

New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring

District: Westville School District **County:** Gloucester

Monitoring Dates: January 4 and 6, 2006

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Ken Richards, Jane Marano, Robert Schweitzer

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Westville School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Westville 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 Westville 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 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 administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of data indicates that 315 students were enrolled in the Westville School District during the 2004 school year. Fifty-nine students were classified as eligible for special education and related services. The district's classification rate for the 2004 school year was 18.73% as compared to the state classification rate of 14.61%. During the 2004 school year, 24.3 % of the students with disabilities were included in general education classes for more than 80% of the school day as compared to the state rate of 41.9%. For each of the past three years, the district has been below the state rate with regard to the percent of students with disabilities who are educated in general education

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for more than 80% of the school day. During the same three year period, the district's classification rate has been higher than the state classification rate.

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: Free Appropriate Public Education, Transition to Preschool, Transition to Adult Life, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant. The areas were reviewed for both students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech-language services (ELSL). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consent ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of Notice of Meeting (ESERS) ▪ Content of Notice of Meeting (ESERS) ▪ Meetings ▪ Provision of written notice (ESERS) ▪ Content of written notice (ESERS) ▪ Notices in native language ▪ Interpreters at meeting ▪ Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referral process ▪ Prereferral interventions ▪ Direct Referrals ▪ Identification meeting timelines ▪ Identification meeting participants
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi disciplinary evaluations ▪ Standardized Assessments ▪ Functional Assessment (ESERS) ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS) ▪ Timelines ▪ Planning meeting participants (ESERS) ▪ Reevaluations prior to age 5 ▪ Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained ▪ Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Eligibility meeting participants ▪ Eligibility criteria ▪ Statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability) ▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP required considerations and components (ESERS) ▪ Implementation dates ▪ Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP (ESERS) ▪ Annual reviews completed by June 30 ▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) ▪ 90-day timelines
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of LRE decisions ▪ Notification of and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district

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Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) – Evaluations conducted for speech and language students do not include the educational impact statement. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks training activities. The district must revise its plan to include training and revise projected timelines to ensure that speech evaluations include the educational impact statement. 		X	
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered and planning meeting participants (ESLS)- Reevaluation planning meetings are not conducted for students who may no longer be eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks sufficient activities including training and administrative oversight. The district must revise its plan to identify new timelines and include activities, training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that reevaluation planning meetings are conducted for students prior to discharge from speech and language services and that all required participants are in attendance. 		X	

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Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
	<p>students receiving speech and language services does not document parental concerns for enhancing the education of their child. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because the plan lacks training and an administrative oversight. The district must revise its timelines and the plan to include training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required considerations and components are documented in the IEP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual review timelines (ESLS) 			X
Least Restrictive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Education Access • Individual Decision Making • Continuum <p>The district indicated that barriers include administrative, parental and staff attitudes that a more restrictive environment allows the student with academic delays to “close the gap” more effectively. Staffing issues also influence the decision making process. Additionally, the district indicated that there are limited resources available in the general education classroom to meet the needs of students with different learning styles. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because the plan lacks an administrative oversight component. The district must revise its plan to include an administrative oversight component to ensure that decisions regarding the student's program are made on an individual basis, not determined by administrative barriers and that a continuum of program options are available to meet the individual needs of the student.</p>		X X X	

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Additional Areas of Need

The following areas were originally identified by the district's self-assessment committee as compliant but were found to be noncompliant by the NJDOE during the on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Activity
Procedural Safeguards	<p>Notice of Meeting content (ESLS) – Notice of meeting does not consistently inform the parent that they have the right to invite others with expertise to a meeting.</p> <p>Written notice content (ESLS) - Written notice following a meeting does not consistently include the short procedural safeguards statement.</p> <p>Written notice content (ESLS) - When a student is found not eligible for speech and language services a description of the action is not always present.</p> <p>Written notice provision (ESLS)- Parents are not consistently provided with a copy of the due process hearing rules with written notice of the</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of meeting informs the parent of their right to invite others with expertise to a meeting. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that parents are informed of their right to invite others who may provide input into the decision making process.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that parents are provided with a written copy of the short procedural safeguards statement following a meeting. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure parents are made fully aware of their rights and the rights of their child.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that when a student is found not eligible for speech and language services, all required components of written notice are documented. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that parents are informed in writing of all decisions made at the meeting and the reason for the decisions.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that parents are provided with a copy of the due process hearing rules with written notice of the identification meeting. These activities must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure parents are made fully aware of their rights and the rights of</p>

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Section	Area	Activity
	identification meeting.	their child.
LRI	Health summary and vision and hearing screenings – When a parent makes a direct referral to the child study team, a health summary and vision and hearing screenings are not completed prior to the identification meeting.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that when a parent makes a direct referral to the child study team, a health summary and vision and hearing screenings are completed prior to the identification meeting. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that there is sufficient information to determine whether or not to evaluate a student.
Evaluation	Functional Assessments (ESLS) – Written reports prepared for students eligible for speech and language services do not consistently document a teacher interview, observation in a non-testing situation and informal measures.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure written reports prepared for students eligible for speech and language services document all required components of a functional assessment. These activities must include procedures, and an administrative oversight component to ensure that reports contain sufficient information upon which eligibility determinations can be made.
IEP	Meeting Participants (ESLS) – General education teachers do not consistently attend initial IEP meetings for students classified as preschool disabled.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that general education teachers attend IEP meetings for students classified as preschool disabled. These activities must include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all required participants are provided opportunity for input into the decision making process.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Westville School District on January 4 and 6, 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 commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revisions will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended 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 data indicates that 315 students were enrolled in the Westville School District during the 2004 school year. Fifty-nine students were classified as eligible for special education and related services. The district's classification rate for the 2004 school year was 18.73% as compared to the state classification rate of 14.61%. During the 2004 school year, 24.3 % of the students with disabilities were included in general education classes for more than 80% of the school day as compared to the state rate of 41.9%. For each of the past three years, the district has been below the state rate with regard to the percent of students with disabilities who are educated in general education for more than 80% of the school day. During the same three year period, the district's classification rate has been higher than the state classification rate.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff. Parents indicated that programs were developed to meet the individual needs of students and that programs began promptly in the beginning of the school year. Parents indicated that communication and progress reporting was good. Parents could not identify any barriers to the provision of services.

Sections identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the following:

- Free Appropriate Public Education;
- Transition to Preschool;
- Transition to Adult Life;
- Discipline;
- Statewide Assessment; and
- Programs and Services.

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Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent; • Implementation without undue delay; • Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS); • Content of notice of a meeting (ESERS); • Meetings; • Provision of written notice (ESERS); • Content of written notice (ESERS); • Notices in native language; • Interpreters at meeting; • Independent evaluations; • Referral process; • Pre-referral interventions; • Direct Referrals; • Identification meeting timelines; • Identification meeting participants; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations; • Standardized assessments; • Functional assessments (ESERS); • Bilingual evaluations; • Written reports prepared by evaluators; • Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESERS); • Timelines; • Planning meeting participants (ESERS); • Reevaluations prior to age 5; • Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained; • Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent; • Eligibility meeting participants; • Eligibility criteria; • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability); • Signature of agreement or disagreement and rationale; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP required considerations and components (ESERS); • Implementation dates; • Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP (ESERS); • Teachers informed of their responsibility (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs); • Annual reviews completed by June 30; • 90-day timelines; • Documentation of LRE decisions; and • Notification of and participation in non academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district.
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Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE included the following:

- Child Find Ages 3-21;
- IEP provided to parent prior to implementation; and
- Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP (ESLS).

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding:

- Parent training;
- Provision of notice of meeting (ESLS);
- Content of notice of a meeting (ESLS);
- Educational impact statement (ESLS);
- Reevaluation when change of eligibility is considered (ESLS);
- Reevaluation planning meeting participants (ESLS);
- Copies of evaluation reports to families;
- IEP meeting participants;
- IEP required considerations and components (ESLS);
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs;
- Continuum of programs; and
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Content of notice of a meeting (ESLS);
- Provision of written notice (ESLS);
- Content of written notice (ESLS);
- Health summary;
- Vision and hearing screenings;
- Functional assessments (ESLS); and
- IEP meeting participants (ESLS).

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Westville School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address those areas that require revisions.

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