

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Winfield Township School District

County: Union

Monitoring Dates: December 20, 2005

Monitoring Team: Barbara J. Tucker and Robert Schweitzer

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Winfield 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 Winfield Township 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 Winfield School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an onsite monitoring visit 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 onsite visit, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitoring team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialist and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's special education data indicated that during the 2003-2004 school year, the district's classification rate was 20.71% (35 of 169 students). For school year 2004-2005, the classification rate rose to 26.01% (42 of 162) which was higher than the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The rate remained high in 2005-2006 at 25.31%. With regard to placement, the rate for students placed in general education for more than 80% of their school day was 11.8% (3 of 34 students) as reported during the 2003-2004 school year. During 2004-2005, however, a greater percentage of students with disabilities (43.9% or 18 of 41 students) remained in general education for 80% of the school day. The district identified the pre-referral intervention

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

process as an area of need during the self-assessment process and developed an improvement plan that addresses this area of need.

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 onsite monitoring process involved verification by the district that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the school in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. **General Provisions, Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services** were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant.

Areas Not Applicable:

The statement of needed transition services, identification of post-secondary liaison, IEP graduation requirements, out-of-district student participation in graduation activities and written notice of graduation were areas not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students for whom these services are required.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. These areas were reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS).

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral Process • Direct Referrals • Health summary • Vision and hearing screenings • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Implementation dates • IEP provided to parent prior to implementation • Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP • Annual reviews completed by June 30 • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access) • 90 day timelines
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district

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

Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of “transition service needs” • Activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student’s desired outcomes
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Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review:

The following areas were originally identified by the district self-assessment committee as non-compliant. The results of review of the improvement plan developed by the district are listed.

Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
LRI	<p>Child Find-The district identified that there are no procedures, timelines, or mechanism for disseminating child find information through the school.</p> <p>Pre-referral Interventions-The district identified that there is no procedure to document the effectiveness of pre-referral interventions.</p>	<p>The district has demonstrated compliance in these areas with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to ensure ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient. The district must ensure that new procedures reflect current requirements for documenting the implementation of pre-referral interventions as outlined in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3(c).</p>
LRE	<p>Continuum of Programs-The district identified continuum of programs for students eligible for special education and related services as an area of need.</p>	<p>The improvement plan is sufficient</p>
Transition to Adult Life	<p>Student and Agency Invitations to IEP meetings-The district identified student invitations to IEP meetings as an area of need.</p>	<p>The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to ensure ongoing compliance.</p>

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

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 New Jersey Department of Education during the onsite monitoring. Activities required to correct noncompliance are listed. An administrative oversight mechanism must be implemented, for each area, to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

Section	Area	Activity
IEP	IEP required Considerations and Components –The district's IEP does not contain all of the required considerations and components.	The district must ensure that the district's IEP contains all of the required considerations and components. The district is advised to use the model IEP provided by the NJDOE for both students who are ESERS and students who are ESLS.
LRE	Documentation of LRE- The district does not sufficiently document placement decisions in students' IEPs.	The district must ensure that placement in the general education setting, with supports as appropriate, is considered first when discussing placement. The IEP must include the specific supplementary aids and services considered and, for any rejected, the reason why. This is required for any student who is removed from general education for 20% or more of the time.

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

Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Winfield Township School District on December 20, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is acknowledged for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about correction of noncompliance. The district is further acknowledged 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.

A review of the district's special education data indicated that during the 2003-2004 school year, the district's classification rate was 20.71% (35 of 169 students). For school year 2004-2005, the classification rate rose to 26.01% (42 of 162) which was higher than the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The rate remained high in 2005-2006 at 25.31%. With regard to placement, the rate for students placed in general education for more than 80% of their school day was 11.8% (3 of 34 students) as reported during the 2003-2004 school year. During 2004-2005, however, a greater percentage of students with disabilities (43.9% or 18 of 41 students) remained in general education for 80% of the school day. The district identified the pre-referral intervention process as an area of need during the self-assessment process and developed an improvement plan that addresses this area of need.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Parents were pleased with the district's administration and staff. They felt that they were valued members of the IEP team.

Sections demonstrating compliance with all standards during self-assessment and verified during the monitoring visit by the New Jersey Department of Education included: General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education, Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the monitoring visit included: referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines and participants, IEP meeting participants, implementation dates, IEP provided to parent prior to implementation, meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP, annual reviews completed by June 30th, teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access), 90 day timelines, beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs" and activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding: Child Find ages 3-21, pre-referral interventions, continuum of programs and student and agency invitation to IEP meetings. The district demonstrated compliance during the onsite visit in the areas of child find and student and agency invitations. The improvement plan for pre-referral interventions and continuum of programs is sufficient.

The onsite visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding: IEP required considerations and components and documentation of LRE decisions.

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

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been reviewed and approved. The district is expected to implement the activities in the district's improvement plan and those described in the monitoring report to achieve compliance in all areas of need within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.