

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

District: West Long Branch School District **County:** Monmouth
Monitoring Dates: April 4, 2005
Monitoring Team: Vanessa Leonard

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the West Long Branch 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 Long Branch 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 Long Branch 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 Betty McElmon Elementary School, on January 27, 2005. 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, a representative sample of student records were also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for the Sign Language Instruction Program. All students in the fourth grade, general and special education, were instructed in American Sign Language for twenty minutes each week. Students use the sign language they have

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learned to improve communication with Hearing Impaired peers and reinforce their own spelling skills using finger spelling.

The district also held workshops intended to educate staff and students in the area of Deaf education. A presentation was held by speakers from the New Jersey Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the New Jersey Protection and Advocacy program during Deaf Awareness/Deaf History month. The speakers discussed the experience of being deaf in a hearing society. The West Long Branch School District invited the speakers in an effort to encourage staff and students to continue to learn, work and play in an inclusive society.

Data Summary:

In 2004, there were 81 classified students in the West Long Branch School District. The classification rate for West Long Branch School District was 10.28% for the same year. This is 4.31% lower than the state classification rate. A total of 82% of students with disabilities ages 6-21 were educated in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This exceeds the state average for that year by 40%.

For students ages 3 to 5, a total of 9 were eligible for pre-school services in 2004. 4 students were placed in out-of-district placements. The remaining 5 students were placed in the districts preschool disabled class. The district has recognized the need to expand program options at the preschool level. As a result, the district created an integrated preschool program which will open in the 2005-2006 school year.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, Programs and Services and Student Records 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 compliance in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of hearing aids and provision of speech language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals and identification meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of health summaries, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of three year timelines and reevaluation planning meeting/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of reevaluations completed by June 30th of the students last year in preschool. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of eligibility meetings, criteria, statement of eligibility of Specific Learning Disability, signatures of agreement/disagreement and reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of eligibility meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of IEP meetings/participants, annual review timelines for students' ages 6-21, required statements, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates and teacher access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP considerations, Present Levels of Educational Performance, annual review timelines for preschool, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, teacher responsibility and IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

There were 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 compliance in the area of preschool transition planning conferences.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of Early Intervention Program to preschool disabled program by age 3. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the West Long Branch School District on April 4, 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.

Five parents attended a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit. Additionally, eight parents provided comments regarding the special education and related services. Overall parents were pleased with the quality of education their children receive in district. Many parents stated that the district advocated inclusion in the general education classroom. Several parents wrote comments praising the district's speech program. Parents expressed that district staff are caring and teachers communicate regularly with parents. Parents stated that they welcome partners in the education of their children.

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, Programs and Services and Student Records 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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included extended school year, provision of programs, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting participants, three year timelines, reevaluation planning meeting/participants, eligibility meetings, criteria, statement of eligibility of SLD, signatures of agreement/disagreement, reports to parents, annual review timelines for students age 6-21, IEP meetings/participants, required statements, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, teacher access and preschool transition planning conferences.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding related services, provision of programs, hearing aids, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines, reevaluations completed by June 30th of a students' last year in preschool, eligibility meeting participants, considerations, Present Level of Educational Performance, annual review timelines for preschoolers, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines, teacher responsibility, IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year and Early Intervention to preschool disabled program by age 3.

The improvement plan submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education in June of 2004 will be forwarded to the Director, Office of Special Education Programs for approval. Verification of implementation of the improvement of will be conducted by the County Office of Education.