

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Englewood Cliffs School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: June 7, 2006

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Spear and Michelle Fenwick

Background Information:

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

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an onsite 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 onsite 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 phone.

Data Summary:

In December 2005, the Englewood Cliffs School District reported a classification rate of 13.7% (63 of 460 students). This rate was lower than the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The district educated 80% (48 of 60 students with disabilities), ages 6 through 21, in general education classes for more than 80% of the time. This rate exceeded the state placement rate of 42% for that category. An additional 10% of their students with disabilities were educated in general education between 40% and 80% of the time. All of the district's preschool students with disabilities (3) received special education services included in the federal category of "itinerant services not at home."

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Sections Demonstrating Compliance

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 onsite 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
- Free Appropriate Public Education
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the remaining sections reviewed, 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
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS) • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Provision of written notice • Content of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meetings • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations • Standardized assessments • Functional assessments • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability) • Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • 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 for preschool students with disabilities exiting the preschool program • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) • 90 day timelines

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following area was identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The improvement plan submitted by the district was determined to be sufficient to achieve compliance.

Section	Area
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESLS) – IEPs for students eligible for speech and language services did not contain required considerations and components.

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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 onsite monitoring visit.

Section	Area	Improvement Activities
Procedural Safeguards	Provision of notice of a meeting (ESLS) - Notice of a meeting was inconsistently provided to parents prior to annual review meetings.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that notice of a meeting is provided when required. These activities will ensure that parents and other members of the IEP team are provided with the opportunity to fully participate in the decision-making process. The district is advised to adopt the model notices provided by the NJDOE and available at www.state.nj.us/education . The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Evaluation	Educational impact statement (ESLS) – Speech- language reports did not include a description of the educational impact of the speech problem as described by the classroom teacher.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that for students referred to the speech-language specialist for a speech problem, the specialist obtains a statement from the classroom teacher documenting the educational impact of the speech problem and reflects the statement in reports for initial speech-language evaluations. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Eligibility	Eligibility criteria – The district was not consistently utilizing required eligibility criteria for the disability of communication impaired.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that for students determined eligible for special education and related services under the category of communication impaired, eligibility criteria listed in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(c)4 are consistently applied. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) – Speech-language specialists were not documenting the provision of reports to parents.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that parents receive copies of speech reports ten days prior to ESLS eligibility meetings. These activities will ensure that parents are provided with the information to fully participate in the decision-making process. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
IEP	IEP Required Considerations and Components (ESERS) – IEPs did not consistently contain goals and objectives for all related services.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that IEPs include goals and objectives for related services. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Englewood Cliffs School District on June 7, 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. The district is further acknowledged 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.

In December 2005, the Englewood Cliffs School District reported a classification rate of 13.7% (63 of 460 students). This rate was lower than the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The district educated 80% (48 of 60 students with disabilities), ages 6 through 21, in general education classes for more than 80% of the time. This rate exceeded the state placement rate of 42% for that category. An additional 10% of their students with disabilities were educated in general education between 40% and 80% of the time. All of the district's preschool students with disabilities (3) received special education services included in the federal category of "itinerant services not at home."

During interviews conducted with parents by phone as part of the monitoring process, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- General Provisions
- Free Appropriate Public Education
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Extended school year
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Transfer procedures
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS)
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Provision of written notice
- Content of written notice
- 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
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Functional assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Eligibility meeting participants

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- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)
- IEP meeting participants
- 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 for preschool students with disabilities exiting the preschool program
- 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 an area of need regarding:

- IEP required considerations and components for students eligible for speech-language services

The onsite visit identified additional areas of need within the various sections including:

- Provision of notice of a meeting (ESLS)
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Eligibility criteria
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS)
- IEP required considerations and components (ESERS)

The improvement plan submitted to OSEP has been reviewed and approved. The district is expected to implement the improvement activities described in the monitoring report to achieve compliance in all of the areas of need identified during self-assessment, and areas of need identified during the onsite visit, within six months of receipt of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.