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members, at the Walnut Street School, on February 7, 2005. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

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. Including 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 therapist and child study team members.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

### Data Summary:

The district's data indicated an increase in the percentage of students with disabilities, with a current classification rate of 23.1%. This is significantly above the state average. There are 114 students receiving special education in the district, including those eligible for speech and language services. The district has 48% of the students with disabilities in general education more than 80% of the school day, and 44.1% are in general education between 40-80% of the school day. The district has no self-contained classes at this time.

The district has instituted a number of staff workshops for general education and special education teachers, resulting in an increased capacity to meet the needs of students with disabilities within the district.

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

**General Provisions, Evaluation, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services** 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of provision of programs and related services except counseling, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified no needs regarding FAPE.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year and counseling as a related service.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Extended School Year**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that extended school year is not consistently considered and documented for every student.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities that ensure that the IEP team makes an individual determination regarding the need for an extended school year program for every student with a disability. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Counseling As a Related Service**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that counseling is not provided to students in the district due to a lack of staff.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities that ensure that counseling is provided to students in accordance with their IEPs. Goals and objectives must be included in the students' IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of provision of written notice. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notice of a meeting.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Notice of a Meeting**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not consistently identify the correct purpose and participants that will be attending a meeting. Additionally, the files did not contain copies of notices resulting in an inability to determine whether or not notice was sent at appropriate times.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities that ensure that notice of a meeting consistently contains the appropriate purpose and participants of the meeting. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are fully informed as to the purpose and participants of a meeting. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of pre-referral interventions, direct parent referrals, summer referrals, and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the referral process. Currently, the district does not have an Intervention and Referral Service team. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue. The district further identified concerns in the area of child find ages 3-21. Although the

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already brought about correction in this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding direct staff referrals, vision and hearing screenings, and health summary.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Direct Staff Referrals**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that staff members must obtain a Child Study Team consultation prior to a referral to the team.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that there is a mechanism in place that allows for direct referrals from staff members to the Child Study Team, as well as parents. Implementation of these activities will result in the compliant location, referral, and identification of students, as well as compliance with 20-day timelines. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Vision and Hearing Screenings/ Health Summary**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that a vision and hearing screening and health summary is not consistently completed for every student referred to the Child Study Team for evaluation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the school nurse completes a vision and hearing screening and health summary for every student referred to the Child Study Team for evaluation. The results will be presented to the case manager prior to the identification meeting. Implementation of these activities will result in the Child Study Team having the necessary information to identify suspected areas of disability and to determine the assessments needed to make an appropriate eligibility determination. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### ***Section VI: Reevaluation***

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of planning meetings, participants, and reevaluations for students turning age five.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of timelines. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section VII: Eligibility**

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of evaluation reports provided to parents ten days prior to eligibility. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Signatures of Agreement/Disagreement Rationale**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the eligibility conference report does not contain a place for participants to sign their agreement or disagreement with the proposed eligibility decision, as well as a place to document a rationale for a dissenting opinion and a place to sign participation at the meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities that ensure that the eligibility conference report contains the appropriate components to include signatures of agreement/disagreement, a rationale for a dissenting opinion, and signature participation. Implementation of these activities will result in the documentation of decisions made by the eligibility team members, as well as participation of the team members, in an effort to inform parents of all decisions made. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of meetings, participants, goals and objectives related to the Core Content Curriculum Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual reviews, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP revisions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding components and required statements and 90-day timelines.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

### **Area of Need:**

**IEP Components and Required Statements**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the IEP does not contain all of the required components, including Extended School Year, length of day and year, signatures of participation, student preferences and interests and courses of study for students age 14, and least restrictive environment statements.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the IEP contains all of the required components and statements. It is recommended that the district adopt the state model IEP to ensure that all of the required statements and components are completed for each student. Implementation of these activities will result in the discussion of all of the required components at an IEP meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**90-Day Timelines**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through record review that 90-day timelines were out of compliance.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that 90-day timelines are met, from the date of consent through implementation of the IEP. Implementation of these activities will result in student services received in a timely fashion. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### ***Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aids and services, general education access, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified no concerns.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding LRE documentation and considerations.

#### **Area of Need:**

**LRE Documentation and Considerations**—During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through record review that IEPs do not clearly and completely document all the decisions for least restrictive environment. In particular, the benefits of general education are not documented for students with disabilities.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that least restrictive environment is discussed and documented for every student in the IEP. Implementation of these activities will result in the**

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

discussion and consideration of general education access for each student. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

### **Section X: Transition to Preschool**

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and early intervention programs to preschool disabled programs by age three.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of age 16 needed transition services, student invitation and agency invitation.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding age 14 transition service needs, courses of study, and preferences and interests.

#### **Areas of Need:**

##### **Age 14 Transition Service Needs/ Courses of Study/ Preferences and Interests—**

During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through record review that age 14 transition service needs, courses of study, and preferences and interests are not consistently documented in student IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that age 14 transition service needs, courses of study and preferences and interests are consistently and completely documented for every student in the IEP. Implementation of these activities will result in the discussion and documentation of transition for every student. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately indicated compliance in the areas of parent/adult student access to records, maintenance of records, and documentation of locations of other records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified no concerns.

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

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding access sheets in files for students eligible for speech and language services and documentation of locations of other records.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Access Sheets in Files for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services—**During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through record review that files for students eligible for speech and language services do not contain access sheets documenting those who reviewed the file.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that files for students eligible for speech and language services contain access sheets. Implementation of these activities will result in the documentation of those who reviewed the file. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Documentation of Locations of Other Records—**During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that cumulative files do not contain a statement of the location of other records for that student.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that cumulative files contain documentation of the locations of other records for that student. Implementation of these activities will result in the knowledge and access of all files for each student.**

### **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Delanco Township School District on February 16 and 17, 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 acknowledged for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify most areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. Additionally, the district is acknowledged for the many areas that were 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 data indicated the classification rate for the district is significantly above the state average at 22.31%, an increase from a rate of 21.7% in 2003. Placement trends



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

indicate that the district includes all classified students in general education and has no self-contained classes in the district at this time.

Parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services, including communication with staff and student progress.

General Provisions, Evaluation, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services were areas demonstrating compliance with all standards.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff and parent development, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of programs and related services except for counseling, transfer students, facilities, certification, surrogate parents, consent, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, prereferral interventions, direct parent referrals, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written reports, documentation of acceptance and rejection of reports, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation planning meetings, participants, reevaluations for students turning age five, eligibility meetings, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, IEP meetings, participants, goals and objectives related to the Core Content Curriculum Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual reviews, individualized decision-making, supplemental aids and services, general education access, continuum, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention programs to preschool disabled programs by age three, age 16 needed transition services, student invitation, agency invitation, parent/adult student access to records, access sheets for students eligible for special education and related services, maintenance of records, and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding provision of written notice, the referral process, three-year reevaluation timelines, copies of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to eligibility meetings, and IEP revisions.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, counseling as a related service, notice of a meeting, direct staff referrals, vision and hearing screenings, health summary, signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale, IEP components and required statements, 90-day timelines, considerations and documentation regarding least restrictive environment, age 14 transition service needs, courses of study, preferences and interests, access sheets for students eligible for speech and language services, and documentation of locations of other records.

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