

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

District: Lebanon Township School District **County:** Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: November 17, 2004 and December 20, 2004

Monitoring Team: Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Lebanon 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 Lebanon 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 Lebanon Township 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, and other relevant information. A focus group meeting for parents and community members was also conducted at the Valley View School. Parent interviews were 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 three year review of the district data indicated the Lebanon Township School District has been able to steadily decrease the percentage of classified students, from 12.7% in 2000-2001 school year, to 12.2% in 2002-2003 school year. Based upon information obtained from district personnel and a review of information documenting the completion of several improvement plans, it was determined that the district has been able to lower their classification rate by revising its referral procedures, by providing staff training and by implementing a variety of effective pre-referral interventions. Additionally, during the 2002-2003 school year, more than 65% of the district's special needs students (41.8% is the state average) were educated in a general education setting for at least 80% of the

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school day. Additionally, while the state average for students spending less than 40% of their school day in a general education setting is 17.3%, the district average is only 5.5%.

As a result of data indicating that none of the district's preschool disabled population is educated in a general education, the district developed an improvement plan which sufficiently addresses this area of need. A new general education preschool program has been opened in the district which accommodates both special and general education preschoolers.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for their Homework Club, an after-school tutoring program for general education and special education students who require additional help with assignments, homework, and organization. Additionally, there is a Homework Line that parents can call on which homework assignments, upcoming tests and long-range assignments are posted. The district has found that this not only helps the school-to-home relationship, but also aids students with organizational skill deficits.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation and Statewide Assessment 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs, transfer students, related services goals and objectives, frequency, duration and location of related services, beginning and ending dates for related services, length of school day, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of related services logs and monitoring out-of-district IEPs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notices of meetings, provision of written notice and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of direct referrals and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, referral process for speech students, pre-referral interventions, health summaries and vision and hearing screenings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the area of copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to a meeting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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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, age of majority, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, IEPs to parents and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of teacher access to IEPs, teacher responsibility, circulation/distribution of speech IEPs, required statements/considerations, goals and short-term objectives and annual review timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of decision making, general education access in district and notification of nonacademic/extracurricular activities to out-of-district students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of continuum of services at the preschool level and documentation of least restrictive environment. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section X: Transition

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and early intervention programs beginning by age three.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age 14-transition service needs and preferences and interests survey. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of documentation of pupil suspension to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral

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assessments and behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination and an interim alternative educational setting list.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedural safeguards and records to law enforcement. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

As Lebanon Township is a K-8 district, there are no findings in this area.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of class size and age range waivers, group sizes for speech and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of common planning time, class program descriptions, reentry of students in state facilities and monitoring early childhood programs not operated by the district in which Lebanon Township students are placed.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of records in other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of access/requests to student records. 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 17 and December 20, 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.

Reevaluation and Statewide Assessment were areas demonstrating compliance with all standards.

At a focus group meeting held, 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.

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, extended school year, provision of programs, transfer students, related services goals and objectives, frequency, location and duration of related services, beginning and ending dates for related services, length of school day, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, direct referrals, identification meetings, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations, eligibility meeting participants, criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students, signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale, IEP meeting participants, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, decision-making process, general education access in the district, notification of nonacademic/extracurricular activities to out-of-district students, preschool planning conference, early intervention programs beginning by age three, suspension tracking, documentation of pupil suspension to case manager, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings, class size, age ranges, group sizes for speech, home instruction, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of records in other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training for staff, documentation of the provision of related services, monitoring out-of-district IEPs, notices of meetings, provision of written notice, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process for speech students, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, functional assessments, copy of evaluations reports to parents 10 days prior to a meeting, teacher access to IEPs, teacher responsibility, circulation/distribution of speech IEPs, considerations and required statements, goals and short-term objectives, annual review timelines, continuum of services at the preschool level, documentation of least restrictive

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environment, age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests survey, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, records to law enforcement, common planning time, class program descriptions, reentry of students in state facilities, monitoring early childhood programs not operated by the district where Lebanon Township students are placed, and access/requests to student records.

The improvement plan submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education in June of 2004 will be forwarded to the Director, Office of Special Education Programs for approval. Verification of implementation of the improvement of will be conducted by the County Office of Education.