

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

District: Wildwood

County: Cape May

Monitoring Dates: September 18, 19, and 20, 2000

Monitoring Team: C. Carthew, J. Marano, and K. Richards.

Background Information

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Wildwood School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Wildwood School District with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free and 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 Wildwood School District developed an improvement plan to address the identified areas.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring visit to verify the district's report of findings and address the sufficiency of the improvement plan and the progress made in implementing that plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at Wildwood High School on September 14, 2000. From this initial focus group meeting, themes were identified that would later be verified during the on-site visit. In addition to these themes, information from previous monitoring activities was available to the team and helped to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, NJDOE team reviewed district documentation, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, and related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education director, building principals, and child study team members, including the speech-language specialist. Input was also received from parents of students with disabilities. In addition, both of the district's school buildings were visited and representative samples of general and special education teachers from each school were interviewed.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District compliance with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the New Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education (N.J.A.C. 6A: 14) was assessed. Systemic areas of need are identified in the findings below.

I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

The Wildwood Board of Education adopted the Policies/Statement of Assurances required by the New Jersey Department of Education. The district is currently in the process of developing procedures to implement policies as required by OSEP. In-service training has been provided regarding instructional strategies, discipline, accommodations and adaptations for students with disabilities and effective inclusive practices.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with staff development and parental participation.

Areas of Need:

Staff Development – During self-assessment, the district identified on-going staff development needs in the areas of: student discipline, modifications and adaptations of instructional strategies for students with disabilities in mainstream settings, Core Curriculum Content Standards and transition for grades 7-12. On-site monitoring reinforced the need for continued staff development, including administrative staff in the areas identified by the district. Staff indicated that the district is committed to including students with disabilities in regular education programs and extracurricular activities. However, both special education and regular education staff cited training needs in the area of behavior management and support for students with disabilities in regular classes as critical to achieving positive outcomes in the districts inclusive practices. In reviewing the district's improvement plan, all identified areas have been included. The plan indicates topics for training with completion dates of June 2001 and June 2002. More specific information is needed regarding training activities, interim timelines for completion and follow-up activities to evaluate the effectiveness of training.

- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include more specific activities for training staff and interim timelines for completion and follow-up activities to evaluate the effectiveness of training.**

Parent Participation- The district identified a need to develop strategies to increase parental participation in all home and school associations, committees, advisory panel, parent conferences and IEP meetings. The district has initiated activities to invite parents to meetings, yet participation by parents continues to be limited.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that will sufficiently address this issue.**

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

II. Free, Appropriate Public Education

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately assessed compliance in the areas of participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities and the provision of special education programs and related services as required by the IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with procedures for transfer students and a need to reduce the number of emergency certified personnel.

However, although the district identified the length of the school day, extended school year and facilities as compliant, during the on-site monitoring visit, problems were noted.

Areas of Need:

Transfer services – The district identified problems with processing transfer students. When students transfer into the district, current registration procedures do not accurately identify classified students. This results in a delay in reviewing records and providing appropriate services.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses this issue.**

Length of the School Day – The district currently provides a shortened school day for some students in the behavior disabilities program. An interview with teachers and CST members indicates that this decision is made on an individual basis. However, a review of the IEPs indicates that the rationale for this decision is not consistently included.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure the rationale for providing a shortened school day is documented in IEPs.**

Extended School Year – An interview with school personnel indicates that extended school year services are considered and discussed for all students. A review of student IEPs indicates that extended school year services are provided, however, only for students currently in out-of-district placements. Interviews with parents of students placed in-district did not indicate that the need for an extended school year is consistently considered and discussed. In addition, IEPs for those students placed in-district do not consistently include documentation of this discussion.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that ensures ESY programs are considered and discussed for all classified students and that those considerations are appropriately documented in each IEP.**

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

Emergency Certifications –The district has identified a need to reduce the number of emergency certified personnel. A review of the improvement plan indicates that the district has addressed this issue.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses this issue.**

Facilities –The district is currently experiencing overcrowding. During the course of the on-site monitoring, several classrooms were visited at the high school that appeared to be too small for the classes assigned. In addition, there were several rooms at both the high school and Glenwood Avenue School that were accommodating more than one class. The district could not demonstrate that the appropriate approvals have been obtained.

- **The county office has been notified of this situation and will direct the district to correct these areas should it be necessary.**

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately assessed compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the components of notice of a meeting.

However, though the district identified some areas as compliant, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding notification of transfer of rights, notices of a meeting, prior written notice for speech, native language, timelines, meeting participants, prior written notice of evaluation plans, and provision of required code documents.

Areas of Need:

Transfer of Rights -The district includes a statement in the IEP documenting that parents and students have been informed that all rights will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. However, this section is not consistently completed in the IEP as required.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that parents and students are consistently notified at least three years before the student turns 18 that all rights transfer when the student reaches the age of majority.**

Notice of a Meeting – The district identified concerns with the components of notice of a meeting. Currently, the district includes a return postcard with each meeting notice that does not identify the mutually agreed upon location. The district’s improvement plan sufficiently addresses this issue. However, during the on-site monitoring, it was additionally noted that notice of an IEP meeting does not include the statement of the parent’s right to invite a person with

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

special expertise to the meeting. When the purpose of the meeting includes transition, the meeting notice does not include this purpose.

- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that when the purpose of a meeting is to review and/or revise the IEP, the notice includes a statement of the parent’s right to invite a person with special expertise.**
- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that when the purpose of the meeting is to discuss transition, the notice includes a statement to this effect.**

Speech Notice of a Meeting – An interview with the district’s speech-language specialist indicates that current practice is to hold an eligibility meeting and IEP meeting at the same time. Notice of that meeting however does not include the development of the IEP as one of the purposes of the meeting. In addition, the district currently uses a notice form to invite parents to meetings for students who are eligible for speech-language services that does not document the provision of PRISE.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that when one of the purposes of a meeting is to develop an IEP for speech, the notice of a meeting includes a statement to that effect.**
- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that notice of a meeting for a student eligible for speech-language services documents the provision of PRISE.**

Speech Prior Written Notice –A review of speech records indicates that the district uses a form signed by the parent indicating that they waive the 15 days consideration time and 15 days notice prior to a meeting. The use of this form should be discontinued. Parent consent is immediate and does not require a waiving of the 15 days consideration time prior to implementation. In addition, there is no requirement for 15 days notice prior to a meeting. Prior written notice of eligibility for speech students does not include an explanation for the reason for the action, options considered and/or rejected, a description of other factors, a statement of other relevant factors, and the short procedural safeguards statement.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that prior written notice of eligibility for speech language services includes all the required components.**

Native Language –The district has a large number of Hispanic families requiring notice in native language. Though notice of a meeting is provided in the language of the parent, prior written notice is not. Notice of evaluation plans is provided in native language, however, notice of eligibility and IEP are not. For these notices, the district provides a standard cover letter in native language, but the IEP and eligibility documentation is in English. Interviews with staff indicate that interpreters are provided at meetings as required. Parents report, however, that interpreters do not consistently attend meetings. Documentation of meeting participants does not

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

consistently identify an interpreter as a participant. When the district is required to provide the code in Spanish, the version being used is reflective of N.J.A.C. 6:28. The Spanish edition of PRISE is also not current.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that prior written notice is provided in the native language of the parent whenever feasible.**
- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that meetings are conducted in the native language of the parent whenever feasible.**
- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that N.J.A.C. 6A:14 and the most recent version of PRISE are provided in native language whenever feasible.**

Timelines –The district does not document that prior written notice is consistently provided within 15 days of a meeting. In addition, there is inconsistent documentation in the files that parents receive notice at the meetings. Interviews indicate that notice is provided at meetings (IEP, eligibility, etc.) and when the parent is not in attendance that notice is mailed with a cover letter. However, a review of the records indicates that many of the cover letters are not dated, therefore timelines cannot be verified.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that prior written notice is provided within required timelines.**

Meeting Participants –The district has indicated that the regular education teacher does not consistently attend IEP meetings. During on-site monitoring, it was found that the district's current practice is to invite all of the student's regular education teachers to the IEP meeting and notice of the meeting reflects all of these participants. However, a review of the signatures of participants indicates that in many instances, only one regular education teacher attends. At times, the vice-principal has signed as a regular education teacher. There are additional problems regarding the attendance of regular and special education teachers at meetings held during the summer.

- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that all the required participants, including regular and special education teachers, attend IEP meetings and the notice of a meeting accurately reflects those district individuals who will be in attendance.**

Prior Written Notice of Identification Meetings –The district provides notice of evaluation plans, however, the notice does not consistently identify the discipline of the persons completing the evaluations.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that notice of an evaluation identifies the discipline of the evaluators conducting said evaluations.**

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

Procedural Safeguards –The district is currently providing parents with the version of N.J.A.C. 6A:14 dated November 1998. In addition, the short procedural safeguards statement is not the revised version which includes the phrase “those who may be determined eligible.”

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that current versions of the N.J.A.C. 6A:14 and the short procedural safeguards statement are provided as required.**

IV. Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately identified compliance with written procedures to locate, refer and evaluate students ages three through twenty-one, including students attending nonpublic schools who reside within the district.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the referral process including the need for a PAC committee at the high school, summary of health data, and notification to the principal that a child is protected under the disciplinary requirements.

However, though the district identified some areas as compliant, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding meeting participants, documentation of the effectiveness of interventions, and timelines.

Areas of Need:

Referral Process -The district identified the need to revise referral forms and review referral procedures with staff and administrators.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that will sufficiently address this issue.**

Identification Meetings -The district does not consistently date the notice of a meeting letter and the referral from PAC. Therefore it could not be determined if identification meetings are conducted within 20 days of receipt of the referral. Though interviews with staff indicate that these meetings occur within required timelines, it could not be verified.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that an identification meeting is held within 20 days of the receipt of the referral.**

Identification Meeting Participants –Regular education teachers do not consistently attend identification meetings. When meetings are conducted during the summer, teachers do not attend on a regular basis. A review of notice of meeting letters indicated that the appropriate participants and additional participants are listed as attending the meeting, but not all listed participants actually attend the meeting. (Corrective action for this issue is addressed in Section III-Procedural Safeguards.)

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

Pre-Referral Interventions -The district has an established system of regular education intervention. However, written documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of the interventions was not always evident in student files. In addition, the district identified the need for a PAC at the high school and the need for teachers to implement more effective interventions, both of which are sufficiently addressed in the improvement plan. Revisions to the plan are required to document the effectiveness of pre-referral interventions.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that ensures the documentation of interventions in the general education setting as well as the documentation of the effectiveness of those interventions.**
- **The district has developed an improvement plan, which sufficiently addresses the establishment of a PAC process at the high school and providing more effective interventions.**

Prior Written Notice of the Identification Meeting -The district has procedures in place to provide written notice of the results of the identification meetings. This notice contains a statement that the student has been identified as potentially disabled. As a result of self-assessment, the district indicated that the building principal is not notified that the child is protected under the discipline requirement.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that will sufficiently address this issue.**

Audiometric and Vision Screenings –During the self-assessment process, the district identified that audiometric and vision screening are not consistently conducted for every student referred for a special education evaluation, especially preschool age children.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that will sufficiently address this issue.**

V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately identified compliance with the provision of evaluation procedures which are technically sound, are neither culturally nor racially discriminatory, are administered by trained personnel, and evaluate all areas of suspected disability.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the procedures for the acceptance and rejection of reports and conducting a structured observation for speech evaluations.

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

However, though the district identified some areas of compliance, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding informed consent and implementation of evaluation plans.

Areas of Need:

Acceptance and/or Rejection of Reports –During the self-assessment process, the district identified problems with the acceptance or rejection of reports and assessments submitted to the IEP team for consideration. Documentation of this acceptance or rejection has not consistently been maintained.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that will sufficiently address this issue.**

Informed Consent -The district does obtain written parental consent before conducting assessments. However, the format used for the consent statement is not clear, leaving some confusion as to the action for which consent is being granted.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that parents are fully informed regarding the actions for which consent is being granted.**

Evaluation Plans -The district does not consistently implement the evaluation plan. For example, a plan requiring 3 assessments had only 2 reports being completed and maintained in the file. In these instances, there was no indication of a revision to the evaluation plan. Finally, the evaluation plans did not consistently identify by discipline the persons who would be conducting the assessments. (Corrective action for components of written notice is addressed in Section III—Procedural Safeguards.)

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that evaluation plans are implemented as written or revised if needed.**

Speech—Structured Observations -The district identified in their self-assessment that speech evaluations do not consistently include structured observations.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that will sufficiently address this issue.**

VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately identified compliance with policies and procedures to ensure that students with disabilities are evaluated every three years or sooner if conditions warrant.

However, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding documentation of written notice.

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

Areas of Need:

Written Notice of Eligibility -Although the district conducts a reevaluation within three years of the previous classification, there was inconsistent documentation in the student records to confirm that the IEP team reviews existing data to decide whether additional data are needed to determine continued eligibility and subsequent programmatic information.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that the district documents the review of existing data and the decisions made subsequent to that review.**

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately identified compliance with determining eligibility based on required assessments and disability categories.

However, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding eligibility meeting participants and providing parents with copies of evaluation reports.

Areas of Need:

Meeting Participants –The district does not consistently convene eligibility meetings with all the required participants. The regular education teacher is not always in attendance. (Corrective action for this issue is addressed in Section III-Procedural Safeguards.)

Copies of Reports to Parents - Interviews with parents indicate that evaluation reports are provided, however, they are not consistently provided within the required 15-day timeline. Additionally, there is no documentation in student files to verify the provision of these reports.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that parents are provided with a copy of the evaluation reports no later than when written notice of the statement of eligibility is provided and that documentation of this activity is maintained.**

VIII. Individualized Education Programs

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately identified compliance with annual review timelines.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with participants at IEP meetings and the alignment of goals and objectives with the core curriculum content standards.

However, though the district identified some areas as compliant, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding documentation of frequency, location, and duration of services in the IEP, individualization of goals and objectives, and provision of written notice within required timelines.

Areas of Need:

IEP Meeting Participants –During the self-assessment process, the district indicated that the regular education teacher does not consistently attend IEP meetings. Each of the child’s regular education teachers is invited to the conference and noted as such in the letter of invitation to the parent. However, all of these participants do not attend the actual conference. In addition to these issues, a review of student IEPs indicates that documentation of participation by both regular and special education teachers is not consistently maintained. General and special education teachers provide written input for consideration at IEP meetings, but they are not consistently in attendance at these meetings.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses the attendance of the regular education teacher at IEP meetings. The district is directed to revise this improvement plan to ensure that special education teachers attend IEP meetings and that signatures of participants are maintained in student files.**

IEP Goals and Objectives –During the self-assessment process, the district identified that goals and objectives in IEPs are not aligned with the core curriculum content standards and that parents are not informed of student progress on these goals and objectives at least as often as parents of nondisabled students. In addition, during the on-site monitoring, a review of student IEPs indicated that goals and objectives are not individualized and are often the same from one IEP to the next.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses the alignment of goals and objectives with core curriculum content standards.**
- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses procedures to inform parents of student progress on goals and objectives.**
- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that IEP goals and objectives are developed on an individual basis.**

Frequency, Location, and Duration of Services -IEPs did not consistently document the frequency/location/duration of related services. Although the district IEP format allows for the notation of this information, the IEPs reviewed did not consistently include this information.

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

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that IEPs document the frequency, location, and duration of related services.**

Written Notice of an IEP Meeting –Interviews with staff and parents indicate that in most cases, parents receive a copy of the IEP at the meeting. However, a review of the student files does not include consistent documentation that this occurs. There is no notation that the parent receives the copy and for those instances when the parent is not in attendance, often times the cover letter accompanying the IEP is not dated. As a result, provision of written notice within 15 days cannot be verified. (Corrective action for this issue is addressed in Section III—Procedural Safeguards.)

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified compliance with annual reviews, placement based on the IEP, placement in the school the student would attend if not disabled, and placement in a setting as close to home as possible.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a need for the development of an in-district option for preschool students and a need to reduce the number of students placed in out-of-district settings.

During the on-site monitoring, additional areas of need were identified regarding documentation of rationale for placement and factors affecting those decisions.

Areas of Need:

Out-of-District Placements –The district has indicated a need for in-district options for preschool and school-aged students who are currently attending out-of-district placements. The district has also indicated a need for a class to accommodate the needs of students with Multiple Disabilities. In addition, during on-site monitoring, staff members and parents indicated that placement decisions are influenced by availability of funds and facilities. The district's improvement plan was reviewed and it addresses the development of a Multiple Disabilities program. More specific information is required as to the procedures that the district will implement to establish this program. The improvement plan does not address the development of in-district options for preschool students with disabilities.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan to address placement of out-of-district students. The district is directed to revise this improvement plan to identify procedures and activities that the district will implement to establish the multiple disabilities program. In addition, the plan must be revised to ensure that placement decisions for students with disabilities are made based on individual student need, not availability of funds or facilities.**

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

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that the continuum of options, including regular education, is considered for all preschool students with disabilities.**

IEP Documentation –The district has made revisions to their IEP format to provide for more individualized documentation of the placement decision-making process. A review of student IEPs indicates that there is a great deal of variety in the level of documentation included in the IEP. Some IEP documentation is more detailed and varies depending on the individual filling out the form. There is a need for more consistency in documenting this process.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure consistent documentation in IEPs of the placement decision-making process.**

X. Transition

Transition from School to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified compliance with IEP required statements of transition service needs and needed transition services, IEP documentation of student interests and preferences, including input when the student is unable to attend the meeting.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a need for more in-service on transition for staff members.

However, though the district identified some areas as compliant, during on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding documentation of student invitation, individualized transition planning, documentation of agency participation, and provision of transition programs.

Areas of Need:

In-Service –The district identified a need for more training for staff members on transition planning and transition services. (This issue is addressed in Section I-General Provisions.)

Meeting Participants –The district indicates that students are regularly invited to attend IEP meetings for the purpose of transition planning. Staff members, parents, and IEP signature pages indicate that students do participate in this meeting. Interviews indicate that a separate letter is sent to the student, however, this documentation was not consistently found in the file. In addition, there is a lack of documentation of agency invitations to transition meetings.

- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure documentation of student invitations to IEP meetings for the purpose of transition planning.**

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

Transition Plans -The district has included the required statements in the IEP format for transition planning, however, transition plans are nearly identical from one IEP to the next. In addition, interviews indicate that transition services are limited due to a lack of community placements and problems with public transportation.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that transition planning is individualized and based on student need rather than available programs.**

Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified compliance with attendance at transition planning meetings.

Although this area was identified as compliant during self-assessment, the on-site monitoring identified areas of need regarding implementation of the IEP by age three.

Areas of Need:

Implementation by Age Three –The district did not ensure placement in a preschool program by the student’s third birthday. The district currently has one student placed in a preschool program. This child was not placed by the third birthday and there was no documentation in the file as to the reasons for the delay in implementation of the IEP.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure IEP implementation by age three.**

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified compliance with notification of case managers when disciplinary actions occur.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a need to reduce the number of suspensions and develop a method for tracking the number of disciplinary referrals. In addition, they identified a need to develop procedures to provide records to the authorities when reporting a crime and a need for additional in-service on the development and implementation of behavior plans.

During the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding notice of a meeting and conducting a manifestation determination within required timelines.

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

Areas of Need:

Reducing and Tracking Suspensions –The district has identified a need to track the number of suspensions that a student has accumulated as well as a need to reduce the number of suspensions for students in general. A review of the district’s improvement plan indicates that all issues have been addressed.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses this issue.**

Providing Records to Authorities –The district has indicated that there are no procedures currently in place to ensure that records of disabled students are provided to the authorities when the district reports a crime.

- **The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses this issue.**

In-Service on Behavior Intervention Plans –The district has identified a need for more in-service on the development and implementation of behavior intervention plans. (This issue is addressed in Section I – General Provisions.)

Manifestation Determinations –Records for students with more than 10 days of suspension were reviewed. There was documentation that a manifestation meeting is conducted, however, the meeting is not always held prior to the 11th day of removal. Files indicated that in some instances, the manifestation determination was conducted at the next regularly occurring IEP meeting, which was well after the 11th day of removal. In addition, for meetings where a manifestation determination was conducted, the notice of a meeting did not include this as one of the purposes.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that manifestation meetings are conducted prior to the 11th day of removal.**
- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that notice of a meeting includes a manifestation determination when appropriate.**

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

Statistics provided through the district’s self assessment reflect continued increases in the percent of students with disabilities participating in statewide assessments with modifications and accommodations as specified in individual student IEPs.

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

The district identified no areas of need during self-assessment, however, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding decision-making for participation in statewide assessment and identification of alternative assessments.

Areas of Need:

Participation in Statewide Assessments– Students with disabilities participate in statewide assessments. On-site monitoring found that many students, while participating, take the assessments for diagnostic purposes only. Instructional staff members indicated that they have little input and are not involved in the decision regarding student participation in assessments. Instructional staff members were unable to identify how decisions regarding exemption and modifications were made.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that staff members, including teachers and related service providers, have the opportunity for input into decisions regarding level of student participation in statewide assessments.**

Alternative Assessments –The district inconsistently identifies alternative assessments for students who are exempted from statewide assessments. In some instances, students take the MAT-7. In many instances, however, an assessment is not identified. Staff indicate that students are expected to achieve the goals and objectives of their IEP as an alternative assessment.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that alternative assessments are identified for students exempted from statewide assessments.**

XIII. Graduation

Summary of Findings:

The district accurately assessed compliance with participation in graduation and written notice of graduation. The district indicated a continued commitment to encourage students with disabilities to complete their high school graduation.

However, though the district identified some compliance with this standard, during the on-site monitoring, areas of need were identified regarding documentation of graduation requirements.

Areas of Need:

Documentation of Graduation Requirement – Graduation requirements were not consistently documented in IEPs of students with disabilities as required. Specific requirements that would qualify the students for the State endorsed diploma issued by the Wildwood school district were not identified in all student records reviewed

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

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan that identifies the procedures to be implemented to ensure that student IEPs address and include graduation requirements**

XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings

Through self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance with employment of CST members, provision of case management services, provision of speech, OT, PT, and home instruction.

Although the district did not identify any areas of need during self-assessment, the on-site monitoring identified areas of need regarding the decision-making process for counseling as a related service.

Areas of Need:

Counseling as a Related Service - While the Child Study Team indicated that students might also participate in community based counseling programs, IEPs reflected limited counseling for students identified with behavior disabilities. Instructional staff expressed that while the CST is supportive in issues dealing with behavior management when they present them, teachers also make efforts to resolve behavioral issues in the classroom. While the teachers recognize they have a role in addressing behavioral issues, counseling must be provided by appropriately certified staff members.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that counseling as a related service is considered on an individual basis during the development of the IEP.**

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified compliance with maintaining a record of persons accessing CST student files and procedures for amending contents of student records.

Although the district did not identify any areas of need during self-assessment, the on-site monitoring identified areas of need regarding the identification of the location of other student records and maintaining access sheets in speech files.

Areas of Need:

Location of Student Records – The main student CST files did not include speech IEP goals and objectives. These central office files did not indicate that speech goals, objectives and other

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

related material were maintained separately by the speech therapist or the location of those speech records. Records maintained by the speech therapist did not include access sheets for individuals inspecting speech records.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that student records identify the location of all other student records.**

Access Sheets for Speech Records –The files for student speech records did not include access sheets to maintain a record of persons reviewing these files.

- **The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to ensure that speech files contain access sheets.**

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

SUMMARY

An on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Wildwood School District on September 18th, 19th, and 20th, 2000. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. As a result of the thorough and comprehensive review conducted by the district during the self-assessment process, the district was able to self-identify a number of areas that require improvement.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. In addition, many of the concerns raised confirmed areas of need identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

The on-site visit determined that the district provides special education and related services as required by IEPs; complies with re-evaluation timelines; obtains consent as required; conducts Child Find activities; provides independent evaluations as required; has technically sound evaluation procedures; provides students a variety of options to participate in regular and special education programs and nonacademic and extracurricular activities; conducts annual reviews within required timelines; determines eligibility based on required assessments and disability categories; and provides for training of surrogate parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development; parental participation; transfer procedures; employment of emergency certified personnel; referral procedures; alignment of IEP goals and objectives with core curriculum content standards; increasing in-district placement options for preschool and multiply disabled students; IEP documentation of transition services; and discipline. On-site monitoring confirmed these areas of need.

The on-site visit further identified areas of need within the various standards regarding documentation of extended school year; procedural safeguards; meeting participants; individualized decision-making for transition, statewide assessment, and placement in the least restrictive environment; conducting manifestation determinations; preschool transition; and student records.

Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district is required to develop an improvement plan to address these areas of needs.