

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Woodcliff Lake School District

**County:** Bergen

**Monitoring Dates:** June 20, 2006

**Monitoring Team:** Vanessa Leonard, Debbie Masarsky, Robert Schweitzer

### ***Background Information:***

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Woodcliff Lake School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Woodcliff Lake 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 Woodcliff Lake School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an onsite 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 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 and 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 administrators and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

### **Data Summary:**

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district had a classification rate of 12.93%, which was lower than the state average of 16.8% for that year. The district educated 69.9% of students with disabilities, ages 6 through 21, in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day compared to the state rate of 42% for the same school year. With regard to placement of preschoolers, 77.8% of preschoolers with disabilities were educated in special education early childhood settings and 11.1% were educated in a combination of general education and special education settings. Although a general education option was not available for preschoolers with disabilities at the time of the onsite monitoring visit, in December 2006, the district reported a rate of 11.1% of preschoolers with disabilities in general education settings for 80% or more of their program.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

### 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 visit involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the district in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. The following sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant:

- General Provisions
- Transition to Adult Life
- Reevaluation
- Statewide Assessments
- Transition to Preschool
- Graduation

### Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the remaining 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). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transfer procedures</li> <li>• Provision of programs</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• Consent</li> <li>• Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>• Provision of notice of a meeting</li> <li>• Provision of written notice</li> <li>• Interpreters at meetings</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Find ages 3-21</li> <li>• Pre-referral interventions</li> <li>• Direct referrals</li> <li>• Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> <li>• Educational impact statement (ESLS)</li> <li>• Standardized assessments</li> <li>• Bilingual Evaluations</li> </ul>
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting participants</li> <li>• Implementation dates</li> <li>• Annual reviews by June 30<sup>th</sup> for preschoolers in their last year of the preschool program and for students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs</li> </ul>

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 90 day timelines</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs</li> <li>• Placement decisions based on individual need</li> <li>• Continuum of Programs</li> </ul>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension tracking system</li> <li>• Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students</li> <li>• IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days</li> <li>• Procedures for determination of change in placement</li> <li>• Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan</li> <li>• Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement</li> <li>• Short-term removals that are not a change in placement— school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided</li> <li>• Interim alternative educational settings</li> <li>• Manifestation determinations</li> </ul>
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age range</li> <li>• Group size</li> </ul>

**Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review**

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The third column, of the table below, includes the results of the review of the improvement plan submitted by the district to correct identified noncompliance.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
FAPE	Oversight of IEP implementation- The district reported that they did not have sufficient staff to conduct oversight.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Extended school year (ESY)- ESY decisions were made prior to the IEP meeting, without input from parents and teachers.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Provision of related services- Adaptive Physical Education was not consistently considered when needed and the district did not have an appropriate number of Occupational Therapists to implement services in students' IEPs.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Content of written notice-Written notice did not consistently include a description of the procedures, tests, records and factors used as a basis for the proposed and/or denied actions.	The improvement plan is sufficient.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Compliance Review</b>
	<p>Content of notice of a meeting – Notice of a meeting did not contain the required components.</p> <p>Notices in native language- The district did not provide written notice to parents in their native language.</p> <p>Independent evaluations- Parents were not provided with a comprehensive list of independent evaluators when required.</p> <p>Documentation of meeting participants- The district staff did not consistently document parent participation when parents participated by phone.</p>	<p>The improvement plan is sufficient</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p>
LRI	<p>Referral process- The Intervention and Referral Services committee referrals to the CST lacked consistency and staff members were not properly trained in the use of referral forms.</p> <p>Identification meeting timelines- Identification meetings were not consistently held within required timelines.</p> <p>Health summary and vision and hearing screenings- Health summaries and vision and hearing screenings were not forwarded to the child study team prior to the identification meeting.</p>	<p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The district is directed to ensure that for each student referred to the child study team, a health summary and vision and hearing screening results are forwarded to the child study team prior to the identification meeting for consideration, when determining whether an evaluation is warranted. The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Evaluation	Functional assessments - The child study team and speech-language specialists did not consistently document all of the required components of a functional assessment.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Evaluation	Written reports prepared by evaluators- The child study team and speech-language specialists did not provide the date the report was written.	The improvement plan is sufficient.

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Compliance Review</b>
Eligibility	<p>Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)- Staff were not consistently using criteria when determining eligibility for special education and related services under the category of Specific Learning Disability.</p> <p>Copies of evaluation reports to parents- Reports were not provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.</p>	<p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p>
IEP	<p>IEP provided to parent prior to implementation- The distribution of IEPs to parents was not consistently documented in students' files.</p> <p>Teacher knowledge and access to IEPs- Procedures did not ensure that teachers had knowledge of IEPs.</p> <p>Meetings held annually or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP - Annual reviews were not consistently held within the required timeline.</p> <p>IEP required considerations and components- IEPs did not consistently include all required components.</p>	<p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p> <p>The district is directed to ensure that annual reviews are consistently conducted within required timelines. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p>
LRE	<p>Documentation of LRE decisions- Staff did not consistently consider the general education class with supplementary aids and services as the first placement option.</p> <p>Non-academic/extracurricular activities- The district did not have a formal means of notifying students placed out of the district of nonacademic and</p>	<p>The district is directed to ensure that each IEP for students who will be removed from general education for more than 20% of their school day specifies the considerations of appropriate supplementary aids and services and program modification; the explanation why the supplementary aids and services and program modifications are not appropriate; and documentation of the comparison of the benefits in each setting. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The improvement plan is sufficient.</p>

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Compliance Review</b>
	extracurricular activities.	
Discipline	Notification of removal forwarded to case manager- Case managers did not consistently receive notification of suspensions.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Programs and Services	Common planning time- The district did not consistently provide common planning time for teaching pairs.	The improvement plan is sufficient.

**Additional Area of Need**

The following area was originally identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as compliant but was found to be noncompliant by the NJDOE during the onsite monitoring.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Programs and Services	Class size- Class sizes for resource classes and in-class support classes at the high school exceeded required limits.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that all special education programs meet class size requirements as indicated in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.6. If class size will exceed required limits, the district must seek approval from the county office of education. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

## Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Woodcliff Lake School District on June 20, 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 nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about compliance.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district had a classification rate of 12.93%, which was lower than the state average of 16.8% for that year. The district educated 69.9% of students with disabilities, ages 6 through 21, in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day compared to the state rate of 42% for the same school year. With regard to placement of preschoolers, 77.8% of preschoolers with disabilities were educated in special education early childhood settings and 11.1% were educated in a combination of general education and special education settings. Although a general education option was not available for preschoolers with disabilities at the time of the onsite monitoring visit, in December 2006, the district reported a rate of 11.1% of preschoolers with disabilities in general education settings for 80% or more of their program.

During interviews conducted with parents by telephone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Parents stated that their children were challenged academically. Parents also stated that the district communicated often with them regarding their children's progress.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the onsite monitoring visit included:

- Transfer procedures
- Provision of programs
- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Meetings
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Provision of written notice
- Interpreters at meetings
- Child Find ages 3-21
- Direct referrals
- Pre-referral interventions
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Standardized assessments
- Bilingual evaluations
- 90 day timelines
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
- Continuum of programs
- Suspension tracking system
- Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students
- IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days
- Procedures for determination of change in placement
- Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan
- Short-term removals resulting in a change of

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Eligibility meeting participants
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement/disagreement and rationale
- IEP meeting participants
- Implementation dates
- Annual reviews completed by June 30 for preschoolers in their last year of a preschool program and students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs
- placement
- Short-term removals that are not a change in placement—school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided
- Interim alternative educational settings
- Manifestation determinations
- Age range
- Group size

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

- Oversight of implementation of the IEP
- Extended school year
- Provision of related services
- Content of written notice
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Notices in native language
- Independent evaluations
- Documentation of meeting participants
- Referral process
- Health summary and vision and hearing screenings
- Identification meetings timelines
- Functional assessments
- Written reports prepared by evaluators
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents
- IEP required considerations and components
- IEP provided to parent prior to implementation
- Teacher knowledge and access to IEPs
- Meetings held annually or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- Notification of non-academic/extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district
- Notification of removal forwarded to case manager
- Common planning time

The onsite visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Class size

The improvement plan submitted by the district is approved. The district must implement improvement activities to correct noncompliance identified during self-assessment and areas of noncompliance identified during the monitoring visit, within six months of receipt of this report. Verification of correction will be conducted by the County Office of Education.