

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

**District:** Warren Township School District

**County:** Somerset

**Monitoring Dates:** April 14, 2003

**Monitoring Team:** Debbie Masarsky, Stephen Coplin, Barbara Tucker,  
Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson

***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Warren Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Warren Township School District with an opportunity to evaluate its 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 Warren Township 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.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Warren Middle School on April 9, 2003. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the 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, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

### **District Strengths:**

The district is commended for the “**Pre-Post-Testing Program**” that was instituted this year. Special education students are tested by their teachers in the areas of reading, writing and math. The purpose of this program is to assist staff in the development of goals/objectives for IEPs, establishing students’ levels in specific areas, instruction and material selection and considering extended school year. This testing is part of a portfolio which includes sample work that helps provide a consistent program of instructional services for special education students.

Additionally, the district provides a “**Homework Club**” for elementary and middle school students. Both special and regular education teachers provide students with after school assistance in the completion of their homework assignments.

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

**General Provisions, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Statewide Assessment and Graduation Requirements** were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

### ***Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)***

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of programs, goals and objectives for related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of related services, extended school year and transfer students. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, content/provision of notices, notices in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of documentation of provision of notice of a meeting and independent evaluations. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions and identification meetings for school-age students held within the 20-day timeline with required participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the 20-day timeline for preschool students, health summaries and hearing/vision screenings for preschool students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and signed/dated reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments and acceptance/rejection of all or parts of reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit it was determined that the district has begun to implement activities to bring about correction in these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings/participants, annual review /90-day timelines, provision of IEPs to parents and annual goals/objectives related to core curriculum content standards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP considerations/required statements, IEPs in effect/implemented at the beginning of the school year and IEP teacher access/responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit it was determined that the district has adopted the IEP format developed by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and has begun to utilize this format as

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

of April 2003. Additionally, the district has begun to implement activities to bring about correction regarding teacher access/responsibility and IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making process, regular education access, continuum of programs and participation of students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of least restrictive environment documentation and availability of integrated preschool programs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, it was verified that the district has established links with a community-based preschool setting and now has the ability to consider placement of preschool disabled students into this setting.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### **Section X: Transition to Post-School**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of student/agency invitations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the statement of "Transition Service Needs." The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of preschool transition planning conferences. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students and written notification to the case manager. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class/group size and age range.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consultation time between regular and special education teachers and descriptions of each special education program. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

### ***Section XV: Student Records***

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures and documentation of location of other student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of access of student records to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

## Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Warren Township School District on April 14, 2003. 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 highly commended for the exceptionally 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 prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of those identified areas had been addressed prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, all seven parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and the advancement that their children had made in these programs. Parents of preschool students praised the Project Grow program and the superior skills of the teachers. All parents commented on the excellent communication between themselves and all of the district's staff and indicated that the staff is very supportive. Parents also believe that they are completely included in the decision-making process and that the district always considers students' individual needs. One parent expressed a need to provide further training to aides working with autistic students in the district.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent/staff development, policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, provision of programs, goals/objectives for related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, surrogate parents, consent, notices, meetings/participants, interpreters, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, identification meetings for school-age students within timelines, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, signed/dated reports, reevaluation timelines, reevaluation by June 30<sup>th</sup> of a student's last year in preschool, eligibility meetings/participants, documentation of criteria for students eligible for special education and related services, copies of evaluation reports to parents, annual review/90-day timelines, individualized decision-making process, regular education access, continuum of programs for school-age students, participation of in-district students in non-academic/extra-curricular activities, notification to out-of-district students of in-district activities, student/agency invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plans, interim alternative educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, age range, class/group size, staff knowledge of student records policies/procedures and documentation of other locations of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, provision of related services, transfer students, documentation of the provision of notice a meeting, independent evaluations, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings, 20-day timeline for preschool students, functional

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

assessments, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, documentation of criteria when determining students' eligibility for speech/language services and documentation of statement of eligibility, IEP considerations/required statements, IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year, IEP teacher access/responsibility, least restrictive environment documentation, integrated preschool programs, preschool transition planning conferences, the statement of Transition Service Needs, written notification to case managers, provision of procedural safeguard rights, consultation time between regular and special education teachers, descriptions of special education programs and parental access to student records.

During the on-site visit no additional areas of need were identified within any of the standards.

The Warren Township School District has submitted an improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs that is sufficient to address those areas that were identified during the self-assessment.