

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Waldwick School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: June 16, 2006

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Spear and Michelle Fenwick

Background Information:

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

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an onsite 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 onsite 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. Where appropriate, 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:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that, during the 2005-2006 school year, the district had a classification rate of 17.17% for students ages 3-21. This rate was higher than the state rate of 16.80% for that same year. The district educated 41.5% of students with disabilities (6-21 years of age) in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This percentage was slightly below the state average of 42% for that same year. The district educated over 46% of preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting that year, which was significantly above the state average of 14.5% for that year.

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Sections Demonstrating Compliance

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 onsite 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, Appropriate Public Education
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Least Restrictive Environment
- 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
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings (ESERS) • Provision of written notice (ESERS) • Content of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meetings • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral process • Pre-referral interventions • Direct referrals • Identification meeting timelines (ESERS) • Health Summary • Vision and Hearing Screenings
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations • Standardized assessments • Functional assessments (ESERS) • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS) • Timelines • Planning meeting participants • Reevaluations prior to age 5

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained • Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP required considerations and components (ESLS) • 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 for preschoolers in the last year of their preschool program and for students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) • 90-day timelines
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension tracking system • Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students • IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days • Procedures for determination of change in placement • Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan • Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement • Short-term removals that are not a change in placement—school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided • Interim alternative educational settings • Manifestation determinations

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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 table below includes the results of the review of the district's improvement plan and identifies those areas where correction of noncompliance was verified during the onsite visit.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent training – The district identified a need to provide more in-service training to parents of students with disabilities. 	The improvement plan was implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provision of notice of a meeting – There is no procedure in place to ensure that the student is being invited to an IEP meeting when transition will be discussed. 	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Location, Referral and Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Health summary (ESLS) – There was no procedure in place to ensure that when a student is referred to the child study team, a health summary is completed and provided to the team prior to the identification meeting. ▪ Vision and hearing screenings (ESERS) – There was no procedure in place to ensure that when a student is referred to the child study team, hearing and vision screenings are completed and results are forwarded to the team prior to the identification meeting. ▪ Identification meeting participants - The speech-language specialist does not consistently attend all preschool identification meetings. 	<p>The improvement plan was implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan was implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p>
Individualized Education Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants – The CST was not aware that vocational school personnel were to be invited to IEP meetings. 	The improvement plan is sufficient.

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Section	Area	Compliance Review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESERS) – There was no procedure in place to ensure that there was written documentation of the IEP considerations. 	<p>The improvement plan was implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.</p>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notification of removal forwarded to case manager – The district lacks a procedure for documenting disciplinary action to case manager. 	<p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p>

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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 onsite monitoring.

Section	Area	Improvement Activities
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="435 506 753 772">• Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS) – Notice of a meeting is inconsistently provided to parents prior to reevaluation planning meetings. <li data-bbox="435 877 753 1178">• Provision of notice of a meeting (ESLS) - Notice of meeting is not provided to parents prior to identification, eligibility, reevaluation or IEP meetings. <li data-bbox="435 1314 753 1514">• Meetings (ESLS) – Identification, eligibility, and reevaluation meetings are not conducted. <li data-bbox="435 1682 753 1881">• Provision of written notice (ESLS) – Written notice following a meeting is not provided consistently. 	<p data-bbox="776 506 1451 806">The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that notice of a meeting is provided as required. Implementation of the improvement activities will ensure that parents and other members of the IEP team are provided with the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p data-bbox="776 877 1451 1241">The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that notice of a meeting is provided as required. Implementation of the improvement activities will ensure that parents and other members of the IEP team are provided with the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance. The district is advised to adopt the model notices provided by the NJDOE and available at www.state.nj.us/education.</p> <p data-bbox="776 1314 1451 1614">The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that when students are referred to the speech-language specialist, or are determined eligible for speech and language services, identification, eligibility and reevaluation meetings and annual reviews are conducted according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p data-bbox="776 1682 1451 1940">The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that written notice is provided as required in N.J.A.C. 6A:14. Implementation of the improvement activities will ensure that parents are provided with the opportunity to consider proposed actions regarding their children. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance. The</p>

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Section	Area	Improvement Activities
		<p>district is advised to adopt the model notice forms provided by the NJDOE and available at www.state.nj.us/education .</p>
Location, Referral and Identification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification meeting timelines (ESLS) – Referrals to the speech-language specialist are not documented; therefore identification meeting timelines could not be determined. 	<p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that when students are referred due to speech and language concerns, the referral process is conducted according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14. Implementation of the improvement activities will ensure that students are identified in a timely manner. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational impact statement (ESLS) – Speech-language specialist reports do not contain a description of the educational impact of the problem as described by the classroom teacher. • Functional assessments (ESLS) –Speech-language specialists are not including prior interventions and observations in written reports. 	<p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that speech-language specialist reports document the educational impact statement provided by the student’s classroom teacher. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that functional assessments, specifically documentation of prior interventions and observations, are documented in speech-language reports for students who are evaluated for a speech problem. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reevaluation when a change in eligibility is considered (ESLS) – Speech-language specialists are dismissing students from speech-language services without conducting a reevaluation meeting. 	<p>The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that all components of the reevaluation process are conducted according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14 for students who may no longer require speech-language services. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>

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Section	Area	Improvement Activities
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="435 306 753 506">• Meeting participants – General education teachers are inconsistently present at IEP meetings. <li data-bbox="435 579 753 840">• Copy of evaluation reports to parents – CST and speech-language specialists are not documenting the provision of reports to parents. 	<p data-bbox="776 306 1450 537">The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that not less than one general education teacher of the student, or a teacher who is knowledgeable about the district's programs, is present at IEP meetings. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p data-bbox="776 579 1450 810">The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that parents receive copies of reports ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. In addition, the date the reports are sent must be documented. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>

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Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Waldwick School District on June 16, 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 areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about compliance. 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.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that, during the 2005-2006 school year, the district had a classification rate of 17.17% for students ages 3-21. This rate was higher than the state rate of 16.80% for that same year. The district educated 41.5% of students with disabilities (6-21 years of age) in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This percentage was slightly below the state average of 42% for that same year. The district educated over 46% of preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting that year, which was significantly above the state average of 14.5% for that year.

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

Sections identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- Free, Appropriate Public Education
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Least Restrictive Environment
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

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

- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings (ESERS)
- Provision of written notice (ESERS)
- 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
- Identification meeting timelines (ESERS)
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Functional assessments (ESERS)
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS)
- Timelines
- Planning meeting participants
- Reevaluations prior to age 5
- Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained
- Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
- Eligibility criteria

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- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- IEP Required Considerations and Components (ESLS)
- 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 for preschoolers in the last year of their preschool program and for students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
- 90-day timelines
- Suspension tracking system
- Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students
- IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days
- Procedures for determination of change in placement
- Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan
- Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement
- Short-term removals that are not a change in placement—school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided
- Interim alternative educational settings
- Manifestation determinations

Areas of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the onsite monitoring visit by the NJDOE, included:

- Parent training
- Health summary (ESERS)
- Vision and hearing screenings (ESERS)
- IEP required considerations and components (ESERS)

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

- Provision of notice of a meeting where transition is to be discussed
- Identification meeting participants (ESERS)
- IEP meeting participants
- Notification of removal forwarded to case manager

The onsite visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS)
- Provision of notice of a meeting (ESLS)
- Meetings (ESLS)
- Provision of written notice (ESLS)
- Identification meeting timelines (ESLS)
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Functional assessments (ESLS)
- Reevaluation when a change of eligibility is considered (ESLS)
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents

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The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP for the remaining areas of need identified by the district and the OSEP has been approved. The district is expected to implement the improvement activities described in the report to achieve compliance in the areas of need within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.