

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Stockton Borough

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: November 15, 2005

Monitoring Team: Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Stockton Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Stockton Borough 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 Stockton 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) 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. All student records were also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's child study team members and special education coordinator. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data indicate that the Stockton Borough School District has a classification rate of 11%, significantly lower than the state average of 14.6%. Additionally, the district is to be commended for the fact that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated all students with disabilities (7) in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day (compared with the state average of 39.2% for that year).

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Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education during the monitoring process as compliant: **General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Discipline, Transition, and Statewide Assessment.**

As Stockton Borough is a K-8 district, there are no findings in the area of **Graduation Requirements.**

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Procedural Safeguards– For students who may be eligible for speech and language services (ESLS) or eligible for special education and related services (ESERS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consent ▪ Written notice- provision ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of notice of a meeting ▪ Content of notice of a meeting ▪ Meetings ▪ Notices in native language ▪ Interpreters at meeting ▪ Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification meeting timelines ▪ Identification meeting participants ▪ Child Find
Evaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) ▪ Standardized Assessments ▪ Functional assessments (ESERS only) ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Independent evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators
Eligibility- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ Eligibility Criteria ▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale ▪ Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability- SLD)
Individualized Education Plan (IEP) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ Implementation dates ▪ IEP provided to parent prior to implementation ▪ Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP ▪ Annual reviews completed by June 30 ▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)

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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.

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written notice-content – written notices do not contain all required components 	X		
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health Summary – not provided prior to identification meetings ▪ Vision/Hearing Screenings- not conducted as part of an initial evaluation ▪ Direct Referrals- teachers are not able to directly refer a child to the child study team if warranted ▪ Pre-referral Interventions- teachers do not maintain documentation of the implementation/effectiveness of pre-referral interventions 	X X X X		
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speech language assessments- speech and language evaluations for ESLs students do not include a classroom observation. 	X		
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents – copies of reports are not provided 10 days prior to eligibility meeting 	X		
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 90 day timelines – initial evaluation and IEP implementation are not completed within 90 days ▪ Required statements/considerations- the district’s IEP does not contain the required considerations 	X		X
Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common Planning Time- time constraints do not allow for consultation between special and general education staff 	X		

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Stockton Borough School District on November 15, 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 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 Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of the district's data indicate that the Stockton Borough School District has a classification rate of 11%, significantly lower than the state average of 14.6%. Additionally, the district is to be commended for the fact that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day (compared with the state average of 39.2% for that year).

During interviews conducted with parents by telephone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and consistency in staff. Parents also reported that the staff knows families very well and the communication between home and school is excellent. Also, it was reported that when a problem with a student's program occurs, the staff is quick to contact the parents, address the issues, provide feedback and solve the problem.

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, Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Discipline, Transition, and Statewide Assessment.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parental consent, provision of written notice, implementation of IEPs without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, educational impact statement (eligible for speech-language services only), standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement/disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility (SLD), IEP meeting participants, implementation dates, IEP provided to parent prior to implementation, IEP meetings held annually, annual reviews completed by June 30, teachers informed of their responsibilities, class sizes, age range, and group size for speech lessons.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding content of written notice, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, direct referrals, pre-referral interventions, speech and language assessments, copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings, 90 day timelines, and common planning time.

As Stockton Borough is a K-8 district, there are no findings in the area of Graduation Requirements.

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The district was able to demonstrate that it has fully implemented the improvement plan activities for IEP required statements and considerations. As a result, this area is no longer an area of need.

No revisions to the district's improvement plan are required. The improvement plan submitted in June, 2005 will be reviewed for final approval. Verification of the implementation of the plan will be conducted by the County Supervisor of Child Study.