

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Logan Township School District

County: Gloucester

Monitoring Dates: January 4 and 5, 2006

Monitoring Team: Caryl Carthew, Julia Harmelin and Cheryl Merical

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Logan 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 Logan 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 Logan Township 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, related service personnel and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's superintendent, special education administrator, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members. 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 52.9% of preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting. This rate is significantly higher than the state average and has increased by nearly 15% over the last three years. Additionally, during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 51.3% of students with disabilities aged 6-21 in a general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is also significantly above the state average. Over the last three years, the district has also decreased the number of students with disabilities in pull-out programs to 20.8% and reduced the number of students in segregated settings to 6.9%, both of which are below

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state averages. The district classification rate is 9.6% which is significantly below the state average. Interviews with school personnel attribute these positive trends to the focus on implementation of more strategies and interventions in the general education classroom.

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, Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessments and Programs and Services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

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:

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Procedural Safeguards– For students who may be eligible for speech and language services (ESLS) or eligible for special education and related services (ESERS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consent ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of notice of a meeting ▪ Meetings ▪ Provision of written notice ▪ Notices in native language ▪ Interpreters at meeting ▪ Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 ▪ Referral process ▪ Pre-referral interventions ▪ Direct Referrals ▪ Health summary ▪ Identification meeting timelines ▪ Identification meeting participants
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Out-of-district student participation

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No areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as noncompliant.

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	Content of notice of a meeting – Notice of a meeting does not inform parents of their right to invite other persons having expertise regarding their child to meetings for all instances when the IEP will be reviewed and/or developed.	The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that includes activities to ensure that notice of a meeting includes a statement of the parent’s right to invite others with expertise regarding their child to meetings. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the OSEP. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that parents are fully informed of their rights.
	Content of written notice —Written notice of the intent to evaluate, proposal of an IEP, and determination of eligibility do not include a description of the options considered and/or rejected and a description of the other relevant factors used in making the decision.	The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that includes activities to ensure that written notice of the intent to evaluate, proposal of an IEP, and eligibility include all the required components. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the OSEP. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that parents are informed regarding decisions made at meetings.
LRI	Vision and hearing screenings—Vision and hearing screenings are not consistently conducted prior to the identification meeting for students referred for an initial evaluation.	The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that includes activities to ensure that vision and hearing screenings are conducted and that results are forwarded to the child study team prior to identification meetings. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that the appropriate information is available when determining if an evaluation is warranted.

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Section	Area	Activity
Transition to Adult Life	Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs”— Transition planning is not conducted for students who will be turning 14 during the year covered by their IEPs.	The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that includes activities to ensure that transition planning is conducted for students if they will be turning 14 during the implementation period of the IEP. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that transition planning is conducted when required.
Graduation	IEP requirements—IEPs do not address graduation requirements for students turning 14 during the year covered by the IEPs.	The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that includes activities to ensure that IEPs for students turning 14 during the year covered by the IEP include graduation requirements. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that graduation requirements are considered when required.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Logan Township School District on January 4 and 5, 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 commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. The district is further commended 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 district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 52.9% of preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting. This rate is significantly higher than the state average and has increased by nearly 15% over the last three years. Additionally, during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 51.3% of students with disabilities aged 6-21 in a general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is also significantly above the state average. Over the last three years, the district has also decreased the number of students with disabilities in pull-out programs to 20.8% and reduced the number of students in segregated settings to 6.9%, both of which are below state averages. The district classification rate is 9.6% which is significantly below the state average. Interviews with school personnel attribute these positive trends to the focus on implementation of more strategies and interventions in the general education classroom.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Parents are pleased with the level of district communication and the extent and variety of services provided for their children.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessments, and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, meetings, provision of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, Child Find ages 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, identification meeting timelines and participants, educational impact statement for students eligible for speech-language services, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, student and agency invitation to meetings, and out-of-district student participation in graduation activities.

During the self-assessment process, no areas of need were identified by the district; however, the on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding content of notice of a meeting and written notice, vision and hearing screenings, and transition planning and IEP graduation requirements for students turning 14.

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Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Logan Township School District will develop and submit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address those areas that require correction.