

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: North Caldwell

County: Essex

Monitoring Dates: February 8 and 9, 2006

Monitoring Team: Robert Schweitzer and Vanessa Leonard

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the North Caldwell School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the North Caldwell 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 North Caldwell 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 special education administrators, 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:

The North Caldwell School District is comprised of one elementary school that includes preschool through grade three and another elementary school that includes grades four through six. A review of the district's data for students with disabilities submitted by the North Caldwell School District indicates that during the 2004 school year, the district educated 52.6% (41 out of 78) 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 rate of 41.9% for that year. Additionally, 37.2% (29 out of 78) of students with disabilities were placed in general education between 40% and 80% of the school day.

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This rate is also above the state rate of 29.6%. In 2005, all 13 preschool students with disabilities were placed in integrated preschool settings.

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 self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant:

General Provisions, FAPE, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Least Restrictive Environment, Preschool Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessments, and Programs and Services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education 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). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

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 • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Provision of written notice • Content of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meeting
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 meetings timelines • Identification meetings participants
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - For students who may be ESLS and/or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • IEP required considerations and components • 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

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Sections with No Findings

Transition to Adult Life and Graduation are sections not part of the monitoring process due to age and grade range of the students enrolled in the district.

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant; however, during the monitoring visit, through interview and documentation, the monitors verified that all identified areas as compliant.

Section	Areas of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Evaluations- the district did not have a list of consultants and evaluators for use for independent evaluation as well as additional resources to supplement child study team evaluation. 	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and hearing screening- the district does not conduct audiometric screenings for every preschool student referred to the child study team. 	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)- teachers are not kept informed of IEP responsibilities when new IEPs are developed or when a child is newly classified during the school year. 	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the **North Caldwell School District** on February 8 and 9, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the school's improvement plan. The district is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process, the ability to identify all areas of need, as well as developing and implementing the improvement plan. Furthermore, the OSEP has verified that the district is presently compliant with all federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities submitted by the North Caldwell School District indicates that during the 2004 school year, the district educated 52.6% (41 out of 78) 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. Additionally, 37.2% (29 out of 78) of students with disabilities were placed in general education between 40% and 80% of the school day. This rate is also above the state rate of 29.6%. In 2005, all 13 preschool students with disabilities were placed in integrated preschool settings.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Most parents felt that the district is very responsive to their concerns regarding evaluation and placement of their children in appropriate settings. The majority of parents interviewed felt that their opinions were valued at meetings and that they were kept well-informed of their children's progress.

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
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Eligibility
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs and Services

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

- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Provision of written notice
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meeting
- Child Find ages 3-21
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- Direct referrals
- Health summary
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- IEP meeting participants
- IEP required considerations and components
- Implementation dates
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Standards where no findings of compliance could be made due to the age and grade range of students enrolled in the district include:

- Transition to Adult Life
- Graduation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding:

- Independent evaluations
- Vision and hearing screenings for preschoolers
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)

During the monitoring visit, the district was 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 are required. As a result, the improvement plan submitted to the OSEP will be reviewed for final approval. Verification of the implementation of the remaining activities in the improvement plan will be conducted by the Essex County Office of Education.