

**THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION MONITORING**

District: Woodlynne School District

County: Camden

Monitoring Dates: November 1, 2004

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair and Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2003 - 2004 school years, the Woodlynne School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Woodlynne 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 Woodlynne School District developed an improvement plan to address the 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 Woodlynne School on October 19, 2004. Information obtained from the meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed district documentation, including district 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 district's special education administrator, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The Woodlynne School District is commended for providing a wide variety of programs for students and community members such as; The ACE Center, a fully-equipped computer center open to students and community members before and after school. A paid employee with computer expertise is always available to help and answer

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questions. Students and community members can access the web and have assistance with completion of homework and research.

The district has a program called “Bookmates”, which consists of voluntary community members, who come into the school two days a week to read to students in grades kindergarten through second grade.

The district also has The Ace Plus Program, which provides after-school tutoring two days per week from second through fifth grade. A Basic Skills program after school two days a week helps to prepare students for the ASK and GEPA State testing.

The Oakwood Program is designed to help with the prevention of substance abuse, provide parents training and counseling for students. A Peer Mediation Program includes students from 5th to 8th grades. The students are trained, to provide mediation for students conflicts, and mentoring to younger students.

Part One Data Summary:

The Woodlynne School District reported a classification rate of 19.7% for the 2003-2004 school year, which is above the state average of 16.3%. The data submitted by the district indicated many students transfer into the district already classified. Data submitted by the district indicated 33.3% of preschool age students are placed in special education classes in the building as compared to the state average of 50.3%. The district had identified this as an area of need and built additional space and opened a preschool program for the 2004-2005 school year. The district indicated through the self-assessment that 24% of students are placed in general education more than 80% of the day which is lower than the state average of 41.3%. The district identified professional training and staffing issues as an area of need and has addressed these issues in their improvement plan.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with all Standards:

Evaluation, Statewide Assessments and **Student Records** 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 the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent/professional development. 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 II. Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

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Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs, related services, length of school day and year, transfer students and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of proper functioning of students hearing aides and facilities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, written notice, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notice of a meeting. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need the district was able to demonstrate that they have brought about correction in this area.

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 indicated compliance in the areas of referral process, direct referrals, identification meetings participants and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of pre-referral interventions, child find, child study team employed during the summer, health summary and vision and hearing screenings. During the on-site visit, it was determined that the district has corrected health summary and vision and hearing screenings. The district improvement plan is sufficient to address pre-referral interventions, child find and child study team employed during the summer.

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

Section VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of three year timelines, planning meetings and reevaluations completed by June 30th of students last year in preschool.

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During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas participants at planning meetings. 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 VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district indicated compliance in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility for students eligible for special education and related services, signature of agreement/disagreement rationale and copy of evaluation reports to parents.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding eligibility for students classified eligible for speech and language services.

Areas of Need:

Eligibility for Speech and Language Services – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review that students were being found eligible for speech and language services at the evaluation plan meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that when an initial speech and language evaluation is completed an eligibility meeting is convened to determine whether the student is eligible for speech and language services. This will ensure that the evaluation for a speech disorder is conducted, parents are receiving reports 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting for review and classification can be determined collaboratively by the participants at the meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII. Individual Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of consideration and required statement, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents and 90 day timelines.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants and teacher access/responsibility. During the on-site visit it was determined that the district had begun to implement their plan regarding meeting participants. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address teacher access responsibility because although the district will send a letter inviting teachers to read IEP it lacks an oversight component to ensure that teacher are actually reading IEP and know their responsibility. The plan must be revised to include this component.**

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

Section IX. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of decision making process, and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Oberti documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, general education access, notification and participation of out-of-district nonacademic and extracurricular activities. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Section X. Transition to Post School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of age 14 transition service needs, preference and interests and student / agency invitation.

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

Section X. Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding preschool transition planning conference and early intervention to preschool disable by age three. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding documentation to case managers, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and reporting a crime. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XIII. Graduation

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Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district indicated compliance in the area of IEP requirements.

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding out-of-district participation. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas class size, age range, group size, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding programs and common planning time. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 Woodlynne School District on December 13, 2004. 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. 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 nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended 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 district data indicated that the district classification rate is above the state average however Woodlynne school district has a high rate of students who transfer into the district already classified. The district is addressing this through professional training and staffing. In addition the district has a lower rate of preschool students who are placed in special education classes in district. The district has built additional space and opened a preschool program for the 2004-2005 school year.

A focus group meeting was held prior to the monitoring visit. Parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. They were generally pleased with the accessibility of the child study team and students' access to general education programs.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Evaluation, Statewide assessments and Student Records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs, related services, length of school day and year, transfer students, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, written notice, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, direct referrals, identification meeting participants, timelines, three year timelines, planning meetings, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students last year in preschool, criteria, statement of eligibility, agreement/disagreement rational, copy of evaluation reports to parents, consideration and required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, decision-making process, continuum of programs, age 14 transition services needs, preference and interests, student/ agency invitation, suspension tracking , manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings, procedural safeguards, class size, age range, group size and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent/professional development, hearing aides worn by deaf and hard of hearing students in school are functioning properly, facilities, notice of a meeting, pre-referral interventions, child find, child study team employed during the summer, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, participants, teacher access/responsibility, out-of-district participation, documentation to case managers, functional behavioral assessments,

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behavioral intervention plans, reporting a crime and programs and common planning time.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding eligibility for student's classified eligible for speech and language services,

Within forty-five days (45) days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Woodlynne Borough School District will revise the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.