

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Westampton Township School District **County:** Burlington

Monitoring Dates: February 19, 20, 2003

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair and Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Westampton Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Westampton Township School District with an opportunity to evaluate its 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 Westampton Township 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 Westampton Township Middle School on February 11, 2003. 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, including a representative sample of student records. 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 its Renaissance Program in which a teacher or an adult may choose any student. Red, blue, and green cards are given to chosen students one time a month which entitles them to breakfast with the principal.

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The district is commended for hosting Read Across America for Burlington County this year. The district hosts a “read-on, sleep-on” program for all third-grade students. This program runs from Friday night to Saturday morning one time a year. Activities during this event include reading aloud, writing stories, story-telling, and silent reading.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, IEP, Statewide Assessment, 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant 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 this issue.

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 themselves compliant in the areas of provision of programs and related services, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year - During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that extended school year is not considered for every student.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year is considered for every student and provided when appropriate. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, and identification meeting participants and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find ages 3-21. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding vision and hearing screenings and health summary.

Areas of Need:

Vision and Hearing Screenings/Health Summaries - During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that vision and hearing screenings and health summaries are not consistently available at the time of the identification meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that vision and hearing screenings/health summaries are conducted/developed and available by the time of the identification meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of LRE documentation and regular education access in district.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aids and services, notification, continuum of programs, and participation of out-of-district students in extracurricular and nonacademic activities. The barrier to successful implementation of inclusive settings is the need to provide training to special education teachers, regular education teachers, and classroom aides on appropriate teaching techniques, classroom management techniques, and accommodation strategies. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

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Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests, age 16 needed transition services and student and agency invitation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of partnerships with community resources. **The district did not submit improvement plan activities for this area of need. The plan must include procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.**

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 themselves compliant in the areas of Preschool transition planning conference and early intervention programs to preschool disabled programs by age 3.

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

Section X: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings, and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notification of suspension to the case manager. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP requirements, written notice of graduation, and choice of diploma.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of participation of out-of-district students in graduation activities. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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 Westampton Township School District on February 19, 20, 2003. 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 exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify all but two areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of activities that resulted in the correction of many areas identified during the self-assessment process. Additionally, the district is 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Concerns were raised regarding individual decision-making, which was identified by the district as an area of need. An out-of-district parent was pleased with the services and programs offered.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, IEP, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included special education policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of programs and related services, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, and identification meeting participants and timelines, LRE documentation, regular education access in district, age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests, age 16 needed transition services, student and agency invitation, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention programs to preschool disabled programs by age 3, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings, procedural safeguards, IEP requirements, written notice of graduation, choice of diploma, class size, age range, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, and consultation time for teachers.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent training, child find ages 3-21, the decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aids and services, notification and participation of out-of-district students in extracurricular and nonacademic activities, partnerships with community resources, notification of suspensions to case manager, and out-of-district participation in graduation.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, vision and hearing screenings, and health summary.

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

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