

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Runnemede School District

**County:** Camden

**Monitoring Dates:** December 5 and 6, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** J. Harmelin, C. Carthew, C. Merial

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

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Runnemede School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Runnemede 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 Runnemede School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an on-site monitoring visit 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, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialists 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 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 43.9% 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 41.9% for that year. Additionally, 9% (16 students) of students with disabilities attended school in separate private or public schools outside of the district, compared to the state average of 10.7%. The district has placed nearly all 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers. The district's three-year-old students attend community-based preschools and this year, some will have the opportunity to participate in the district's preschool program.

**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:

Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE), Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, and Statewide Assessment.

**Areas Demonstrating Compliance**

The following areas 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-language services (ESLS). Areas compliant for only one group are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
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>▪ Meetings</li> <li>▪ Provision of written notice</li> <li>▪ Content of written notice</li> <li>▪ Notices in native language</li> <li>▪ Interpreters at meeting</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>▪ Health summary</li> <li>▪ Identification meetings timelines</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> <li>▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS)</li> <li>▪ Standardized assessments</li> <li>▪ Functional assessments (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Bilingual evaluations</li> <li>▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meetings</li> <li>▪ Eligibility criteria</li> <li>▪ Statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability)</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESLS)</li> <li>▪ Implementation dates</li> <li>▪ IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>▪ Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to</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>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</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documentation of LRE decisions</li> <li>▪ Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district</li> <li>▪ Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs</li> <li>▪ Placement decisions based on students' individual needs</li> </ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identification of post-secondary liaison</li> </ul>
Graduation Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Student participation in promotional activities (in-district and out-of-district)</li> </ul>
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Class sizes</li> <li>▪ Age range</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. The district must revise the improvement plan for any area where there is an ‘X’ in the ‘Needs Revision’ column.

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent/Professional Training—There is a need for increased parental participation in parent development activities, and professional training is needed regarding behavior intervention plans and instructional strategies.</li> </ul>	X		
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents. Copies are not provided 10 days prior to eligibility meeting. <b>The district’s improvement plan must be revised to include sending reports for students evaluated for speech and language services.</b></li> </ul>		X	
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuum—In-class support is not offered at all grade levels.</li> </ul>	X		
Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Common Planning Time—Resource teachers are not provided with enough planning time with general education teachers.</li> </ul>	X		

**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	Notice of a Meeting— Content-Notice does not inform parents of their right to invite others with expertise and does not include transition as the purpose of the meeting, when required.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notices of a meeting include all required components. The district is advised to adopt the NJDOE notices of meetings in order to ensure compliance. Activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that parents are appropriately informed about meetings.
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	Vision and Hearing Screenings-The district does not consistently conduct vision and hearing screenings prior to the initial identification meeting.  Identification Meeting Participants-A general education teacher does not attend identification meetings for preschool students.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that vision and hearing screenings are conducted for all students referred to the Child Study Team prior to the initial identification meeting. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all areas of a suspected disability are considered for a student.  The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a general education teacher consistently attends identification meetings for all students, including preschool students. These activities must include an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required members of the team are present to make decisions for a student.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Evaluation	Functional Assessments (ESLS)—The speech-language specialist does not consistently conduct structured classroom observations for students being evaluated for speech and language services.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all components of a functional assessment are completed for students being evaluated for speech and language services. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that eligibility decisions are made for students with complete information.
Eligibility	<p>Meeting Participants—A general education teacher does not consistently attend eligibility meetings for preschool students.</p> <p>Signature of Agreement and/or Disagreement Rationale—Child Study Team members who conduct initial evaluations do not document agreement and/or disagreement with eligibility decisions on the conference report.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a general education teacher consistently attends eligibility meetings for all students, specifically, preschool students. These activities must include an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required members of the team are present to make eligibility decisions for a student.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all components of the eligibility conference report are completed. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that parents are informed about any evaluators' disagreement with eligibility decisions.</p>
IEP	Meeting Participants—A general education teacher does not consistently attend IEP meetings for students placed in preschool and in self-contained classes.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a general education teacher consistently attends IEP meetings for all students, specifically, preschool students and students placed in self-contained classes at the Volz Elementary School. These activities must include an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required members of the IEP team are present to make decisions for a student.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Transition to Adult Life	<p>Age 14 Transition Service Needs— The district does not document all components of a student’s transition needs statement in the IEP for the year in which the student will turn age 14.</p> <p>Student/Agency Invitation-The district does not invite students or appropriate agencies to IEP meetings when transition is being discussed.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all components of the age 14 transition service needs statement are completed for a student turning age 14. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and an administrative oversight component to ensure that transition planning begins when required.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that students who are age 14 or who will turning age 14 within the length of that IEP are invited to IEP meetings, and that appropriate agencies are invited to attend those meetings as well. These activities must include procedures, in-service training, and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required participants of the IEP team are present to make decisions for a student.</p>
Graduation Requirements	IEP Documentation— The district does not document graduation requirements for students who are turning age 14 or older.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that graduation requirements are documented in the IEP for students who are 14 or older and those who will be turning age 14 during the timeframe of the IEP. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that graduation is considered for transition purposes.
Programs and Services	In-Class Support- The district utilizes a paraprofessional to provide in-class support (ICS) services for students who have ICS written into their IEP at Bingham Elementary School.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a special education teacher provides in-class support services when ‘in-class support’ services are in the IEP. If the services of a paraprofessional are needed as per the IEP team, the IEP should reflect the services to be provided and indicate that they will be provided by a paraprofessional. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that IEPs reflect the services being provided.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Programs and Services (continued)	Group Sizes for Speech Therapy- Groups for speech therapy include more than 5 students. IEPs state that students are to receive 30 minutes of in-class speech therapy, and the therapist services 13 students per 30 minutes at the Bingham Elementary School.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs correctly identify the amount of in-class speech therapy students receive, utilizing the group size guide, no more than 5 students per group at a time. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that group sizes for in-class services are in compliance.



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

### ***Summary***

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Runnemede School District on December 5 and 6, 2005. 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 commended 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 commended for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the OSEP 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 educated 43.9% 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 41.9% for that year. Additionally, 9% (16 students) of students with disabilities attended school in separate private or public schools outside of the district, compared to the state average of 10.7%. The district has placed nearly all 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers. The district's three-year-old students attend community-based preschools and this year, some will have the opportunity to participate in the district's preschool program.

During interviews conducted with parents by telephone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Parents stated that their children are challenged academically and that they receive all notices of a meeting and written notice. Parents also stated that the district works well with them and communicates often with them regarding their children's progress.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE), Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, 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, meetings, provision and content of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find ages 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, identification meeting timelines, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments (ESERS), bilingual evaluations, written reports, educational impact statement from classroom teacher, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility, IEP meetings, required statements and components (ESLS), copy of IEP provided to parents prior to implementation, implementation dates, annual reviews, teacher knowledge and access to IEPs, 90-day timelines, documentation of LRE decisions, notification/participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, individualized decision-making, student participation in promotional activities for in-district and out-of-district students, class sizes, and age range.

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

***Summary (continued)***

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, professional training for staff regarding behavior intervention plans and instructional strategies, copies of evaluation reports to parents, continuum and common planning time.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding content of notice of a meeting, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting participants, functional assessments for students receiving speech and language services (ESLS), eligibility meeting participants, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, IEP meeting participants, required consideration and statements for students receiving special education and related services (ESERS), age 14 transition service needs, student and agency invitation, IEP graduation requirements, in-class support and group sizes for speech therapy.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Runnemede School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address those areas that require revisions.