

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Oradell School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: February 17, 2006

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller and Michelle Fenwick

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Oradell School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Oradell 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 Oradell 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 special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, 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 during the 2004-2005 school year, the district, serving students grades Kindergarten to 6, educated 66.1% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day which was higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. Additionally, 22.9% of students with disabilities were in general education between 40 and 80% of the school day. The district's classification rate of 9.72 % was significantly lower than the state rate of 14.6%. Rates must be compared with caution since state rates include districts that include grades Kindergarten to grade 12.

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With regard to preschoolers, as reported in December 2005, the district educated 17 of the 19 preschoolers with disabilities in special education programs.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

The self-assessment process required the district to review implementation of federal and state regulations categorized into fifteen 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
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessment
- Programs & Services

Sections Not Reviewed

Transition to Adult Life and Graduation were sections not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students for whom these regulations apply.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the remaining sections reviewed, 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).

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
Procedural Safeguards	<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 • Interpreters at meetings • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find ages 3-21 • Referral process • Direct referrals • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi-disciplinary evaluations• Standardized assessments• Bilingual evaluations
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting participants• Eligibility criteria• Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale• Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continuum of programs

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Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The table includes the results of the review of the district's improvement plan and identifies those areas where correction of noncompliance was verified during the on-site visit.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transfer procedures 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notices in native language 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-referral interventions 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision and hearing screenings 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health summary- Health summaries are not provided to child study team prior to identification meetings 	Improvement plan is sufficient.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) 	Improvement plan is sufficient.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Functional assessments- Functional assessments did not include all required components. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS). The improvement plan is sufficient for students eligible for speech-language services (ESLS).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators- Reports did not include all required components. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS). The improvement plan is sufficient for students eligible for speech-language services (ESLS).
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
Least Restrictive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities- Students in out of district placements are not notified regarding nonacademic and extracurricular activities. 	Improvement plan is sufficient.

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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	Improvement Plan Activity
LRE	Documentation of LRE decisions, ages 3 through 21 – IEPs for students educated in special education settings do not contain documentation of consideration of general education placement.	The district is directed to ensure that least restrictive environment determinations are documented in the students IEP, including the specific supplementary aids and services that were considered, the reasons why each were rejected and the content areas where removal from general education is being considered (for students who will be removed from general education more than 20% of their day). It is suggested that the district adopt the LRE page from the State IEP. Improvement plan activities must include in-service and administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs	Since all IEPs did not contain evidence of the appropriate consideration of general education placement, opportunity for all students to access all general education programs could not be evaluated. Verification of this issue will be conducted when decision making documentation is reviewed.
	Placement decisions based on students’ individual needs	Since all IEPs did not contain evidence of the appropriate consideration of general education placement, decisions based on individual needs of students could not be evaluated. Verification of this issue will be conducted when decision making documentation is reviewed.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Oradell School District on February 17, 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. 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 during the 2004-2005 school year, the district, serving students grades Kindergarten to 6, educated 66.1% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day which was higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. Additionally, 22.9% of students with disabilities were in general education between 40 and 80% of the school day. The district's classification rate of 9.72 % was significantly lower than the state rate of 14.6%. Rates must be compared with caution since state rates include districts that include grades Kindergarten to grade 12.

Parents were interviewed via telephone. Parents expressed their overall satisfaction with district programs and services.

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

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessment
- Programs & 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 (IEP) implementation
- Extended school year
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision and content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Provision and content of written notice
- Interpreters at meetings
- Independent evaluations
- Child Find (ages 3-21)
- Referral process
- Direct referrals
- Identification meeting timelines and participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- Continuum of programs

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Areas of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE are:

- Transfer procedures
- Notice in native language
- Pre-referral interventions
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Functional assessments (ESERS)
- Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESERS)
- Copies of evaluation reports to parents

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

- Health summary
- Functional assessments (ESLS)
- Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESLS)
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Notification of and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need regarding:

- Documentation of least restrictive environment decisions (ages 3 through 21)

The following areas of need will be reviewed once documentation of placement decisions meets compliance requirements:

- Placements decisions based on students' individual needs
- Opportunities for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been approved. The district is expected to implement the activities described in the monitoring report to achieve compliance in all of the areas of need identified during self-assessment, and those 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.