

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Island Heights School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: April 20-21 and June 7, 2006

Monitoring Team: Jane Marano

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Island Heights School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Island Heights 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 Island Heights 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 superintendent/building principal, special education administrator, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialist and child study team members.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district educated 93.3% of students with disabilities (or 14 out of the 15 students) between the ages of 6 and 21 in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. The district's classification rate was 8.74% in 2005 -2006 as compared to the state classification rate of 14.85%.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

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. 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 (FAPE)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessment
- Programs and Services

Sections Not Reviewed

These sections were not reviewed by the NJDOE during onsite monitoring because the district does not serve a population of students for whom these regulations apply:

- Transition to Adult Life
- Graduation

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).

| Section | Areas Demonstrating Compliance |
|---|--|
| Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referral process ▪ Direct referrals ▪ Identification meeting timelines ▪ Identification meeting participants |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations ▪ Standardized assessments ▪ Functional assessment ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators |
| Eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability) ▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale |
| Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district ▪ Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs ▪ Continuum of programs ▪ Placement decisions based on students' individual needs |

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

Areas of Noncompliance – Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The table includes the results of the review of the district’s improvement plan and identifies those areas where correction of noncompliance was verified during the onsite visit.

| Section | Area | Compliance Review |
|----------------|--|--|
| LRI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 – Child find procedures did not address homeless and migrant students residing in the district. ▪ Pre-referral interventions – General education programs do not provide sufficient interventions. | <p>The district demonstrated compliance in this area.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> |
| Evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) – Evaluations do not consistently include the educational impact statement. | The improvement plan is sufficient. |
| Eligibility | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copies of evaluation reports to parents – Evaluation reports are not provided to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings. | The improvement plan is sufficient. |
| LRE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of LRE decisions - The district does not document in the IEP potentially beneficial or harmful effects of placement on the student with a disability or other students in the class. | The improvement plan is sufficient. |

Additional Area 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 NJDOE during the onsite monitoring.

| Section | Area | Activity |
|----------------|---|--|
| LRI | Health summary and vision and hearing screenings – When a parent makes a direct referral to the child study team, health summary and vision and hearing screenings are not completed prior to the identification meeting. | The district submitted documentation of correction of noncompliance prior to the release of this report. The district must conduct administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance. |

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Island Heights School District on April 20 - 21 and 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. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan to achieve compliance. The district is further acknowledged for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the OSEP during the monitoring visit as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district educated 93.3% of students with disabilities (or 14 out of the 15 students) between the ages of 6 and 21 in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. The district's classification rate was 8.74% in 2005 - 2006 as compared to the state classification rate of 14.85%.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff.

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

- General Provisions
- Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessment
- Programs and Services

Areas within the remaining sections that were identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- Referral process
- Direct referrals
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Functional assessment
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Continuum of programs
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs

An area of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the onsite monitoring visit by the NJDOE, was Child Find, ages 3-21.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding:

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Pre-referral interventions
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Copies of evaluation reports to parents
- Documentation of LRE decisions

The onsite visit identified an additional area of need regarding health summary and vision and hearing screenings; however, documentation of correction of noncompliance was submitted by the district prior to the release of this report.

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