

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

**District:** Wallington School District

**County:** Bergen

**Monitoring Dates:** February 6, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Tracey Pettiford-Bugg and Michelle Fenwick

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

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Wallington School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Wallington 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 Wallington 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, 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 phone.

### **Data Summary:**

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 38.5% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. An in-district preschool program does not exist in the Wallington School District. The district educates all of the preschool students with disabilities through the South Bergen Jointure Commission. In the same year, the district reported a classification rate of 8.8% which is substantially lower than the state average of 14.7%.

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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
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs & Services

### Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, 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 and language services (ESLS). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation</li> <li>• Extended school year</li> <li>• Provision of programs</li> <li>• Provision of related services</li> </ul>
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>• Content of notice of a meeting</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Provision of written notice</li> <li>• Content of written notice</li> <li>• Interpreters at meeting</li> <li>• Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct Referrals</li> <li>• Health summary</li> <li>• Vision and hearing screenings</li> <li>• Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> <li>• Standardized assessments</li> <li>• Functional assessments (ESERS)</li> <li>• Bilingual evaluations</li> <li>• Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> </ul>

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<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Eligibility Criteria</li> <li>• Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> <li>• Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)</li> <li>• Copies of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Implementation dates</li> <li>• Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</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 (ages 6-21)</li> <li>• Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district</li> <li>• Continuum of programs (ages 6-21)</li> <li>• Placement decisions based on students' individual needs ages (ages 6-21)</li> </ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"</li> <li>• Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services"</li> <li>• Identification of post-secondary liaison</li> <li>• Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes</li> </ul>

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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.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Plan Is Sufficient</b>	<b>Plan Needs Revision</b>	<b>Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance</b>
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Transfer procedures</li> </ul>			X
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Notices in native language</li> </ul>			X
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> </ul>	X		X X
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Educational Impact Statement (ESLS)</li> </ul>	X		
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components</li> <li>▪ IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>▪ Annual reviews completed by June 30</li> </ul>	X		X  X

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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.

Section	Area	Activity
Location, Referral and Identification Evaluation (LRI)	Identification Meetings Timelines – Identification meetings are not held within twenty day required timelines.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that identification meetings are held within required timelines. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that identification meetings are held within twenty days of referrals to the child study team.
Evaluation	Functional assessments (ESLS) -The required components of the functional assessment are not consistently included in evaluation reports for students who are potentially eligible for speech and language services.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the components of the functional assessment required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d) 2 are included in evaluation reports. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that evaluations include a variety of assessments.
Eligibility	Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) - Copies of evaluation reports are not provided to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that evaluation reports are sent to parents 10 days prior to the meetings. These activities must include procedures, in-service and oversight to ensure that parents are afforded the opportunity to review evaluation reports prior to the eligibility conference.
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that preschool students with disabilities have opportunities to access general education settings. These activities must include procedures, in-

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	<p>general education programs; documentation of LRE decisions and continuum of programs (ages 3-5)- Preschool students with disabilities do not have opportunities to access general education.</p>	<p>service and oversight to ensure that preschool students with disabilities have opportunities to be educated with their non-disabled peers.</p>
<p>Transition to Adult Life</p>	<p>Students and agency invitation to IEP meetings – Students turning fourteen during the implementation of the IEP are not invited to attend IEP meetings.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that students participate in transition planning, if they will turn 14 during the implementation of the IEP. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that transition planning is conducted when required and that students are afforded the opportunity to participate in the process.</p>

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## Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Wallington School District on February 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 systemic change. 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 indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 38.5% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. An in-district preschool program does not exist in the Wallington School District. The district educates all of the preschool students with disabilities through the South Bergen Jointure Commission. In the same year, the district reported a classification rate of 8.8% which is substantially lower than the state average of 14.7%.

Of the parents who were interviewed, the majority indicated that they were very satisfied with the district's programs and services. Parents stated that they were very involved in the planning of their children's educational programs. One parent expressed a concern with not receiving copies of their child's IEP. The district identified this area of need and they have developed activities to address this area.

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

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- 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 include:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Extended school year
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Provision of written notice
- Content of written notice
- Interpreters at meeting
- Independent evaluations
- Direct Referrals
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria

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- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- IEP meeting participants
- Implementation dates
- Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
- 90 day timelines
- Documentation of LRE decisions (6-21)
- Continuum of programs (age 6-21)
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs (ages 6-21)
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district
- Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"
- Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services"
- Identification of post-secondary liaison
- Activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student's desired outcomes

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE include:

- Transfer procedures
- Notices in native language
- Child Find ages 3-21
- Referral process
- IEP required considerations and components
- Annual Reviews completed by June 30

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

- Pre-referral interventions
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- IEP provided to parents prior to implementation

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Identification meeting timelines
- Functional assessments (ESLS)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS)
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (preschool)
- Documentation of LRE decisions (preschool)
- Continuum of programs (preschool)
- Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings

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