

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

District: Washington Township School District

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: October 18, 2005

Monitoring Team: Barbara J. Tucker

Background Information

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Washington 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 Washington Township 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 Washington Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) reviewed parent surveys; conducted phone interviews with a sampling of parents of special education students; conducted a comprehensive review of student files, district's policies and procedures; and interviewed the supervisor of special services, child study team members and speech specialists. The purpose of the activities was to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan and to determine the district's progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the OSEP that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of need identified during that process.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's classification data for students ages 6 to 21 indicated that in 2001, the district's rate was 13.5%. Between 2002 and 2003, the rate fluctuated between a high of 13.9% (2002), and a low of 13.1 % (2003). However, the data show that the district's rates were either at or below the state classification rates for the three year period. Additionally, the district's placement data for students ages 6-21 showed that between 2002 and 2004, 35% of the district's special needs students spent at least 80% of their day with their non-disabled peers. This rate is 6% below the state rate for that year. At the preschool level, for school years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, 95% of special education students were in self contained placements with the remaining students in separate public or private settings. The district has identified continuum of programs at the preschool level to be a concern and has developed an improvement plan to address this area of need.

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 process involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the district in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. General Provisions, Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Reevaluations, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Programs and Services were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs during the monitoring process as compliant.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas within the remaining sections were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. The areas were reviewed regarding students who are eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and those eligible for speech and language services (ESLS).

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
III. Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Provision of written notice • Meetings • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meetings • Independent evaluations
IV. Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral process • Health summary • Vision/Hearing Screenings • Direct Referrals • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
V. Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary Evaluations • Standardized Assessments • Functional assessments • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports
VII. Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with required participants • Eligibility criteria • Signature of agreement/disagreement • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
VIII. Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with required 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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access)
IX. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documentation of LRE decisions (ages 6 to 21) Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (ages 6 to 21) Placement decisions based on students' individual needs (ages 6 to 21)

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were originally identified by the district's self-assessment committee as non-compliant but, were found to be compliant by the NJDOE during the on-site monitoring:

Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
III. Procedural Safeguards	Notice of meeting and Written Notice -The district identified a concern regarding the content of its notice of meeting and written notice.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
IV. Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	Child Find - The district identified that it does not conduct child find activities which are sufficient to reach all children within the district, especially those who might be migrant or homeless.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
V. Evaluation	Educational impact statement - The district identified that the evaluation reports developed by speech-language specialists for students eligible for speech-language services only, do not contain the educational impact statement.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
VII. Eligibility	Copies of evaluation report to parents - The district identified a concern regarding the provision of evaluation reports to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
VIII. Individualized Education Program (IEP)	IEP required statements - The district identified that its IEP does not contain the required statements and components.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
VIII. Individualized Education Program (IEP)	90-day timelines -The district identified that it does not meet the required timelines for implementing an initial IEP.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
IX. Least Restrictive Environment	Continuum of programs - The district identified a concern regarding the availability of general education program options for preschool students with disabilities.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

Additional Area(s) of Need

The following area was originally identified by the district as compliant, but was found to be noncompliant by the NJDOE during the onsite monitoring process:

Section	Area	Activity
Location, Referral and Identification	Pre-referral interventions- The district identified an area of need regarding general education teachers not providing or maintaining sufficient written documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of interventions attempted.	The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that general education teachers provide and maintain sufficient written documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of interventions attempted in the general education classroom.

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Summary

Special education monitoring was conducted in the Washington Township School District on October 18, 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 areas that were determined by the district and verified by the OSEP to be compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of the district's classification data for students ages 6 to 21 indicated that in 2001, the district's rate was 13.5%. Between 2002 and 2003, the rate fluctuated between a high of 13.9% (2002), and a low of 13.1 % (2003). However, the data show that the district's rates were either at or below the state classification rates for the three year period. Additionally, the district's placement data for students ages 6-21 showed that between 2002 and 2004, 35% of the district's special needs students spent at least 80% of their day with their non-disabled peers. This rate is 6% below the state rate for that year. At the preschool level, for school years 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, 95% of special education students were in self contained placements with the remaining students in separate public or private settings. The district has identified continuum of programs at the preschool level to be a concern and has developed an improvement plan to address this area of need by expanding general education options.

Parents were randomly selected and interviewed by phone as part of the monitoring process. Parents expressed overwhelming support for the programs and services provided by the district and stated that they enjoy the communication between themselves and their child's case manager.

General Provisions, Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Reevaluations, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Programs and Services were the standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of meeting, provision of written notice, conducting meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, health summary, vision/hearing screenings, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines, and participants, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services only, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, eligibility meeting with required participants, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility, IEP 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, documentation of placement in the least restrictive environment (ages 6 to 21), notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district, opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (ages 6 to 21) and placement decisions based on students' individual needs (ages 6 to 21).

The following areas of need were originally identified by the district during self-assessment as non-compliant, but were found to be compliant during the on-site monitoring by the NJDOE as a result of improvement activities. These areas included, content of written notice and notice of meeting, child find, educational impact statement, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP required statements and components, 90-day timelines and continuum of programs.

An additional area of need was found during the onsite monitoring process regarding the documentation of pre-referral interventions.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address the area that requires revision.