

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

District: Rumson School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: May 9 and June 20, 2005

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the **Rumson School District** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Rumson 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 **Rumson School District** demonstrated implementation of the improvement plan in all areas.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted monitoring activities that included a comprehensive desk audit, interviews with the supervisor, child study team members, speech therapists and parents and held a public focus group meeting for parents/community members at the Forrestdale School on May 5, 2005 to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and has implemented the improvement plan that has brought the district into compliance in all areas.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data indicated the 145 students eligible for special education programs and services represent a classification rate of 14.6 % which approximates the state average of 14.35%. The district reported that for the past three years, an average of 60% (88 out of 145) of all special education students were classified under the category of specific learning disability (SLD). Of those students, 64.4% (56 out of 87) spend less than 80% of their school day with their non-disabled peers. The district's analysis of this information indicated that there was a lack of supports in general education programs that led to many unwarranted SLD classifications. The district reported that prior to this school year, the lack of supports in general education programs necessitated classification of many students from general education in order to

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

meet the needs of students who may not have met the criteria for classification. However, staff members from the Office of Special Education Programs have verified that the district has implemented all areas of the improvement plan that include an increase in-class support programs that reflect IEP requirements; provision of staff development regarding differentiated instruction, use of supplementary aids and services, and classification criteria; intervention and referral services procedures; and pre-referral interventions.

The district's data also indicated that presently, all preschool students with disabilities have been placed in self-contained classes. Although an in-district integrated preschool program is not available at this time, arrangements have been made for appropriate placements of preschool students with disabilities in community preschool programs.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

Statewide Assessment and Graduation Requirements were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the monitoring process.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of public information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of staff development and parent training. As part of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of related service documentation of frequency, duration and location, transfer students, length of school day/year, facilities, and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs and related services, goals and objectives for counseling, adaptive physical education, assistive technology, and hearing aid checks. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of surrogate parents and consent.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of content and provision of notices, notices in native language, independent evaluations, and interpreter/translator at meetings. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of direct referrals, identification meetings with required participants convened within the 20-day timeline, health/medical summary and vision/hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, and principal approval of child study team referrals. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of standardized assessments, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services, inclusion of the educational impact statement from the classroom teacher in evaluation reports for students eligible for speech and language services, written reports, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of functional assessment. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that this area has been addressed by the district and is now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during monitoring process.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of 3-yr reevaluation timelines, reevaluation planning meeting with required participants, and reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of reevaluations completed without undue delay following a parental request. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that this area has been addressed by the district and is now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of eligibility meetings with required participants and signatures of agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of eligibility criteria, provision of parental notice of eligibility, statement of eligibility for *Specific Learning Disability* (SLD), and provision of evaluation reports to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility conference. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of present levels of educational performance statements (PLEPS), goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority and teacher knowledge and responsibility to implement IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation of general education teachers at IEP meetings, IEP considerations and required statements, the provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, annual review and 90-day timelines, IEP oversight, IEP revisions, and progress reporting. As a result of the monitoring process, these areas were determined to be corrected and may now be closed out.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individual decision-making, use of appropriate supplementary aids and services in general education, LRE consideration and documentation, regular education access within the district, integrated preschool programs, notification to out-of-district students of nonacademic / extracurricular activities within district, and sufficient in-class support programs. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of transition from preschool to kindergarten. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that this area has been addressed by the district and is now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of post-secondary transition activities, interests and preferences, IEP documentation, and invitations to students. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of class and group size, age range, and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consultation time between regular and special education teachers and the use modified

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

instruction materials. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of access to student records, staff knowledge of student record policies, and documentation of other student records on cumulative files. As a result of the monitoring process, it was determined that these areas have been addressed by the district and are now compliant.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

Special education monitoring was conducted in the **Rumson School District** on May 9 and June 20, 2005. The purpose 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 highly commended for the areas that were determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs to be compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations. Additionally, all areas of need were identified by the district during the self-assessment process. The district is further commended for implementing the special education improvement plans that were developed during self assessment.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data indicated the 145 students eligible for special education programs and services represent a classification rate of 14.6 % which approximates the state average of 14.35%. The district reported that for the past three years, an average of 60% (88 out of 145) of all special education students were classified under the category of specific learning disability (SLD). Of those students 64.4% (56 out of 87) spend less than 80% of their school day with their non-disabled peers. The district's analysis of this information indicated that there was a lack of supports in general education programs that led to many unwarranted SLD classifications. The district reported that prior to the 2004-2005 school year, the lack of supports in general education programs necessitated classification of many students from general education in order to meet the needs of students who may not have met the criteria for classification. However, the Office of Special Education Programs verified that the district has implemented all areas of the improvement plan that include an increase in-class support programs that reflect IEP requirements; provision of staff development regarding differentiated instruction, use of supplementary aids and services, classification criteria; I&RS procedures; and pre-referral interventions.

The district's data also indicated that during the 2004-2005 school year, all preschool students with disabilities have been placed in self-contained classes. Although an in-district integrated preschool program is not available at this time, arrangements have been made for appropriate placements of preschool disabled students in community preschool programs.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services and communication between themselves and staff. The majority of parents praised the new administration for implementing needed changes in the district that have greatly improved special education programs and the implementation of IEPs. Parents commented on the increase in progress that their children have made this school year.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the monitoring visit included policies and procedures; dissemination of public information; documentation of location of related services; transfer students; length of school day and year; facilities; certification; surrogate parents; consent; direct referrals; identification meetings with required participants convened within the 20-day timeline; health summary; vision/hearing screenings; standardized assessments; multidisciplinary evaluations; bilingual evaluations; written reports; acceptance/ rejection

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

of reports; 3-year reevaluation timelines; reevaluation planning meetings with required participants; reevaluations by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool; eligibility meetings with required participants; signatures of agreement /disagreement with eligibility; present levels of education performance statements; goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards; age of majority; teacher access/responsibility to implement IEPs; preschool transition planning conferences; IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three; suspension notification to case manager; suspension tracking; manifestation determination meetings; functional behavioral assessments; behavior intervention plans; interim alternative educational settings; provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students; statewide assessment participation; approved accommodations/modifications for statewide assessment; IEP statewide assessment documentation; alternate proficiency assessments; graduation requirements documented in IEPs of students transitioning into high school; age range; and class and group size.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development; parent training; extended school year; provision of programs and related services; goals and objectives for counseling; hearing aid checks; adaptive physical education; assistive technology; content of notices; provision of notices; notices in native language; interpreters; independent evaluations; child find; referral process; pre-referral interventions; functional assessment; reevaluations completed without undue delay following parental request; eligibility criteria; provision of evaluation reports to parents; provision of parental notice of eligibility; statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability; participation of general education teachers at IEPs; considerations and required statements; annual review and 90-day timelines; provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation; IEP implementation oversight; IEP revisions; progress reporting; individual decision-making process; least restrictive environment consideration and documentation; use of appropriate supplementary aids and services; integrated preschool opportunities; regular education access within the district; notification to out-of-district students of nonacademic/extracurricular activities within district; sufficient in-class support programs; post-secondary transition activities; interests and preferences, IEP transition documentation; student invitations to transition meetings; transition from preschool to kindergarten; consultation time between general and special education teachers; modified instructional materials; access to student records; staff knowledge of student record policy; and documentation of other locations of student records in the central file.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process. All areas originally identified as areas of need have been verified as compliant by the Office of Special Education Programs. No further action with regard to the improvement plan is necessary.