



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

students who might have been suspended; and, the counseling-based anger management program. These programs include students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers.

The district is also commended for the summer program, entitled School and Home Achievement with a Partnership for Education (SHAPE), which offers language arts and math instruction, organizational skills training, and opportunities for community and vocational involvement. During the school year, the district also offers after school tutoring, the organization management study skills (OMSS) course, the Reading ASSIST Institute (RAI), the High Motivation Program, and Earobics. These programs are designed to promote academic achievement for all students.

For students with disabilities, the district is commended for its Preparing for Academic and Vocational Education (PAVE) program and the Transition Alternative Program (TAP) which provide opportunities for students with significant challenges to be educated within the Delsea Regional School District. The COIN Career Community system, which provides Internet accessible career exploration and planning, also assists students with disabilities in identifying career goals.

The district also provides a wide variety of clubs and activities open to all students, including those with disabilities. The district newsletter, The Delsea Crusader's Banner, informs students educated in and out of district about all school programs.

### ***Data Summary:***

For students ages twelve to twenty-one, for the past three years, approximately 22.7% of students with disabilities have spent more than eighty percent of the school day with non-disabled peers. Approximately 26% of students with disabilities spent less than forty percent of the school day with non-disabled peers. In contrast to the state averages for the same periods (41.5% and 17.8%, respectively), these are recognized as areas of need and are addressed through the district's improvement plan.

The district's classification rate has been above the state average for the past four years at 14.3%, 15.2%, 16.8% and 17.1% respectively. The district indicated a significant number of students are entering the district already classified; however, upon reevaluation, the district continues to find nearly all students eligible for special education and related services. The district has identified a need to reduce the classification rate and will collaborate with sending schools to identify strategies.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:***

**Free, Appropriate Public Education** and **Student Records** were determined by the district during self-assessment and confirmed by the Office of Special Education Programs during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit to be areas of compliance for the Delsea Regional School District.

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

### ***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 IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of in-service training for general education and special education staff, child study team and parents, regarding effective transition practices for students preparing for adult life. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to conduct training for staff on transition issues.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section III: Procedural Safeguards***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, notice of meetings, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents and written notice timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, summer referrals, and identification meeting timelines and participants.

Areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding the health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings** – Record review and staff interviews indicated that, at the time of the identification meeting, information concerning the health summary and results of the vision and hearing screenings are not available.

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

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities that will ensure that the school nurse develops health summaries and conducts vision and hearing screenings on every child referred for an evaluation and provided to the team prior to the identification meeting. Implementation of these activities will ensure the identification team members have the necessary information to identify suspected areas of disability and to determine the assessments needed to make an appropriate eligibility determination. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

### ***Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports, and documentation of acceptance or rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of functional assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address functional assessments.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section VI: Reevaluation***

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of reevaluation planning meetings and participants at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address reevaluation timelines.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section VII: Eligibility***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of eligibility meetings, participants, and statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of classification rate, eligibility standards/criteria, and copy of evaluation reports to parents

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

ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding signatures of agreement or disagreement with the eligibility status.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Signatures of Agreement or Disagreement** – Record review and staff interviews indicated that the Individualized Education Program (IEP) team does not express assenting or dissenting opinions regarding eligibility determinations for students eligible for special education or for students eligible for speech and language services only. As a result, teachers are not afforded the opportunity to express a dissenting opinion and parents are not made aware of this point of view regarding eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities that will ensure that district personnel have an opportunity to state in writing whether they agree or disagree with eligibility determinations. Further, the district will document the rationale for any disagreement. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents are fully informed of any differing opinions regarding these eligibility determinations. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

### ***Section VIII: IEP***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of IEP meetings and participants, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives, age of majority, teacher access to IEP and knowledge of responsibilities, and parental opportunity to observe proposed placement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of 90-day timelines, copy of IEP to parent prior to implementation, provision of programming and services prior to implementation date of IEP, considerations and required statements in IEP, particularly regarding least restrictive environment statements and supplementary aids and services, progress review by IEP team at annual reviews, Core Curriculum Content Standards, and annual review timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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

### **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of considerations and documentation regarding placement in the least restrictive environment and notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of supplemental aids and services, particularly to ensure a special education student's success in the general education setting. Further, the district indicated a lack of availability of programs and services that provide increased access to general education for students with disabilities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### **Section X: Transition to Preschool**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

The Delsea Regional School District services students from seventh grade through twelfth grade and is not required to address issues of preschool transition.

### **Section X: Transition to Adult Life**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the area of student invitations to IEP meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, age sixteen needed transition services and how these services are linked to current instructional needs, outside agency involvement, and student interests, surveys and assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding consideration and documentation of selected courses of study for students turning 14.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Age Fourteen Courses of Study** – Record review and staff interviews indicated that the district is not including courses of study relevant to the transition service needs under the applicable parts of the student's IEP.

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

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a statement of the transition services needs includes consideration and documentation of appropriate courses of study, relevant to the student's interests/preferences. Implementation of these activities will ensure instruction is focused on preparing students to achieve successful post-secondary outcomes. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the activities.**

### ***Section XI: Discipline***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, documentation to case manager, and suspension tracking.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of disciplinary practices specifically, differing tolerance levels and consequences for disabled and non-disabled students, discipline procedures, functional behavioral assessments/behavioral intervention plans, interim alternative educational setting, and manifestation determination. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section XII: Statewide Assessment***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of student participation in statewide assessments, IEP documentation, accommodations and modifications, alternative proficiency assessment, Special Review Assessment process and modifications to graduation requirements related to statewide assessment.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the preparation of students with disabilities for statewide assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section XIII: Graduation***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of out-of-district student participation and written notice of graduation.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of IEP graduation requirements. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

### ***Section XIV: Programs and Services***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of common planning time and class sizes. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has begun to implement its improvement plan to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, follow-up interviews and comprehensive desk audit.



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

## **Summary**

Special education monitoring was completed in the Delsea Regional School District on September 20, 2004. The purpose of this phase of the monitoring process 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 its exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that, with only minor revision, will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas identified as compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Free, Appropriate Public Education and Student Records were sections demonstrating compliance with all standards.

A review of data indicated that Delsea students with disabilities spend less of their school day in instructional settings with non-disabled peers compared with state averages. The district has identified a need for more supplemental aids and services to support students with disabilities general education settings. Additionally, although a significant number of students are entering Delsea already classified, upon reevaluation, the district continues to find nearly all students eligible for special education and related services. The district has addressed these needs through their improvement plan.

At a public focus group meeting held prior to the comprehensive desk audit, forty-one parents, staff and community members expressed their overwhelming satisfaction with the district's exceptional programs and services, the academically challenging courses and instruction, and the devoted, approachable and knowledgeable teaching staff, child study team, and director of special services. Participants noted that special education timelines are maintained, meetings are conducted when necessary and with all required personnel, parents are made welcome and a part of the process, IEP documents are kept current, and the range of programming options is appropriate. Furthermore, participants remarked favorably on the district's attention to least restrictive environment issues, out-of-district student involvement, the alignment of IEP goals and objectives with Core Curriculum Content Standards, and extended school year considerations and services. Parents commented that it is a smooth and supportive process for students who transition from the middle school into the high school, as well as for those students who graduate and move on to some post-secondary experience. However, parents complained that, for this school year only, middle school students experienced significant scheduling problems and the lack of related services and other IEP-mandated services during the first weeks of school. No systemic issues of noncompliance were brought to light at this focus group meeting.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during monitoring activities included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, consent, notice of meetings, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports, documentation of acceptance or rejection of reports, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, eligibility meetings and participants, statement of eligibility, IEP meetings and participants, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives, age of majority, teacher access to IEP and

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

knowledge of responsibilities, parental opportunity to observe proposed placement, Oberti, considerations and documentation, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, student invite to post-secondary transition planning, disciplinary procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, documentation of removal from program to case manager, suspension tracking, student participation in statewide assessments, IEP documentation, accommodations and modifications, alternative proficiency assessment, Special Review Assessment process, the process for exemption from passing statewide assessments, out-of-district student participation in graduation, written notice of graduation, age-range, group sizes for speech, and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training for general education and special education staff, child study team and parents, regarding effective transition practices for students preparing for post-secondary experiences, surrogate parents, written notice timelines, functional assessments, reevaluation timelines, classification rate, eligibility standards/criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting, 90-day timelines, copy of IEP to parent prior to implementation, provision of programming and services prior to implementation date of IEP, considerations and required statements in IEP, particularly regarding least restrictive environment statements and supplementary aids and services, progress review by IEP team at annual reviews, Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines, supplemental aids and services, particularly to ensure a special education student's success in the general education setting, availability of programs and services, decision-making process, general education access for students with disabilities, age fourteen transition service needs, age sixteen needed transition services, disciplinary practices, discipline procedures, functional behavioral assessments/behavioral intervention plans, interim alternative educational setting, manifestation determination, preparation of students with disabilities for statewide assessments and proficiency rates, common planning time and special education class sizes.

The focus group meeting, additional interviews and comprehensive desk audit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding health summary, vision and hearing screenings, signatures of agreement or disagreement, and age fourteen courses of study.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Delsea Regional School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.