

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Lincoln Park Borough

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: December 2, 2005

Monitoring Team: Vanessa Leonard and Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Lincoln Park 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 Lincoln Park 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 Lincoln Park Borough 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) team reviewed district documents, 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 administrators, general education and special education teachers. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 55.6% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. In 2004-2005 the district had 15 students ages 3-5 in need of special education programs. Seven of those students were placed in special education early childhood settings, five were placed in a program which provided them with opportunities to participate in a general education program for part of the day and one student was in a full time general education early childhood setting. While the percentage of students in a general education early childhood setting was lower than the state average a review of records, staff and parent interviews indicated that these

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decisions were based on the individual student needs and the least restrictive environment was taken into consideration for each student. The district has developed a positive relationship with the area community based preschool programs in order to meet the needs of preschool children with disabilities.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education during the monitoring process as compliant:

Procedural Safeguards, Location Referral and Identification, Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant.

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
Evaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) ▪ Standardized Assessments ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators
Eligibility- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale ▪ Statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability)
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<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 ▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) ▪ 90 day timelines
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs” ▪ Identification of post-secondary liaison ▪ Agency invitation to IEP meetings ▪ Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student’s desired outcomes

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Statewide Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Participation documented in IEPs ▪ Approved accommodations and modifications documented in IEPs as appropriate

Areas of Noncompliance – Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The district must revise the improvement plan for any area where there is an ‘X’ in the ‘Needs Revision’ column.

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent Training- Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area. 			X
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of Related Services- Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area. ▪ Transfer Procedures- Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area. 			X
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functional assessments –Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area. 			X

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Lincoln Park Borough School District on December 2, 2005. 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 commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that 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 the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 55.6% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is 13.9% higher than the state average for that year. In 2004-2005 the district had 15 students ages 3-5 in need of special education programs. Seven of those students were placed in special education early childhood settings and six were placed in a program which provided them with opportunities to participate in a general education program for part or all of the day.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Several parents stated that they appreciated the flow of communication they have with their child's case managers. All parents interviewed stated that they were valued as members of the IEP team.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Procedural Safeguards, Location Referral and Identification, Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included oversight of individualized education program implementation, extended school year, provision of programs, provision of related services, multi-disciplinary evaluations, educational impact statement, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, eligibility meeting participants, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility, 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, teachers informed of their responsibilities knowledge of and/or access, 90 day timelines, beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs", identification of post-secondary liaison, agency invitation to IEP meetings, activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes, participation documented in IEPs and approved accommodations and modifications documented in IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, provision of related services, transfer procedures, functional assessments, eligibility criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP required considerations and components, student invitation to IEP meetings and graduation requirements documented in IEPs. During the monitoring visit, however, the district was

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able to demonstrate that the improvement plan developed to address these areas of need has been implemented and the district achieved compliance in all areas`.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process and no revisions to the district's improvement plan were required.