

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Waterford Township School District

County: Camden

Monitoring Dates: December 12 and 13, 2005

Monitoring Team: Caryl Carthew, Jane Marano, Cheryl Merical, and Robert Schweitzer

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Waterford 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 Waterford 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 Waterford 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.

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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's superintendent, special education administrator, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the data submitted by the Waterford Township School District as a result of the self-assessment process indicates that the school's classification rate for 2004 was 16.56%. This rate has been consistent over the last several years and is slightly above the state average. The district has identified concerns with the pre-referral process as part of the self-assessment and has developed activities that will in turn address the classification rate. Data from 2004 also indicates that for students age 6-21, approximately 35% of students with disabilities were placed in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day. Additionally, 58% of students with disabilities were placed in general education between 40% and 60% of the school day.

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Approximately 4% of students with disabilities spend less than 40% of the day in general education. These placement rates have remained fairly consistent over the past three years. Although the percentage of students in general education more than 80% of the day is below the state average, the percentage of students in general education less than 40% is well below the state average. In addition, 3.9% of students with disabilities are in separate settings. This is well below the state average. Interviews with school personnel indicate that establishing more in-district placement options has enabled the district to keep more students in their neighborhood schools and that these inclusive opportunities have resulted in less time spent in self-contained classes. The district further reports that for 2004, 20% (4) of preschool students with disabilities were receiving services in full-time and/or part-time general education programs. An additional 35% (7) of preschool students with disabilities are receiving itinerant services. The trend over the last three years has indicated that most preschool students with disabilities have access to and are receiving a minimum of part-time services in the general education preschool setting. The district is to be commended for the efforts to maintain a general education preschool program in the district as an option for preschool students with disabilities. Further interviews with staff members and parents and a review of individualized education programs (IEPs) indicate that a continuum of options is considered for all students with disabilities.

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 (FAPE), Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Transition to Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services.**

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
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 ▪ Referral process ▪ Direct Referrals ▪ Health summary ▪ Vision and hearing screenings ▪ Identification meetings timelines ▪ Identification meetings participants

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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
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-referral interventions –The pre-referral process does not consistently result in the implementation of interventions that specifically address the presenting problem, nor does it establish timelines to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. The timelines established in the improvement plan have not been met. The district must identify new timelines and implement the activities by those newly identified dates. 		X	

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit, interviews or record review.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Waterford Township School District on December 12 and 13, 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 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 with minor revision 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 data submitted by the Waterford Township School District as a result of the self-assessment process indicates that the school's classification rate for 2004 was 16.56%. This rate has been consistent over the last several years and is slightly above the state average. The district has identified concerns with the pre-referral process as part of the self-assessment and has developed activities that will in turn address the classification rate. Data from 2004 also indicates that for students age 6-21, approximately 35% of students with disabilities were placed in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day. Additionally, 58% of students with disabilities were placed in general education between 40% and 60% of the school day. Approximately 4% of students with disabilities spend less than 40% of the day in general education. These placement rates have remained fairly consistent over the past three years. Although the percentage of students in general education more than 80% of the day is below the state average, the percentage of students in general education less than 40% is well below the state average. In addition, 3.9% of students with disabilities are in separate settings. This is well below the state average. Interviews with school personnel indicate that establishing more in-district placement options has enabled the district to keep more students in their neighborhood schools and that these inclusive opportunities have resulted in less time spent in self-contained classes. The district further reports that for 2004, 20% (4) of preschool students with disabilities were receiving services in full-time and/or part-time general education programs. An additional 35% (7) of preschool students with disabilities are receiving itinerant services. The trend over the last three years has indicated that most preschool students with disabilities have access to and are receiving a minimum of part-time services in the general education preschool setting. The district is to be commended for the efforts to maintain a general education preschool program in the district as an option for preschool students with disabilities. Further interviews with staff members and parents and a review of individualized education programs (IEPs) indicate that a continuum of options is considered for all students with disabilities.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and the level of communication between district personnel and parents.

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 (FAPE), Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Transition to

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Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Child Find ages 3-21, referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, and Identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified an area of need regarding pre-referral interventions.

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

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Waterford Township School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the area that requires revision.