

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

**District:** West Morris Regional High School

**County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** February 2, 2005

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

***Background Information:***

During the 2003 – 2004 school year, the **West Morris Regional High 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 Morris High 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 Morris High 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 West Morris Central School, on February 1, 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 was 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 developing and expanding their in-class support model. The model has been implemented in a variety of subject areas, grade levels. 85% of the special education staff participates in the model. General education and special education teachers receive ongoing professional development opportunities related to

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

collaboration in the classroom. The program model has been successful in assisting students to meet course requirements in the least restrictive environment.

The district is further commended for implementing the Behavioral Support Program. This program provides the needed support for students with behavioral challenges who might otherwise be educated outside of the district. The goal of the program is for students to increase the amount of time they spend in general education classes with supports. The program can support students throughout their high school years.

The district is also commended for working collaboratively with the Extra Support Parents Network (ESPN). ESPN provides training and support to parents on a variety of topics including: transition planning, the role of the CST, post-secondary options and parenting teenagers.

### **Data Summary:**

The district is commended for its successful efforts in placing students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. A review of district data for the past three years indicates that nearly 80% of the students who are eligible for special education and related services are educated with their non-disabled peers for more than 80% of the school day. This percentage substantially exceeds the state average of 41.6%.

The district reported a classification rate of 13.9% for the 2003 – 2004 school year; which is lower than the state average of 14.3%.

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

**Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment and Graduation Requirements** 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 areas of staff and parent training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

### **Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of frequency, duration and location of related services, length of day and year, facilities and certifications.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### ***Section III: Procedural Safeguards***

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notices of meetings, written notices and copy of PRISE to parents at identification meetings. 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, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find 3-21 and pre-referral interventions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### ***Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations and acceptance and rejection of reports.

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

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

### ***Section VI: Reevaluation***

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

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of timelines. 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 eligibility meetings and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of eligibility criteria and copy of eligibility determination to parent or adult student. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, signatures of agreement or disagreement with rationale and provision of evaluation reports to parents.

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

**Statement of Specific Learning Disability** – During the on-site monitoring, interviews and record review indicated that documentation of the determination of eligibility for students with a specific learning disability did not include all required information.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that eligibility for special education and related services due to a specific learning disability is determined considering the required factors and documented appropriately in the eligibility statement. The meeting participants must document that the specific learning disability is not the result of visual, hearing or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. Implementation of these activities will ensure that eligibility decisions are based on the appropriate information.**

**Signatures of Agreement and Disagreement** – During the on-site monitoring, interviews and record review indicated the district does not document assenting or dissenting opinions regarding eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure the district documents assenting and dissenting opinions regarding eligibility determinations. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents are aware of any disagreement with eligibility determinations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

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

**Provision of Evaluation Reports to Parents** – During the on-site monitoring visit, interviews and record review indicated that parents are not provided with a copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that copies of evaluation reports are provided to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meetings. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents are informed of the results of their child’s evaluation and if necessary, can seek additional information prior to the eligibility meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, provision of IEPs to parents, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants, implementation dates and annual review timelines. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of documentation of least restrictive environment, notification and participation of out of district students, nonacademic and extracurricular activities and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision making process, consideration of supplementary aids and services and regular education access. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### **Section X: Transition to Post-School**

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs and age 16 transition service needs, student and agency invitation.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preferences and interests assessment.

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

### ***Section XI: Discipline***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting and procedural safeguards for short term removal.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation to case manager.

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

**Documentation to Case Manager** – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interview with staff that case managers are inconsistently notified when students are removed from programs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure the case manager is notified every time a student with disabilities is removed from program. Implementation of these activities will ensure appropriate procedural safeguards and services are provided to suspended special education students.**

### ***Section XIV: Programs and Services***

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

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

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

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

### ***Section XV: Student Records***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of maintenance and destruction and documentation of other location.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of access and requests and access sheets. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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

## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the West Morris Regional School District on February 2, 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 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 inclusive practices which have resulted in a significant number of special education students being educated in regular education settings for more than 80% of the school day.

At a parent focus meeting conducted at the West Morris High School Central Library on February 1, 2005 parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services. Parents of students in the continuum of placements from residential to general education classrooms feel that their children are receiving access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment. An important concern raised by parents at this meeting involved a related transition issue of PSAT and SAT testing modifications. Parents of special education students are provided with calendars from the guidance department regarding testing at the same time as parents of general education students. However, special education students often have to apply for modifications within different timeframes. Parents expressed their interest in having the district notify them of these testing schedules earlier in order for their children to be able to take these tests under the appropriate conditions.

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, frequency, duration and location of related services, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines and participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, planning meeting participants, eligibility meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, provision of IEPs to parents, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, documentation of least restrictive environment, notification and participation of out of district students, nonacademic and extracurricular activities, continuum of programs, age 14 transition, age 16 transition, student and agency invite, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguards, statewide assessment participation, accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, graduation requirements, age range waivers, group sizes for speech, home instruction, consultation time, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other location.



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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent training, extended school year, transfer students, surrogate parents, notices of meetings, written notices, provision of PRISE to parents at identification meetings, child find, pre-referral interventions, functional assessments, reevaluation timelines, eligibility criteria, copy of eligibility determination to parent or adult students, IEP meeting participants, implementation dates, annual review timelines, individualized decision making process, consideration of supplementary aids and services, regular education access, preferences and interests assessment, class size waivers, access and requests and access sheets.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the eligibility statement for students with a specific learning disability, signatures of agreement and disagreement, provision of evaluation reports to parents and suspension documentation to case managers.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the West Morris Regional School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.