

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Lafayette Township Public School District

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: April 24, 2006

Monitoring Team: Michelle Fenwick and Jenifer Spear

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Lafayette Township 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 Lafayette Township 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 Lafayette Township Public 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 and parent intake information 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.

Data Summary:

A review of the special education data for this preschool through 8th grade school district indicated a classification rate of 17.47% for the 2005-2006 school year which exceeded the state rate for that year of 16.8%. During that same school year, the district educated 62.3% of students with disabilities within general education programs for more than 80% of the day, which is higher than the state average of 41.9%. An additional 31% of the students with disabilities were educated in general education for 40% to 80% of their school day. All preschoolers (3 students) were educated in special education programs.

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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 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
- Location, Referral, and Identification
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 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
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation • Extended school year • Provision of programs • Provision of related services • Transfer procedures
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Content of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meeting • Independent evaluations
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility meeting participants • Eligibility Criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district

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Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. During the on-site monitoring visit, the NJDOE verified that improvement plan activities in these areas had been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs – The district identified that it does not allow opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs. <i>[N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2(d)1-2]</i> • Continuum of programs, documentation of LRE decisions and placement decisions based on individual student's needs – The district identified that it does not provide for a continuum of programs. <i>[N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2(a)3 and 4.3(a)]</i> 	<p>On-site monitoring by the NJDOE verified that improvement plan activities have been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.</p> <p>On-site monitoring by the NJDOE verified that improvement plan activities have been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.</p>

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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 on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Activity
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of written notice - Written notice was not provided to parents following eligibility determinations [N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(f)]. 	The district is directed to ensure that written notice is provided following eligibility determinations. The district must implement activities to ensure that parents are fully informed regarding the determination of eligibility. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of evaluation reports to parents - Copies of reports are not consistently provided to parents at least ten days prior to the eligibility determination conference [N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(a)]. 	The district is directed to ensure that evaluation reports are provided to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings. The district must implement procedures and in-service activities to ensure that parents are afforded the opportunity to review evaluation reports prior to the eligibility conference. The district must also implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Lafayette Township Public School District on April 24, 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 that will bring about systemic change. The district is further acknowledged for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the OSEP as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of the special education data for this preschool through 8th grade school district indicated a classification rate of 17.47% for the 2005-2006 school year which exceeded the state rate for that year of 16.8%. During that same school year, the district educated 62.3% of students with disabilities within general education programs for more than 80% of the day, which is higher than the state average of 41.9%. An additional 31% of the students with disabilities were educated in general education for 40% to 80% of their school day. All preschoolers (3 students) were educated in special education programs.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, 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 on-site monitoring visit included

- General Provisions
- Location, Referral, Identification,
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Extended school year
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Transfer procedures
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Content of written notice
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meeting
- Independent evaluations
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (SLD)

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- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE included:

- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Continuum of programs
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- Placement decisions based on individual student's needs

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Provision of written notice
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been approved. The district is expected to implement the activities described in the report to achieve compliance in the areas of need identified during the on-site visit within sixty days of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.