

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

District: Woodland Township School District

County: Burlington

Monitoring Dates: December 10,11,12, 2001

Monitoring Team: Arlene Popovici, Deborah Knauss

Background Information:

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Woodland Township School District conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Woodland 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 Woodland Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at Chatsworth School on December 4, 2001. Information obtained from this meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE 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, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrator/ building principal general education and special education teachers and child study team members.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, and Programs and Services were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during the self-assessment process and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section II: FAPE

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of transfer students. The district developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

Section IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals, health summary, summer referrals, and vision and hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, referral process, and identification meetings including timelines and participants. The district developed an improvement plan that that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

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Section V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments, written reports, and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, and acceptance and rejection of reports. The district developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

Section VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, and documentation of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of providing copies of evaluation reports to parents. The district developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

Section VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, considerations, required statements, annual reviews, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of goals and objective, implementation dates, and teacher knowledge and access to IEPs. The district developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

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Section IX. LRE

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti, considerations and documentation, supplementary aids and services, regular education access and continuum.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of non-academic/extra curricular participation. The district developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

Section X. Preschool Transition

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area transition from early intervention programs to pre-school programs by the age of three.

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

Section X. Post-School Transition

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of agency involvement, age 14 transition service needs, courses of study, and preferences and interests.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding student invitation.

Area of Need:

Student Invitation to Meeting – During the on-site visit, it was determined through the interview process and through record review that although students attend meetings where transition is discussed, the district does not maintain documentation of the provision of this written invitation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district maintains documentation of the provision of a written invitation to students when the purpose of a meeting is transition planning.**

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Section XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings and interim alternative education settings.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of functional behavioral assessments. The district developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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

Section XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent/adult student access, access sheets, and maintenance and destruction.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of location of student files.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Location of Student Files - During the on-site visit, interviews and record reviews indicated that central files do not identify the locations of other student records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files identify the locations of other student files maintained by the district.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Woodland Township School District on December 10, 11,12, 2001. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is also commended for the many areas that were determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations. The district is further commended for its level of commitment to the support of inclusive programs for students with disabilities and for the level of documentation maintained by the child study team members in student files.

At a focus group meeting at the Chatsworth School, held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process. There were eight parents and five staff members in attendance at the focus group meeting. Parents indicated that services are available and are being provided in a timely manner. They further indicated that changes on the child study team have been positive and that staff go above and beyond for the children and their families. Some parents expressed concerns with the time it takes to obtain an independent evaluation, with the amount of difficulty some students are experiencing in inclusive settings, and the lack of notification to out-of-district students regarding extracurricular activities.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during the self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included general provisions, extended school year, related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, procedural safeguards, direct and summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, health summaries, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation, eligibility, IEP participants, considerations and required statements, annual review and 90-day timelines, individual decision-making, Oberti, considerations and documentation, supplementary aids/services, regular education access, continuum, pre and post school transition, discipline, statewide assessment, IEP requirements for graduation, diploma, participation, programs and services, student records access, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding transfer students, Child Find 3-21, referral process, identification meetings including timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, acceptance and rejection of reports, turning age 5, evaluation reports given to parents, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum standards, IEP implementation dates, teacher knowledge of and access to IEPs, nonacademic/extracurricular activities, pre-school planning conference, and functional behavior assessments.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding student invitation to transition meeting, and documentation of locations of student files.

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Within forty five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the in-site visit and those areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.