

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Knowlton Township School District

County: Warren

Monitoring Dates: April 25, 2006

Monitoring Team: Tracey Pettiford-Bugg and Michelle Fenwick

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the **Knowlton 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 **Knowlton 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 **Knowlton Township 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, speech-language specialists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the data submitted by the **Knowlton Township School District** as a result of the self-assessment process indicated that the district reported a classification rate of 12.6% in December, 2004. This rate was significantly lower than the state classification rate of 16.57% for that year. Data from the same year indicated that approximately 48% (25) of students with disabilities were placed in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day. An additional 40% of students with disabilities were educated in general education settings between 40 and 80% of the school day. No students with disabilities, ages 6 through 21, were reported as educated in separate public or private special education settings. Of the five preschoolers receiving special education and related services that year, all were educated in separate special education settings.

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**
- **Discipline**
- **Reevaluation**
- **Statewide Assessments**
- **Transition to Preschool**

Areas not Reviewed

Transition to Adult Life and Graduation were sections not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students for whom these requirements apply.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant 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
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation • Provision of programs • Provision of related services
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 (ESERS) • Meetings • Provision of written notice (ESERS) • Content of written notice (ESERS) • Notices in native language • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral process • Pre-referral interventions • Direct Referrals • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational impact statement (ESLS) • Standardized assessments • Functional assessments • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Eligibility criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
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 preschoolers with disabilities going on to Kindergarten • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) • 90-day timelines
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of LRE decisions • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs • Continuum of programs • Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age range • Group size • Common planning time

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The district's accompanying improvement plan was determined by the OSEP to be insufficient to bring the district into compliance. The third column, of the table below, includes improvement activities that the district must implement to achieve compliance in these areas. Each area was reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS).

Section	Areas of Need	Improvement Activities
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Extended School Year- The district does not provide transportation for students who attend extended school year programs.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that transportation is provided for students who attend extended school year programs. The district's activities must include an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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

Section	Areas of Need	Improvement Activities
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Transfer Procedures – The district has not developed procedures for students with disabilities who transfer into the district.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that when a student with disabilities transfers into the district, the records are reviewed, an IEP developed and appropriate programs and services are provided without undue delay. Documentation of the implementation of the procedures must be maintained. The district's activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Procedural Safeguards	Interpreters at Meetings – The district does not have a list of qualified persons to act as interpreters for a variety of languages.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that qualified interpreters are provided for non-English speaking parents during meetings or to interpret notices that may be unavailable in the native language. The district's activities must include development of procedures for obtaining interpreters, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	Child Find – The district does not conduct sufficient child find activities.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that sufficient Child Find activities are conducted throughout the community to inform parents of children 3-21 of the educational opportunities for individuals who may have disabilities. The district must also maintain documentation of such activities. The district's activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screening –The school nurse does not consistently provide a health summary and the results of the vision and hearing screening to the child study team prior to the identification meeting.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the school nurse provides a health summary and the results of the vision and hearing screening to the child study team prior to an identification meeting. The district's activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Evaluation	Multidisciplinary Evaluation - Initial evaluations are not consistently conducted by at least two members of the child study team.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that initial evaluations consist of a <i>multidisciplinary evaluation</i> in all areas of suspected disability that will include assessments conducted by at least two members of the child study team. The district's activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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

Section	Areas of Need	Improvement Activities
Eligibility	Evaluation reports to parents – Copies of evaluation reports are not provided to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that parent(s) are provided a copy of the evaluation report(s) at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. Evaluator(s) must also document the provision of the reports to parent(s) in student files. The district's activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Individualized Educational Program (IEPs)	IEP required considerations and components – The district's IEPs do not contain all required considerations and statements.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the district's IEPs include all required considerations and statements. The district is encouraged to review the sample IEPs available at www.state.nj.us/education . The activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Least Restrictive Environment	Notification to out-of-district students – The district does not notify students educated outside of the district of non-academic and extracurricular activities provided within the district.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that out-of-district students are notified of the non-academic and extracurricular activities provided within the district and to maintain documentation of the notification. The activities must include development of procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Programs and Services	Class size – The class size of resource programs exceed code requirements.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that class sizes for all programs meet requirements. The activities must include an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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

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 for students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS).

Section	Area of Need	Improvement Activities
Procedural Safeguards	Content and Provision of Notice of a Meeting and Written Notice for ESLS- Notices do not contain all required components and are not consistently provided to parents within required timelines.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that speech and language specialists utilize revised ESLS notices that contain required components. The district's activities must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted of the **Knowlton Township School District** on April 25, 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. An improvement plan was developed to correct noncompliance; however, the plan was insufficient. Required improvement activities are listed in the report.

A review of the data submitted by the **Knowlton Township School District** as a result of the self-assessment process indicated that the district reported a classification rate of 12.6% in December, 2004. This rate was significantly lower than the state classification rate of 16.57% for that year. Data from the same year indicated that approximately 48% (25) of students with disabilities were placed in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day. An additional 40% of students with disabilities were educated in general education settings between 40 and 80% of the school day. No students with disabilities, ages 6 through 21, were reported as educated in separate public or private special education settings. Of the five preschoolers receiving special education and related services that year, all were educated in separate special education settings.

Parents interviewed by the monitoring team were satisfied with the district's programs and services. Parents spoke very highly of the district's staff and administration.

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

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments

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
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS)
- Content of notice of a meeting (ESERS)
- Meetings
- Provision of written notice (ESERS)
- Content of written notice (ESERS)
- Notices in native language
- Independent evaluations
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- Direct referrals
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Standardized assessments
- Functional assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility for SLD
- 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 students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
- 90-day timelines
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Continuum of programs
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
- Age range
- Group size
- Common planning time

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

- Extended school year
- Transfer procedures
- Child Find
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- IEP required considerations and components
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district
- Class size

The onsite visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Content and provision of notice of a meeting and written notice for students receiving speech-language services

The district is directed to implement improvement activities to correct all areas of noncompliance identified through the self-assessment process and during the onsite monitoring visit within six (6) months of receipt of this monitoring report. The verification of correction of noncompliance will be conducted by the Warren County Office of Education.