

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

District: White Township

County: Warren

Monitoring Dates: May 17, 2004

Monitoring Team: Zola Mills and Carol Raff

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the **White 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 **White 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 **White 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 White Township School on May 17, 2004. 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 school 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 school's special education administrators, building principal, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for its numerous programs to place special education students in general education settings and successfully maintain them in that setting. Included in those programs are in-class supplemental supports, before and after school homework help and several counseling programs.

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The district is further commended for the two week summer program held in August of each school year to address the needs of basic skills, at risk and special education students. This allows these students to start the school year more successfully. The district is seeking a grant to add one to one tutoring for students over the summer to augment the current two week program.

The district is also commended for its emphasis on communication with parents. They publish a monthly newsletter and many teachers maintain almost daily contact with parents.

Additionally, the district is commended for its character education program "kicked off" by a Character Education Carnival in the fall featuring a petting zoo to teach caring, tables and exhibits by community agencies offering various services to families, and fund raising activities to provide money for Meals-On-Wheels. Follow up character education activities are carried out with classroom lessons throughout the year.

Data Summary:

A review of the data submitted by the district shows that 40% of their preschool students are placed in general education early childhood settings which is above the state average of 23.2%. The district data show they are near the state average for inclusion of special education students ages 6-21 for more that 80% of the school day, 39.5% as compared to the state average of 41.6%. The district slightly exceeds the state average for inclusion 40% to 80% of the school day, the state average is 30.9% compared to the district's average of 32.6%. Because the district is committed to improving their placement of students in the least restrictive setting it has formulated plans to train teachers in more inclusive practices and provide preschool students with services in a general education setting.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Transition, Discipline and Statewide Assessment, 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 staff and parent training.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of dissemination of IDEA information. 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, related services, length of day and year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of reviews of transfer students and accurately documenting the language arts time in IEPs of students in the self-contained language disabled classes. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. The district developed procedures and forms that were implemented in August 2003 to document these areas. They were found in compliance as a result of the on-site record review.

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 themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, provision of notices of meetings, provision of written notice, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of content of written notice and content of notices of meetings. The district initiated activities in the fall 2003 that have brought these areas into compliance as evidenced by the on-site record review and staff interviews. 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 themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, and pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, summer referrals and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of referral process, health summaries and vision and hearing screenings. The district implemented procedures in fall 2003 to bring these areas into compliance. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of written reports signed and dated and acceptance or rejections of reports. The district developed and implemented new forms for these areas in fall 2003. These areas are now compliant based on on-site record review and staff interviews.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas planning meetings and participants and turning age five.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district implemented a new report form in the fall 2003 and this area is compliant based on on-site record review and staff interviews.

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 themselves compliant in the areas of meetings and participants, documentation of eligibility,

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of criteria, signature of agreement or disagreement and a space for the rationale, the provision of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to the meeting and a procedure for the speech language therapist to use to refer student suspected of additional disabilities. The district has developed and implemented forms and initiated other activities to bring these areas into compliance.

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 themselves compliant in the areas of meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, alignment of goals and objectives with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review and ninety-day timelines, and teacher access and knowledge.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of the provision of the IEP to parents prior to implementation and procedures for revision of IEPs. The district has developed procedures and forms and initiated other activities in fall 2003 to bring these areas into compliance.

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 themselves compliant in the decision making process, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation of supplementary aids and services, regular education access and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notification to out of district students to enable their participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section XIII: Graduation is not applicable in this Pre-K to Eight Grade District

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range waivers, group sizes for speech, and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of class size for resource programs and consultation time. The district initiated activities in fall 2003 to correct these areas. Staff interviews and class rosters indicate that these areas are now compliant.

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

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Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access and requests, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff knowledge of these procedures. 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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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the White Township School District on May 17, 2004. 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 all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result most of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas determined by the school and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of data and the development of an appropriate plan reflects the commitment to place more special education students in the least restrictive environment.

At a focus group meeting held during the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services and with the district's responsiveness to the needs of their children. Communication between home and school was stressed as strength of the district as well as the district policy of holding high standards for special education students.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff and parent training, extended school year, related services, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, provision of notices of meetings, provision of written notices, meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, Child Find, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluation, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, independent evaluations, planning meetings, participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool, eligibility meetings and participants, statement of eligibility, IEP meeting and participants, considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, alignment of goals and objectives with the core content curriculum standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, individualized decision making, Oberti factors, consideration and documentation, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement, student and agency invitations, preschool transition planning conference, placement in program by age three, procedural safeguards, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plan, functional behavior assessments, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, class size waivers, age range and waivers, group sizes for speech, home instruction, case management time, access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified an area of need regarding dissemination of IDEA information, accurate documentation of the provision of language

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arts, transfer students, content of notices of meetings and written notice, referral process, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, nature and scope of identification meeting participants, written reports signed and dated, acceptance or rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, criteria, signature of agreement or disagreement , provision of evaluation reports ten days prior to meeting, documentation of IEPs to parents, IEP revisions, notification and participation of out of district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, resource class sizes, consultation time and staff knowledge of student records procedures. These areas of concern have been brought into compliance or are addressed appropriately in the district's improvement plan.