

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Mount Arlington School District

**County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** May 10, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Robert Schweitzer and Deborah Masarsky

### ***Background Information:***

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Mount Arlington School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Mount Arlington 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 Mount Arlington 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 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 special education administrators, building principals, speech-language specialists 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 in December 2005, the district's classification rate was 15.8%, which is above the state average of 14.9%. With regard to educational placement of students with disabilities, the district reported that same year 36% (40 of 112) of students with disabilities were educated in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day, which was below the state average of 42%. The district educated the vast majority of students with disabilities within the district; only 3% (3 of 112) of students with disabilities attended separate special education public and/or private school settings compared to the state average of 9.2% for that year. At the time of the monitoring, there were no opportunities for in-class support available in the district.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

### Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

The self-assessment process required the school 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 school in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education during the monitoring process as compliant:

- Evaluation
- Statewide Assessments
- Transition to Preschool
- Programs and Services

### Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas within the remaining sections were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. These areas were reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). The areas listed below are compliant for both groups of students:

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of programs</li> <li>• Transfer procedures</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent</li> <li>• Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>• Content of a notice of a meeting</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Content of written notice</li> <li>• Notices in native language</li> <li>• Interpreters at meetings</li> <li>• Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Find Ages 3-21</li> <li>• Direct referrals</li> <li>• Identification meeting timelines</li> <li>• Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered</li> <li>• Planning meeting participants</li> <li>• Reevaluations prior to age 5</li> <li>• Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained</li> <li>• Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> <li>• Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)</li> </ul>

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Individualized Education Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Implementation date</li> <li>• IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>• Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</li> <li>• Annual reviews completed by June 30</li> <li>• 90-day timelines</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of and participation in non-academic and extra-curricular activities for students educated outside the district</li> </ul>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan</li> <li>• Interim Alternative Educational Settings</li> <li>• Manifestation determinations</li> </ul>

**Areas with No Findings**

The sections and areas related to transition requirements for students age 16 and above and discipline were not reviewed since the district does not currently serve a population of students for whom these regulations apply.

**Areas of Noncompliance - Compliance Review**

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant and the accompanying improvement plan was determined by the OSEP to be sufficient. Each area was reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). The third column identifies the results of the review of the improvement plan.

Section	Areas of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
General Provisions	Parent training - Sufficient training is not provided to parents of students with disabilities regarding the special education process.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that sufficient training is provided to parents of students with disabilities regarding the special education process. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Extended School Year (ESY)-Case managers were not considering ESY for each student during IEP meetings.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area and conducts administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance.
FAPE	Provision of related services - Related services are not consistently provided as required by students' IEPs.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure the provision of related services beginning with the implementation date and ending no sooner than the documented date in

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

Section	Areas of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
		students' IEPs. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Location, Referral and Location (LRI)	Referral process - Procedures are not clearly established for the referral process.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that referral procedures are clearly established and followed. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
LRI	Pre-referral Interventions - There are no procedures for the documentation of the implementation and the effectiveness of interventions used in the general education setting.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure the documentation of pre-referral interventions and the effectiveness of the interventions utilized in the general education setting. Interventions must be documented according to current requirements in NJAC 6A:14-3.3(c). The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Eligibility	Copy of evaluation reports to parents- Evaluation reports are not consistently provided to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that evaluation reports are consistently provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Individualized Education Program	IEP required considerations and components - The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance and modifications for the general education classroom are not completed in the IEP.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that IEPs for students eligible for ESERS or ESLs contain the required considerations and components. The district is referred to the sample IEP form available on the NJDOE web site at <a href="http://www.state.nj.us/education">www.state.nj.us/education</a> . The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
IEP	Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) - Although training has been provided to teachers regarding their responsibilities with regard to implementing the IEP, teachers continue to have difficulties in understanding these responsibilities.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area and conducts administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas of Non-Compliance</b>	<b>Compliance Review</b>
Discipline	Notification of removal forwarded to case manager-There was no procedure to ensure written notification to the case manager when a student was removed for disciplinary reasons.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area and conducts administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance.
Discipline	Suspension tracking system-There was no procedure to track student suspensions. Therefore, case managers were not aware when students accumulated more than 10 days of removal.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area and conducts administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance.

**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 New Jersey Department of Education during the on-site monitoring. The third column identifies the improvement activities that the district must implement to bring these areas into compliance within six months of receipt of this report.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Improvement Activity</b>
Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation-There is no procedure to ensure appropriate implementation of students' IEPs.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to monitor implementation of IEPs. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Procedural Safeguards	Provision of a notice of a meeting-Documentation of notice of a meeting is not consistently available in all students' files.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the district documents the provision of notice of a meeting. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Procedural Safeguards	Provision of written notice-Documentation of written notice is not available in all students' files.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the district documents the provision of written notice following a meeting. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Improvement Activity</b>
Location, Referral, and Identification (LRI)	Health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are not consistently conducted prior to the identification meeting.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the school nurse provides health summary and vision and hearing screening results to case managers prior to the identification meeting. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Reevaluation	Timelines-Reevaluations are not consistently being conducted within three years of the previous eligibility date.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure reevaluations are conducted as required. The district must review current special education regulations to ensure that procedures comply with current requirements (NJAC 6A:14-3.8). The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
LRE	<p>Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs and placement decisions based on students' individual needs - The district does not make all placement decisions based on students' individual needs. Some placements have been made according to teacher availability rather than the student's needs.</p> <p>Documentation of LRE decisions- As a result of limited placement options, documentation of placement decisions was not based on individual need for all students.</p>	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that placement in general education is considered first and that documentation reflects that decisions are based on individual student needs according to NJAC 6A:14-4.2(a)10. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
LRE	Continuum of programs-The district does have an in-class support option.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that there is a full continuum of programs available to meet the needs of all students with disabilities. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Transition to Adult Life	Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"- Documentation of transition planning for students who will be turning age 14 does not include all required components.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that transition planning is conducted for students if they will be turning 14 during the implementation period of the IEP. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Improvement Activity</b>
Graduation	IEP requirements - IEPs for students turning 14 during the implementation period of the IEP do not include graduation requirements.	The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that IEPs of students turning 14 during the implementation period of the IEP include graduation requirements. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

## Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Mount Arlington School District on May 10, 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 acknowledged for the 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 will bring about systemic change. The district is further acknowledged 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 in December 2005, the district's classification rate was 15.8%, which is above the state average of 14.9%. With regard to educational placement of students with disabilities, the district reported that same year 36% (40 of 112) of students with disabilities were educated in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day, which was below the state average of 42%. The district educated the vast majority of students with disabilities within the district; only 3% (3 of 112) of students with disabilities attended separate special education public and/or private school settings compared to the state average of 9.2% for that year. At the time of the monitoring, there were no opportunities for in-class support available in the district.

Interviews conducted with parents by phone indicated that some of the parents were very satisfied with the district's programs, services and staff. These parents expressed that the district is responsive to their concerns regarding evaluation and placement of their children in appropriate settings and have been supportive of their views and opinions at meetings. Two parents indicated that they were extremely dissatisfied by the district's communication and lack of support and knowledge regarding the nature of their child's disability.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included:

- Evaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs and Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included:

- Provision of programs
- Transfer procedures
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Content of written notice
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meetings
- Independent evaluations
- Child Find
- Direct referrals
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered
- Reevaluation meeting participants
- Reevaluations prior to age 5
- Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained



## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and disagreement
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- IEP meeting participants
- IEP 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
- 90 day timelines
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district
- Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessments and development of behavior intervention plans
- Interim alternative educational settings
- Manifestation determination

Areas of need originally identified by the district as noncompliant during self-assessment, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE, included:

- Extended school year
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access to IEPs)
- Notification of removal forwarded to case manager
- Suspension tracking system

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the following areas that remain noncompliant:

- Parent training
- Provision of related services
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meeting
- IEP required considerations and components

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Provision of a notice of a meeting
- Provision of written notice
- Health summaries
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Reevaluation timelines
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- Continuum of programs
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
- Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of transition service needs
- Graduation IEP requirements

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

The district is directed to implement improvement activities to correct all areas of non-compliance identified through the self-assessment process and during the on-site monitoring visit within six (6) months of receipt of this monitoring report. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance. The verification of correction of non-compliance will be conducted by the county office of education.