

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Mount Ephraim School District

**County:** Camden

**Monitoring Dates:** January 11 and 12, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Cheryl Mercial and Patricia Fair

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

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Mount Ephraim 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 Ephraim 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 Ephraim 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 and related service personnel and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's director of special services, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by telephone.

### **Data Summary:**

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district's classification rate for students with disabilities was 19.83%. This is higher than the state rate for that year of 16.80%. The district educated 50.8% of school-aged students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is also higher than the state average of 42.0%. The district's data for the 2005-2006 school year indicate that 100% of preschool students with disabilities are educated in a general education early childhood setting, which is significantly higher than the state average of 14.5% for that same year.

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

**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), Transition to Preschool, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and Statewide Assessment.

**Sections Not Applicable**

Mount Ephraim School District serves a K-8 population and the NJDOE monitoring team did not review: IEP statement of “needed transition services”, beginning at age 16, identification of post-secondary liaison, activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student’s desired outcomes, out-of-district student participation in graduation exercises and written notice of graduation. The district does not serve a population of students for whom these requirements apply.

**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. The areas were reviewed regarding students who are eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and those eligible for speech-language services (ESLS). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted in the table.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consent</li> <li>▪ Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>▪ Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Meetings (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Provision of written notice (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Content of written notice (ESERS)</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>▪ Referral process</li> <li>▪ Pre-referral interventions</li> <li>▪ Direct referrals</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting timelines (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting participants (ESERS)</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> </ul>

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Standardized assessments</li> <li>▪ Functional assessments (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Bilingual evaluations</li> <li>▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> </ul>
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Timelines (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Planning meeting participants (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Reevaluations prior to age 5</li> <li>▪ Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent (ESERS)</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting participants (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Eligibility criteria</li> <li>▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)</li> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting participants (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Implementation dates</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>▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)</li> <li>▪ 90-day timelines (ESERS)</li> </ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs”</li> </ul>
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP requirements</li> </ul>
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Class size</li> <li>▪ Age range</li> <li>▪ Common planning time</li> </ul>

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

**Areas of Noncompliance – Improvement Plan Review**

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. An improvement plan was submitted and implemented by the district. Compliance was verified, in all areas of need listed below, during the onsite monitoring visit.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area of Need</b>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Content of a notice of a meeting For a student beginning at age 14, the notice of meeting did not indicate that a purpose of the meeting was to develop a statement of transition.</li></ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings The district did not invite the student or any other agency that was likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services.</li></ul>
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Group size The district identified that, at times, the group size for the upper grade resource center program exceeded the required limits.</li></ul>

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

***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:

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice of a meeting (provision/content) (ESLS)-Notice of meeting is not consistently provided.</li>   <li>• Meetings (ESLS) -Required meetings are inconsistently held.</li>   <li>• Written notice (provision/content) (ESLS) -Written notice is not consistently provided.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that notice of a meeting, with the required components, is consistently provided to parents of students referred, evaluated and/or eligible for speech-language services. The district is advised to adopt notice of meeting letters developed by the NJDOE. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that required meetings are held for students referred, evaluated and/or eligible for speech and language services. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that written notice, with the required components, is consistently provided to parents of students referred and evaluated for eligibility for speech and language services. The district is advised to adopt written notice letters developed by the NJDOE. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health summary and vision and hearing screenings (ESERS) - Health summary and vision and hearing screenings are not being completed prior to the identification meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are completed prior to the identification meeting. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>

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

Section	Area	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification meeting timelines and participants (ESLS) - Identification meetings are inconsistently held and a general educator is often not in attendance. Documentation of referrals is not maintained; therefore, timelines could not be verified.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that identification meetings are held within 20 days of the initial referral for speech and language services and that the required participants are in attendance. Documentation of referrals is to be maintained. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational impact statement and functional assessment (ESLS) -Written reports do not consistently include an educational impact statement or all components of a functional assessment.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that speech evaluations include an educational impact statement and all required components of a functional assessment. The district must also implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESLS) -Reevaluation planning meetings are not being conducted when students are dismissed from speech.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure reevaluation planning meetings are held when students may no longer require speech-language services. The district must also implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>

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

Section	Area	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timelines (ESLS) -Reevaluation planning meetings are not being conducted every three years with required participants, unless the parent provides written consent to waive the reevaluation.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that reevaluation planning meetings are held, within three years for students eligible for speech-language services to determine continued eligibility. Beginning in September, 2006, new regulations allow waiving of reevaluations if written consent from the parent is obtained and the district agrees [NJAC 6A:14-3.8(a)1]. If a reevaluation is waived, written consent from the parent must be obtained and maintained in the student's file. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants (ESLS) -Eligibility meetings are inconsistently held and general educators do not typically attend.</li> <li>• Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) - Documentation is not maintained regarding the provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that eligibility meetings are held for students who have been evaluated for speech and language services and that required meeting participants are in attendance. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that parents of students evaluated for speech and language services are provided evaluation reports at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting and that documentation will be maintained. The district must also implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants (ESLS) -General educators are typically not in attendance at IEP meetings.</li>   <li>• IEP required considerations and components (ESLS) -The IEP does not consistently contain the required considerations and components.</li> </ul>	<p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure IEP meetings are held for students eligible for speech-language services and required participants are in attendance. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district is directed to implement activities to ensure that IEPs for students eligible for speech-language services have all the required components. The district is advised to adopt the speech IEP form developed by the NJDOE. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>



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

### ***Summary***

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Mount Ephraim School District on January 11 and 12, 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 areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will correct noncompliance.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district's classification rate for students with disabilities was 19.83%. This is higher than the state rate for that year of 16.80%. The district educated 50.8% of school-age students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is also higher than the state average of 42.0%. The district's data for the 2005-2006 school year indicate that that 100% of preschool students with disabilities are educated in a general education early childhood setting, which is significantly higher than the state average of 14.5% for that same year.

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), Transition to Preschool, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Discipline and Statewide Assessment.

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 [for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS), meetings (ESERS), provision of written notice (ESERS), content of written notice (ESERS), notices in native language, interpreters at meeting, independent evaluations, Child Find ages 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines (ESERS), identification meeting participants (ESERS), multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments (ESERS), bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS), timelines (ESERS), planning meeting participants (ESERS), reevaluations prior to age 5, procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained (ESERS), documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent (ESERS), meeting participants (ESERS), eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale (ESERS), statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability), copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS), meeting participants (ESERS), IEP required considerations and components (ESERS), 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 (ESERS), beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs", IEP requirements for graduation, class size, age range and common planning time.

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE were content of a notice of a meeting, student and agency invitation to IEP meetings and group size.

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

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding provision/content of notice of a meeting (ESLS), meetings (ESLS), provision/content of written notice (ESLS), identification timelines and meeting participants (ESLS), educational impact statement (ESLS), functional assessment (ESLS), reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESLS), timelines (ESLS), eligibility meeting participants (ESLS), copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS), IEP meeting participants (ESLS), IEP required considerations and components (ESLS),

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been approved. The Mount Ephraim School District is expected to implement the activities described in the report to achieve compliance in the areas of need identified during the on-site visit within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.