

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

District: Lebanon Borough School District

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: November 4, 2004

Monitoring Team: Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Lebanon Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Lebanon Borough 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 Lebanon Borough School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a comprehensive desk audit, including a review of representative sample of student records, as well as reviews of district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related services personnel. A focus group meeting for parents and community members was held at the Lebanon Borough Elementary School. Parent interviews were also conducted in order to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of identified need.

Data Summary:

A review of the district data for the past three years indicated that the Lebanon Borough School District has been able to steadily decrease the percentage of students eligible for special education, from 14.5% in 2001-2002 school year, to 12% in 2003-2004 school year. Based upon information obtained from district personnel, and a review of the data, it was determined that the district has been able to lower their classification rate by revising referral procedures and by implementing a variety of effective pre-referral interventions. Additionally, during the 2002-2003 school year, more than 89% of the district's students with disabilities were educated in a general education setting for at least 80% of the school day, as compared to the state average of 41.6%. During that

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same year, 50% of the district's preschool students with disabilities were educated in a general education, early childhood settings, in contrast to the state average of 23.2%.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for instituting a character development, classroom based initiative called "The Six Pillars of Character." This curriculum focuses on educating the "whole" child and accentuates positive social interactions, effective problem solving and conflict resolution. The "six pillars" of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship, are encouraged on a daily basis for both students in general and special education through classroom instruction and activities.

Community involvement and collaboration are encouraged through visiting seniors at local adult day care centers, the organizing and implementing a recycling program, conducting food drives, collecting gifts for needy families, and participating in activities to beautify the school.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Free Appropriate Public Education, Procedural Safeguards, Location, Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff training. 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 VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students and signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of eligibility criteria for students diagnosed as specific learning disabled and copy of evaluation reports to parents/adult students ten days prior to a meeting. 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.

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, present levels of educational performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of considerations and required statements. 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.

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Summary

Special education monitoring was completed in the Lebanon Township School District on November 4, 2004. The purpose of this phase of the monitoring process 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 its exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas identified as compliant during the self-assessment and verified as such by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Free Appropriate Public Education, Procedural Safeguards, Location, Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

At a focus group meeting, several parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. In general, the district was praised for its efforts to meet the individualized needs of special education students, for staff professionalism and availability to address parental concerns and also for the district's willingness to meet individual student needs.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, parent training, dissemination of IDEA information, eligibility meeting participants, statement of eligibility, signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale, meeting participants for IEP meetings, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training for professional staff, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students, copy of evaluation reports to parents/adult students ten days prior to meetings and considerations and required statements.

No revisions to the district's improvement plan are required. The original improvement plan will be submitted for approval by the County Office of Education. Verification of implementation of the plan will be conducted by the County Supervisor of Child Study.