

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public School District**

District: Harmony Public School District

County: Warren

Monitoring Dates: November 3, 2005

Monitoring Team: Michelle Fenwick, Jenifer Spear, & Tracey Pettiford-Bugg

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Harmony Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Harmony Public 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 Harmony 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 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, building principals, 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 district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 36.8% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is slightly lower than the state average of 41.9% for that year. Additionally, only 1.8% of students with disabilities attended school in private or public schools outside of the district compared to the state average of 6%. However, the district has placed nearly all 3 and 4-year-old

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

preschool students with disabilities within restrictive settings, in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers or in out-of-district placements. The district has identified preschool continuum as an area of concern and has developed a plan to address this area of need.

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 on-site monitoring visit involved verification of the self-assessment findings.

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education during the monitoring process as compliant:

- Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessment
- 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
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent training
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral process • Direct Referrals • Identification meetings timelines • Identification meetings participants
Eligibility - For students who may be ESLS and/or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Eligibility Criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of LRE decisions (ages 3-5) • Notification and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (ages 6-21) • Placement decisions based on students' individual needs (ages 6-21)
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of post-secondary liaison • Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-district student participation in graduation ceremonies • Written Notice of Graduation

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

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	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-referral interventions: need existed for referrals (ESLS) to document attempted interventions and their effectiveness. • Health Summary: need existed for district to document health and medical information for each student referred to the Child Study Team • Vision and hearing screenings: need existed for district to document vision and hearing information for each student referred to the Child Study Team. 	<p>X</p> <p>X</p> <p>X</p>		
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of evaluation reports to parents within the 10 day timeline: need existed for district to provide copies of evaluation reports to parents prior to the eligibility meeting. 	X		
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP required considerations and components: the district does not have a mechanism to report on the progress of students with disabilities 	X		
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuum of programs: need existed to provide full continuum of placement options for preschool students with disabilities. 	X		

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

Additional Areas of Need

The following area was originally identified by the district's self-assessment committee as compliant but was found to be noncompliant by the New Jersey Department of Education during the on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Activity
LRE	LRE Documentation <u>N.J.A.C.6A:14-4.2.</u> – The IEP teams did not consider potentially beneficial or harmful effects of the placement and document this in the IEP (ages 6-21).	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure all components of the LRE statement have been sufficiently considered, specifically, the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a placement may have on the student with disabilities or the other students in the class.
Transition to Adult Life	Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs” <u>N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d)(3)</u> – IEP teams do not consider transition service needs for students who will turn 14 during the timeframe of the IEP.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs for students, beginning at age 14, or younger if appropriate, include a statement of transition service needs. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that transition planning occurs when appropriate.

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

Section	Area	Activity
Transition to Adult Life	Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings <u>N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d)(3)</u> – Students and agencies that are likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services are not invited to transition planning meetings.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that students and agencies are invited to participate in IEP meetings where transition will be discussed. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that students and agency representatives have the opportunity to participate in transition planning.
Graduation Requirements	IEP Requirements <u>N.J.A.C. 6A:14 3.7(d)7(i)</u> - IEP teams do not determine and document in the IEP graduation requirements for students who will turn 14 during the timeframe of the IEP.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs for students beginning at age 14 include graduation requirements. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that the IEP team considers requirements for graduation on an individual basis and documents decisions in the IEP.

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Harmony Township School District on November 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 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 district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 36.8% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is below the state rate of 41.9% for that year. For the same school year, 1.8% of students with disabilities attended school in private or public schools outside of the district compared to the state average of 6%. However, the district has placed nearly all 3 and 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities within restrictive settings, in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers or in out-of-district placements. The district has identified preschool continuum as an area of concern and developed a plan to address this area of need.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff. One parent stated that the services provided as "even better and more consistent" than services received previously in another district.

The following sections of the self-assessment were identified as compliant by the district and verified as compliant by the monitoring team: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE); Procedural Safeguards; Evaluation; Reevaluation; Transition to Preschool; Discipline; Statewide Assessment; and Programs and Services.

Within the remaining sections, the following areas were identified as consistently compliant: parent training, Child Find 3-21, referral process, direct referral, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, signature of disagreement or agreement, statement of eligibility, documentation of placement in the least restrictive environment (3-5), notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, opportunities for all students to access general education, placement decisions based on students' individual needs (6-21), identification of post-secondary liaison, activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired post-school outcome, out-of-district student participation in graduation ceremonies and written notice of graduation.

Areas of need originally identified by the district during the self-assessment process which are considered to have sufficient plans to be verified by the County Supervisor of Child Study included: pre-referral interventions, copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to eligibility determination, and full continuum of programs offered at the preschool level.

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring
Harmony Public Schools**

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various sections regarding documentation of decisions regarding placement in the least restrictive environment (ages 6-21), the statement of transition service needs, student and agency invitations to IEP meetings where transition will be discussed and graduation requirements documented in IEPs.

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