

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

**District:** Wenonah School District

**County:** Gloucester

**Monitoring Dates:** January 4, 5, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Patricia Fair, Ken Richards, Jane Marano, Robert Schweitzer

***Background Information:***

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Wenonah School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Wenonah 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 Wenonah 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 and 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, 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 2004-2005 school year, the district's classification rate was 16%, slightly higher than the state rate. The district educated 46% (15 out of 32) of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate exceeded the state rate for that year. Additionally, 46% (15 out of 32) students with disabilities were educated in the general education settings 40-80% of the school day. During the 2004-2005 school year, 29% of preschoolers with disabilities (2 of 7) were educated in a general education setting. Two other preschoolers with disabilities were educated in a combination of general and special education settings.

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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: Free Appropriate Public Education, 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. 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"> <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 (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Content of written notice (ESLS)</li> <li>▪ Notices in native language</li> <li>▪ Interpreters at meeting</li> <li>▪ Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Referral process</li> <li>▪ Pre-referral interventions</li> <li>▪ Direct Referrals</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting timelines</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 assessment (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Bilingual evaluations</li> <li>▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> </ul>
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Timelines</li> <li>▪ Planning meeting participants (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Reevaluations prior to age 5</li> <li>▪ Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained</li> <li>▪ Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eligibility Criteria</li> <li>▪ Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)</li> <li>▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> </ul>

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<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Meeting Participants (ESERS)</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Implementation dates</li> <li>▪ Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</li> <li>▪ Annual reviews completed by June 30</li> <li>▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)</li> <li>▪ 90 day timelines</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. During the on-site monitoring visit, the NJDOE verified that compliance was achieved in several areas through implementation of improvement plan activities. Results of the review of improvement activities for the remaining areas are listed. The district must implement improvement activities and achieve compliance in all areas listed within six months of the date of this report.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Compliance Review</b>
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent Training – Based on the results of the district’s parent survey, more training is needed.</li> </ul>	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision of written notice (ESLS) – Written notice is not provided within 15 days of a meeting.</li> </ul>	The district’s improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because timelines identified for completion of improvement activities have not been met. The district is directed to ensure that written notice is provided according to required timelines and implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance..
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 – Child find procedures do not address homeless and migrant students.</li> </ul>	The district has demonstrated compliance.
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) – Evaluations do not include the educational impact statement.</li> </ul>	The district’s improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue. The district is directed to ensure that educational impact statements are included in reports prepared by the speech-language specialist(s). The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Functional assessments (ESLS) – Evaluation reports do not include all parts of a functional assessment.</li> </ul>	The district’s improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue. The district is directed to ensure that speech-language evaluations include all components of a functional assessment. A template for speech-language initial evaluations is available at <a href="http://www.state.nj.us/education">www.state.nj.us/education</a> for use in the district. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Section	Area	Compliance Review
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESLS)- Reevaluation planning meetings are not conducted for students who may no longer be eligible for speech and language services.</li> </ul>	<p>The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because timelines identified for completion of improvement activities have not been met. The district is directed to ensure that reevaluation is conducted when a change in eligibility is being considered, unless the parent and district agree to waive the evaluation in writing. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting Participants (ESLS) – Teachers do not attend eligibility meetings.</li> <li>▪ Copies of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) – Evaluation reports are not provided 10 days prior to eligibility meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because timelines identified for completion of improvement activities have not been met. The district is directed to ensure that teachers are in attendance at eligibility meetings and implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because timelines identified for completion of improvement activities have not been met. The district is directed to ensure that copies of speech-language evaluations are provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants (ESERS) – general education teachers are not present at IEP meetings for preschool students with disabilities.</li> <li>• IEP provided to parent prior to implementation.</li> <li>• IEP required consideration and components (ESLS) – IEPs for students receiving speech-language services do not include</li> </ul>	<p>The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan has been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan is insufficient. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing</p>

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<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Compliance Review</b>
	parental concerns for enhancing the education of their child.	compliance.

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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 New Jersey Department of Education during the on-site monitoring. Correction of noncompliance must be achieved within 6 months of this monitoring report.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Procedural Safeguards	Content of written notice - (ESERS) - When a student is not eligible for special education and related services, a description of the proposed eligibility status is not always included in the written notice provided to parents.	The district is directed to ensure that eligibility status is documented in written notice, even when a student is not eligible as determined at the eligibility meeting. The district must conduct in-service training and implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
LRI	Health summary/vision and hearing screenings – When a parent makes a direct referral to the child study team, health summary and vision and hearing screenings are not completed prior to the identification meeting.	The district is directed to ensure that when a direct referral of a student is made by the parent, a health summary and vision and hearing screenings are completed prior to the identification meeting. The district must conduct in-service training on the procedures and implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Reevaluation	Planning meeting participants (ESLS) – general education teachers do not consistently attend planning meetings.	The district is directed to ensure that general education teachers attend reevaluation planning meetings. The district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
IEP	Meeting Participants (ESLS) – general education teachers do not consistently attend IEP meetings.	The district is directed to ensure that general education teachers attend IEP meetings or that consent is obtained from parents if excusal is proposed. Written documentation of participation must be maintained in students' files and the district must implement an administrative oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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## *Summary*

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Wenonah School District on January 4 and 5, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is acknowledged for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district's classification rate was 16%, slightly higher than the state rate. The district educated 46% (15 out of 32) of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate exceeded the state rate for that year. Additionally, 46% (15 out of 32) students with disabilities were educated in the general education settings 40-80% of the school day. During the 2004-2005 school year, 29% of preschoolers with disabilities (2 of 7) were educated in a general education setting. Two other preschoolers with disabilities were educated in a combination of general and special education settings.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. A few parents expressed concerns with the level of services provided to their students; however, monitoring determined that this was not a systemic area of need.

Sections identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Free Appropriate Public Education, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Transition to 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 consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, content of notice of a meeting, provision of written notice (ESERS), content of written notice (ESLS), meetings, notice in native language, interpreters at meeting, independent evaluation, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments (ESERS), bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, reevaluation when change in eligibility is considered (ESERS), reevaluation timelines, planning meeting participants (ESERS), reevaluations prior to age five, procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained, documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent, eligibility meeting participants (ESERS), eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS), IEP required considerations and components (ESERS), implementation dates, meetings held annually or more often if necessary to review and/or revise IEP, annual reviews completed by June 30, teachers informed of their responsibilities and 90 day timelines.

Areas of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), are Child Find ages 3-21 and sending a copy of the IEP to parent prior to implementation.



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During the self-assessment process, the district also identified areas of need regarding parent training, provision of written notice (ESLS), educational impact statement (ESLS), functional assessment (ESLS), reevaluation when a change in eligibility is considered (ESLS), eligibility meeting participants (ESLS), copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS), IEP meeting participants (ESERS) and IEP required considerations and components (ESLS).

Additional areas of need regarding students eligible for special education and related services were identified including, content of written notice (ESERS), health summary, vision and hearing screenings, IEP meeting participants (ESLS) and planning meeting participants (ESLS).

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been reviewed and approved. The district is directed to implement activities to achieve compliance in all of the areas of need identified during self-assessment, and areas of need identified during the on-site visit, within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.