

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Rochelle Park School District

**County:** Bergen

**Monitoring Dates:** January 12 and 13, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Gladys Miller and Tracey Pettiford-Bugg

## ***Background Information:***

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Rochelle Park School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Rochelle Park 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 Rochelle Park 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 during the on-site visit.

## **Data Summary**

During the 2004-2005 school year, the district's overall classification rate for students with disabilities, not including students who were eligible for speech, was 14.2 % which is slightly lower than the state average of 14.6%. A review of the district's placement data for students ages 6-21 indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 47.6% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is higher than the state average of 39.2% for that year. However, the district has placed nearly all 3 and 4-year-old pre-school students with disabilities in restrictive settings such as approved private schools for the disabled or in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers. In 2005, 4

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of the 6 preschoolers with disabilities were in a special education setting full time within the district. Although the percentage of preschoolers in special education settings is high, the number of students affected is small. The district was not found noncompliant in this area but is advised to review options for general education placement for preschoolers.

**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, Reevaluation, IEP, Transition to Preschool, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

**Areas and Standards not Applicable**

Age 16 IEP statement of needed transition services, identification of post-secondary liaison, activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student’s desired outcomes, out-of-district student participation in graduation activities and written notice of graduation were areas not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students for whom these services apply.

**Areas Demonstrating Compliance**

The following areas, within the 15 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). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation</li> <li>• Extended school year</li> <li>• Provision of programs</li> <li>• Provision of related services</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consent</li> <li>• Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>• Provision of notice of a meeting</li> <li>• Content of notice of a meeting</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Provision of written notice</li> <li>• Content of written notice</li> <li>• Interpreters at meeting</li> <li>• Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Find Ages 3-21</li> </ul>

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<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referral process</li> <li>• Pre-referral Interventions</li> <li>• Direct Referrals</li> <li>• Identification meeting timelines</li> <li>• Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> <li>• Educational Impact Statement</li> <li>• Standardized Assessments</li> <li>• Bilingual evaluations</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>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation of LRE decisions</li> <li>• Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs</li> <li>• Continuum of programs</li> <li>• Placement decisions based on students' individual needs</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>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of removal forwarded to case manager</li> <li>• Suspension tracking system</li> <li>• Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students</li> <li>• IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days</li> <li>• Procedures for determination of change in placement</li> <li>• Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement</li> <li>• Short-term removals that are not a change in placement—school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided</li> <li>• Interim Alternative Educational Settings</li> <li>• Manifestation determinations</li> </ul>
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP requirements</li> </ul>

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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 district must revise the improvement plan for any area where there is an 'X' in the 'Needs Revision' column.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Plan Is Sufficient</b>	<b>Plan Needs Revision</b>	<b>Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance</b>
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transfer Procedures</li> </ul>			X
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Notice in Native Language</li> </ul>			X
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Health summary</li> <li>▪ Vision and hearing screenings</li> </ul>			X X
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Functional assessments – evaluations do not contain all required components</li> <li>▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> <li>▪ Acceptance or rejection of outside evaluations</li> </ul>			X
				X
				X
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents – copies not provided 10 days prior to eligibility meeting</li> </ul>			X
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district</li> </ul>			X
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan</li> </ul>			X

**No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit.**

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### ***Summary***

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Rochelle Park School District on January 12 and 13, 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 OSEP as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations. In addition, all areas identified as areas of need in the self-assessment were corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit.

During the 2004-2005 school year, the district's overall classification rate for students with disabilities, not including students who were eligible for speech, was 14.2 % which is slightly lower than the state average of 14.6%. A review of the district's placement data for students ages 6-21 indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 47.6% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is higher than the state average of 39.2% for that year. However, the district has placed nearly all 3 and 4-year-old pre-school students with disabilities in restrictive settings such as approved private schools for the disabled or in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers. In 2005, 4 of the 6 preschoolers with disabilities were in a special education setting full time within the district. Although the percentage of preschoolers in special education settings is high, the number of students affected is small. The district was not found noncompliant in this area but is advised to review options for general education placement for preschoolers.

During interviews conducted with parents during the on-site visit, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Individual parents stated that the special services department, and the ways in which the department ensured their children's needs were met, were praiseworthy. Parents were very positive about the newly developed social skills program.

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant: General Provisions, Reevaluation, IEP, Transition to Preschool, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas within the remaining sections identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include oversight or individualized education program (IEP) implementation, extended school year, provision of programs, provision of related services, 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, Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, educational impact statement, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility, documentation of LRE decisions, opportunity for all students to access all general education programs, continuum of programs, placement decisions based on students' individual needs, beginning at age 14, IEP statement of transition service needs, notification of removal

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forwarded to case manager, suspension tracking system, discipline procedures employed equitably for all students, IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days, procedures for determination of change in placement, short-term removals resulting in a change of placement, short-term removals that are not a change in placement, interim alternative educational settings and manifestation determinations.

Areas of need originally identified by the district as noncompliant, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE are transfer procedures, notice in native language, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance or rejection of outside evaluations, copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meeting, notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district, procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan.

No revisions to the district's improvement plan are required. The district is considered compliant in all areas reviewed as part of the monitoring process. The district is expected to sustain its routine administrative oversight, as well as provide training and technical assistance, on an as needed basis in response to changes that occur in the school district and federal and state laws in order to remain compliant.