

Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Sandyston-Walpack Township Public School District

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: June 6, 2006

Monitoring Team: Michelle Fenwick, and Jenifer Spear

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Sandyston-Walpack Township Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Sandyston-Walpack Township Public 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 Sandyston-Walpack Township Public 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:

The Sandyston-Walpack school district educates students with disabilities in preschool through sixth grade. In December 2005, the district reported that of the 179 students enrolled, 15.08% were classified. This rate was below the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The district educated 38.5% of students with disabilities, ages 6 through 12, in general education settings for more than 80% of the day. The remaining students were educated in general education settings between 40% and 80% of the time.

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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
- Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

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). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral process • Direct referrals • Health summary • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standardized assessments • Educational impact statement (ESLS) • Functional assessments • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators
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)

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Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas, in the chart below, were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The third column identifies the compliance status at the time of the onsite visit and additional activities that must be implemented for areas where the improvement plan was insufficient.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-referral Interventions - The district identified that their Intervention and Referral Services procedures were not effective to meet the needs of students prior to determining a potential disability. 	In order to comply with current regulations, the district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the frequency, duration, location and effectiveness of interventions in the general education class are documented prior to referral to the child study team.
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to eligibility meetings - The district identified that Speech Evaluations were not being provided to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area with an oversight mechanism in place to ensure ongoing compliance.

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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. The district must ensure that for each area, an oversight mechanism is implemented to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

Section	Area	Improvement Activity
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision and hearing screenings – Results of vision and hearing screenings were not forwarded to the child study team prior to identification meetings. 	The district is directed to ensure that vision and hearing screenings are conducted for students referred to the child study team and that results are forwarded to the child study team prior to the identification meeting.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations – Based on a review of student records, it was determined that for students referred to the child study team for a language problem, evaluations were not conducted as required. An evaluation by the speech-language specialist and a minimum of one other child study team member are required. 	The district is directed to ensure that evaluation by a minimum of 2 child study team members is conducted for each student referred to the child study team. For students referred for a language problem, the speech-language specialist is considered one of the two members of the child study team.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Sandyston-Walpack Township Public School District on June 6, 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 correction of noncompliance. 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.

The Sandyston-Walpack school district educates students with disabilities in preschool through sixth grade. In December 2005, the district reported that of the 179 students enrolled, 15.08% were classified. This rate was below the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The district educated 38.5% of students with disabilities, ages 6 through 12, in general education settings for more than 80% of the day. The remaining students were educated in general education settings between 40% and 80% of the time.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff.

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 (FAPE)
- Procedural Safeguards
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

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

- Child Find
- Referral process
- Direct referrals
- Health summary
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Standardized assessments
- Functional Assessment
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (SLD)

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An area of need originally identified by the district as noncompliant, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit, included:

- Copies of evaluation reports to parents

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

- Pre-referral interventions

Additional areas of need were found during the onsite monitoring process regarding:

- Vision and hearing screenings
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations

The district is directed to implement improvement activities to correct all areas of non-compliance identified through the self-assessment process and during the on-site monitoring visit within six (6) months of receipt of this monitoring report. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance. The verification of correction of non-compliance will be conducted by the county office of education.