

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

**District:** Harding Township School District

**County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** May 23, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Deborah Masarsky, Robert Schweitzer

***Background Information:***

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Harding 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 Harding 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 Harding 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.

During the on-site 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 administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialist and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

**Data Summary:**

Data for 2005-2006 indicated that for students ages 3-21 the district's classification rate was 11.9% (49 students eligible for special education and/or related services out of a total of 409 students), reflecting a lower classification rate than the state average of 14.6% for that year. Additionally that year, 61.3% (27 out of 44) students with disabilities, ages 6-21, were included in general education classes for more than 80% of the school day. During the same year, the district educated 60% (3 out of 5) preschool students with disabilities in integrated community preschool programs. A review of the Harding Township School District's data indicated that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district did not have any preschool students with disabilities enrolled. Although

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

the district did not have preschool students enrolled, the district’s self-assessment committee identified a need for preschool options and developed an improvement plan that was implemented during the 2005-2006 school year providing opportunities for preschool students with disabilities who enroll in the district to be educated in community settings, as appropriate.

**Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards**

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. Within the sections entitled **General Provisions, Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Programs and Services**, all areas were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant.

**Areas Demonstrating Compliance**

The following areas within the remaining sections were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. Each area was reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). The areas listed below were compliant for both groups of students.

<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> <li>• Transfer procedures</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent</li> <li>• Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>• Notices in native language</li> <li>• Interpreters at meetings</li> <li>• Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct referrals</li> <li>• Identification meeting timelines</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> <li>• Standardized assessments</li> <li>• Functional assessments</li> <li>• Bilingual evaluations</li> <li>• Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP considerations and required statements</li> <li>• Implementation dates</li> </ul>

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>• Annual reviews completed by June 30 for students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs</li> <li>• 90-day timelines</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (ages 6-21)</li> </ul>

**Corrected Self-Assessed Areas of Noncompliance**

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant and the accompanying improvement plan was determined by the OSEP to be sufficient. During the on-site monitoring, each area was reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). It was determined by the NJDOE that for both groups of students, the district has successfully implemented the improvement plan resulting in findings of compliance in all areas listed.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Improvement Plan Implemented/Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended school year (ESY)</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of a meeting and written notice</li> <li>• Written notice and notices of meetings</li> <li>• Meeting participants</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Find.</li> <li>• Health Summary</li> <li>• Vision and hearing screenings</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral process</li> <li>• Pre-referral interventions</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational impact statement (ESLS)</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> <li>• Copy of evaluation reports to parents</li> </ul>
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher knowledge of responsibilities to implement IEPs</li> <li>• Meetings held annually or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of LRE decisions and individual decision-making</li> <li>• Continuum of programs</li> <li>• Notification and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities</li> </ul>

No additional areas of need were identified during the onsite monitoring visit.

**Summary**

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted of the Harding Township School District on May 23, 2006. The purpose 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.

Data for 2005-2006 indicated that for students ages 3-21 the district's classification rate was 11.9% (49 students eligible for special education and/or related services out of a total of 409 students), reflecting a lower classification rate than the state average of 14.6% for that year. Additionally that year, 61.3% (27 out of 44) students with disabilities, ages 6-21, were included in general education classes for more than 80% of the school day. During the same year, the district educated 60% (3 out of 5) preschool students with disabilities in integrated community preschool programs. A review of the Harding Township School District's data indicated that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district did not have any preschool students with disabilities enrolled. Although the district did not have preschool students enrolled, the district's self-assessment committee identified a need for preschool options and developed an improvement plan that was implemented during the 2005-2006 school year providing opportunities for preschool students with disabilities who enroll in the district to be educated in community settings, as appropriate.

Of the parents who were interviewed and those who participated in the parent survey, most expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and communication with district staff. During the self-assessment process, some parents expressed concerns that the administration did not enforce the consistent implementation of accommodations, modifications and teaching strategies required by students' IEPs. The district addressed the parents' concerns through the provision of extensive staff training and the implementation of oversight activities conducted by the administration.

The district identified ***General Provisions, Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Programs and Services*** as sections of the self-assessment that were consistently compliant during self-assessment and verified during the monitoring process.

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and verified by the NJDOE as compliant:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Transfer procedures
- Consent
- Content and provision of notices
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meetings
- Independent evaluations
- Direct referrals
- Identification meeting timelines
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Functional assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Eligibility criteria
- Statement of eligibility for SLD
- IEP considerations and required statements
- Implementation dates
- IEP provided to parent prior to implementation
- Annual review timelines

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

- Annual reviews completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> for students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs
- 90-day timelines
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs

All of the following areas, identified by the district as non-compliant during the self-assessment process, were corrected and determined by the NJDOE to be compliant:

- Extended school year
- Content of notice of a meeting and written notice
- Provision of notice of a meeting and written notice
- Meeting participants (identification, eligibility and IEP)
- Child Find
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Signatures of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents
- Teacher knowledge of responsibilities to implement IEPs
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- Individual decision-making process
- Continuum of programs
- Notification and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities

No additional areas of noncompliance were identified within the various standards during the on-site monitoring. Additionally, it was determined that the district has corrected all self-identified areas of noncompliance. The district is expected to sustain its routine administrative oversight, as well as provide training and technical assistance, on an as needed basis, in response to changes that occur in the school district and federal and state laws in order to remain compliant.