

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

**District:** West Milford School District

**County:** Passaic

**Monitoring Dates:** February 7 and 8, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Jenifer Spear, Gladys Miller, Tracey Pettiford-Bugg and Susan Wilson

***Background Information:***

During the 2003–2004 school year, the **West Milford Public Schools** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **West Milford Public Schools** 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 Milford Public Schools** 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 meeting for parents and community members at the Macopin Middle School on October 19, 2004. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit. Additionally, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) completed a desk audit, including review of a representative sample of student records, as well as reviews of district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews with child study team members and administrators were conducted. Additional interviews were conducted with parents by telephone. Based on these sources, OSEP staff determined that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan which will appropriately address all areas of need.

**District Strengths:**

The district is commended for operating a comprehensive behavioral disabilities program, with classes at the elementary, middle and high school levels. All students have access to the general education setting as appropriate. In addition high school

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students in the behavioral disabilities class work with kindergarten students in the Maple Road School.

### **Data Summary:**

The district reported that during the 2004-2005 school year 45% of students with disabilities were educated with general education students more than 80% of the school day and 36% of students were educated with general education students more than 40% of the school day. These percentages are slightly above the state average of 41% and 30% respectively. The district is educating 20% of preschool students with disabilities in general education preschool setting and another 11% of preschool students in a combination of general and special education settings. These percentages are commensurate with state averages.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:***

**Evaluation Procedures, Re-evaluation, Transition, Statewide Assessments, Graduation Requirements 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 I: General Provisions***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified 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 and related services, frequency, duration and location of services, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of goals and objectives for all areas. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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**Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of identification and training of surrogate parents and notices of meetings to students where transition is being discussed. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

**Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings and identification meetings, timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of Child Find ages 3-21. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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 meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility and signatures of agreement and disagreement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the area of copy of evaluation reports 10 days prior to eligibility meeting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

**Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings, participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of providing copies of IEPs to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

### **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance notification and participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a need to expand their continuum of programs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding documentation of LRE decisions.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Documentation of LRE Decisions** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that although discussed at IEP meetings, consideration of supplemental aids and services is not documented in the IEP.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the IEP specifies the supplemental aids and services considered and rejected. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

### **Section XI: Discipline**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavior improvement plans, functional behavior assessments, manifestation determination and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of interim alternate educational setting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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**Section XIV: Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of class sizes and waivers, age ranges and waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of additional administrative staff. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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### ***Summary***

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the West Milford Public Schools on February 7 and 8, 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 comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that 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.

The district is commended for its implementation of comprehensive behavioral disabilities classes throughout all grade levels.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the on-site monitoring visit, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff. Parents were especially pleased with the many programs and services provided within the district as well as the preparation their children received related to transition to post-secondary educational settings. Many parents expressed satisfaction with their level of involvement in the IEP process and the receptiveness of the case managers and the Director of Special Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included, policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs and services, documentation of frequency, duration, and location of related services, length of school day and year, transfer procedures, facilities, certifications, consent, notices of meetings, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screening, identification meetings, participants and timelines, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, reevaluations completed by June 30 of students last year in preschool, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, signatures of agreement and disagreement, IEP meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool program by age 3, age 14 transition service needs, preference and interests, surveys and assessments, age 16 needed transition services, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavior intervention plans, functional behavior assessments, manifestation determination, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, IEP documentation, alternate proficiency assessment, IEP requirements at age 14, out of district participation in graduation exercises, written notice of graduation, class sizes and waivers, age ranges and waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, consultation time, access and requests, access sheets, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other locations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff training, goals and objectives for all areas, identifying and training surrogate parents, notices of meetings when transition is discussed, Child Find 3-21, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEPs to parents, continuum of programs, interim alternate educational settings and additional administrative staff.

The on-site monitoring visit identified an additional area of need regarding documentation of least restrictive environment.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the West Milford Public Schools will revise the improvement plan in the area that requires revision and submit revisions to the Office of Special Education Programs to address.