

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

**District:** West Amwell School District

**County:** Hunterdon

**Monitoring Dates:** February 14, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Nicole Buten and Vanessa Leonard

***Background Information:***

During the 2004-2005 school year, the West Amwell School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the West Amwell 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 West Amwell 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 administrator 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 over 47% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. The district's rate for educating preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting was consistently low during the past three years (0% in 2003, 0% in 2004 and 14% in 2005). Additionally, the district's classification rate was 14.54%, just below the state average of 14.6%. The district has addressed the high classification rate (13.96% in 2003, 14% in 2004) by developing an improvement plan that focuses on training district personnel in pre-referral interventions. The district anticipates that with this training, the classification rate will decrease. The district has identified preschool continuum as an area of need in

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

the self-assessment and has developed an improvement plan that will address this issue.

**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: **Evaluation, Transition to Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessments and Programs and Services.**

**Standard not Applicable**

Graduation was a standard not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students for which the NJDOE would require these services.

**Areas Demonstrating Compliance**

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE 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.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
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>▪ Transfer procedures</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>▪ Consent</li> <li>▪ Provision of notice of a meeting</li> <li>▪ Content of a notice of a meeting (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Meetings</li> <li>▪ Provision of written notice</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>▪ Direct referrals</li> <li>▪ Child Find Ages 3-21</li> <li>▪ Health summary</li> <li>▪ Vision and hearing screenings</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting timelines</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Areas Demonstrating Compliance</b>
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reevaluation timelines</li> <li>▪ Planning meeting participants</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>▪ 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> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting participants</li> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESERS)</li> <li>▪ Implementation dates</li> <li>▪ IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</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 and/or access)</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 the district</li> <li>▪ Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (ages 6-21)</li> <li>▪ Continuum of programs (ages 6-21)</li> <li>▪ Placement decisions based on students' individual needs</li> </ul>

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

**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
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Parent training- The district identified a need to provide more parents training and better informs parents about training opportunities outside of the district.</li> </ul>	X		
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provision of speech therapy- Speech language specialists’ positions is not always filled.</li> </ul>	X		
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Content of written notice (ESLS) - Due to difficulty hiring district personnel to provide speech services, the district established a contract with an agency for speech-language specialists who did provide required components of written notice.</li> </ul>			X
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pre-referral interventions- District personnel require further training on providing interventions in the general education setting. Additionally, teachers do not keep documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of pre-referral interventions.</li> </ul>	X		
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents - The district does not consistently provide reports to parents 10 days prior to an eligibility meeting.</li> </ul>			X

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

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESLS) - The IEP developed by the district's contracted service provider does not contain required components.</li> </ul>	X		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 90-day timeline-initial evaluations are not consistently completed within 90 calendar days.</li> </ul>			X
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuum of programs, documentation of placement decisions and opportunity to access general education programs (preschool only)- The district does not provide program options for preschoolers to be educated with typical peers.</li> </ul>	X		

The on-site visit identified no additional areas of need.

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

### ***Summary***

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the West Amwell School District on February 14, 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 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 OSEP 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 over 47% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. The district's data for educating preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting was consistently low in the past three years (0% in 2003, 0% in 2004 and 14% in 2005). Additionally, the district's classification rate is 14.54%, just below the state average of 14.6%. The district addressed the higher than usual classification rate (13.96% in 2003, 14% in 2004) by developing an improvement plan that focuses on training district personnel in pre-referral interventions. The district anticipates that with this training, the classification rate will decrease. The district has identified preschool continuum as an area of need in the self-assessment, and has developed an improvement plan that will address this issue.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services. Additionally, parents indicated that because the school is small, case managers, as well as administrators, are easily accessible and are focused on the best interest of their children.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Evaluation, Transition to Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessments and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation, extended school year, provision of programs, transfer procedures, implementation without undue delay, consent, provision of notice of a meeting, content of a notice of a meeting (ESERS), meetings, provision of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referrals, Child Find Ages 3-21, referral process, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines, Identification meeting participants, reevaluation timelines, planning meeting participants, reevaluations prior to age 5, procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained, documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent, meeting participants, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility (specific learning disability), IEP meeting participants, IEP required considerations and components (ESERS), 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 (knowledge and/or access), documentation of LRE decisions, notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students with disabilities educated outside the

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

district, opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs, continuum of programs for students 6-21 and placement decisions based on students' individual needs.

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE are content of written notice (ESLS), copy of evaluation reports to parents, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, provision of speech therapy, pre-referral interventions, reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESLS), IEP required considerations and components (ESLS) and continuum of programs for preschoolers.

The on-site visit identified no additional areas of need within the various standards. Additionally, no revisions to the district's improvement plan are required. The improvement plan submitted in June, 2005 will be reviewed for final approval. Verification of the implementation of the plan will be conducted by the Hunterdon County Supervisor of Child Study.