

**THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION MONITORING**

District: Lavallette Elementary School District

Monitoring Dates: November 23, 2004

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Ken Richards

Background Information:

During the 2003 - 2004 school years, the Lavalette School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Lavalette School District with an opportunity to evaluate strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free and 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 Ocean Township School District developed an improvement plan to address the 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.

As part of the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Lavallette Elementary School on November 30, 2004. Information obtained from the meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed district documentation, 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 administrator, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The Lavalette School District is commended for providing a frequency modulated system (FM system) in each classroom throughout the school district. This system is used in classrooms to overcome the adverse effects of distance and competing noises. All students attending the Lavallette School District benefit from this service.

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

The district also provides Wednesday Folders. Wednesday folders are used to ensure that parents receive weekly communication regarding their children and district events. All students and families, including students placed in out-of-district settings, receive Wednesday Folders.

The district also provides peer tutoring. A student from the Point Pleasant Beach high school is paired with a student from the Lavallette School District who may need additional help in a particular subject or assistance with homework.

Data Summary:

The district indicates that it provides special education and related services to seventeen students eligible for special education and related services and eligible for speech and language services. These students represent 8.9% of all students in the district. During the past four years, the district classification rate has remained significantly below the state average.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with all Standards:

Free Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessments, Graduation Requirements, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during the self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

Section III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding notice of a meeting and written notice.

Areas of Need:

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

Notice of a Meeting for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interviews that notice of a meeting does not inform parents of their rights to invite others with expertise to a meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of a meeting for students eligible for speech and language services includes a statement informing parents of their rights to invite others with expertise to a meeting. The implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are receiving proper notification of a meeting.**

Written Notice for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services– During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interview that written notice does not document a description of factors used in making the decision, options considered/rejected and why rejected and a description of other relevant factors.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that written notice includes all the required components. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are fully informed of the decisions made at the meeting and the factors considered in making the decision. It is recommended the district adopt the notices developed by the Office of Special Education. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Section IV. Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the area of child find. The district's plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected child find procedures prior to the on-site visit.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

Areas of Need:

Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interview that health summary and vision and hearing screenings are not consistently completed prior to the identification meeting for students referred for special education and related services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that health summary and vision and hearing screening for students referred for special education and related services are conducted prior to**

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

the identification meeting. The implementation of these activities will ensure that information is available to determine the need for an evaluation and if needed the assessment that will be conducted. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.

Section V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments, written reports and documentation of acceptance and rejection of reports.

Areas of Need:

Functional Assessments for Students Eligible Speech and Language Services – During the on-site visit, it was determined through record review and staff interviews that functional assessment for student eligible for speech and language service does not consistently include structured observation, parent interview, teacher interview, documentation of educational impact, review of developmental history and review of interventions.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure functional assessments contain all required components. Implementation of these activities will ensure that reports contain sufficient information upon which eligibility determination can be made. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation to these activities.**

Written Reports for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the speech therapist is conducting evaluations using appropriate assessments tools to determine eligibility however she is not preparing a report of findings.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that speech language specialist prepares a written report which is signed and dated and includes appraisal of current functioning and analysis of instructional implications and statement of relevant behavior, relationship to academic functioning. This will ensure eligibility determination is based on mandated criteria. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

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

Section VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of meetings and participants, criteria and statement of eligibility.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding signature of agreement/disagreement and rationale.

Areas of Need:

Signature of agreement/disagreement rational – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the IEP team does not express assenting or dissenting opinions regarding eligibility determination for students eligible for special education and related services and for student eligible for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that district personnel have an opportunity to state in writing whether they agree or disagree with eligibility determination. Further, the district will document the rational for any dissenting opinion. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents are fully informed of any differing opinion regarding eligibility determination. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Section VIII. Individual Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of meetings, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curricular content standards, implementation dates annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding IEPs for students eligible for speech and language services only.

Areas of Need:

IEPs for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interviews that IEPs for student's eligible for speech and language services do not contain all the required considerations and statements.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all considerations and required statements are addressed at IEP meetings this will ensure that all components of the IEP are addressed. It is recommended that the district adopt the state IEP for students eligible for speech and**

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

language services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation for the plan.

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

SUMMARY

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Lavallette School District on 23, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is commended for the exceptionally 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 with some revision 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 district data indicated that the district is significantly lower than the state average for classification.

At focus group meeting held following the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. They were generally pleased with the accessibility of the child study team and students' access to general education programs. Parents felt their students were receiving a high quality of education.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included free appropriate public education, reevaluation, least restrictive environment, transition, discipline, statewide assessment, graduation requirements, program and services and student records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, surrogate parents, consent, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification timelines, participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, meetings, criteria, statement of eligibility, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curricular content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development and child find.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding notice of a meeting, written notice, functional assessments, written reports and consideration and requirements statements for students eligible for speech and language services and health summary vision and hearing screenings and agreement disagreement rational.

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

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