

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

District: Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District **County:** Salem

Monitoring Dates: February 4, 5, 6, 2002

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Background Information

During the 2000–2001 school year, the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional 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 Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional 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 Mary S. Shoemaker Elementary School on January 29, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, the NJDOE 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, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district’s special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district should be commended for initiating and maintaining ongoing communication between regular education staff, special education staff, and child study team members. This change has occurred as a result of the actions taken by the new director of special services and the new members of the district’s child study team.

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The Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District has implemented PowerSchool, a district-wide tracking system for grades, attendance, and suspension, as well as voice-mail and e-mail for parents and teachers. The district has been able to build and modify equipment for individual students with physical disabilities, by utilizing the skills of in-district carpenters to build lab tables and individual workstations.

Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Re-evaluation was determined to be an area of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures, parent development, and dissemination of IDEA information.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding professional development.

Areas of Need:

Professional Training - During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews that teaching staff are not provided with opportunities to participate in training and in-services related to special education.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to identify the procedures that will ensure staff will attend training related to special education. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures, as well as documentation of the effectiveness of the training.**

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of in-district and out-of-district transportation, length of school day and year, facilities, and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, related services (Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Counseling), and transfer students. The district has already corrected issues regarding extended school year, transfer students, and counseling. The improvement plan is insufficient to address the issues the other related services

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because it lacks appropriate timelines. The plan needs to be revised to include more reasonable timelines to ensure timely implementation of the identified procedures.

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

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, meetings, native language, and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notice of meetings and parent participation. During the on-site it was determined that the district had implemented activities that corrected the identified issues prior to the on-site monitoring visit.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding surrogate parents and written notice.

Areas of Need:

Surrogate Parents - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews that the district does not have procedures for the selection and training of surrogate parents, in the event one is needed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district selects and trains surrogate parents, in the event one is needed. The improvement plan must include a mechanism for staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

Written Notice - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the district does not consistently provide parents with written notice.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice is provided to parents on a consistent basis. The improvement plan must include staff development and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process, direct referrals (parent/staff), summer referrals, health

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summary, vision and hearing screenings, and identification meetings, including participation and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find. During the on-site it was determined that the district had implemented activities that corrected the identified issues prior to the on-site monitoring visit.

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

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments, functional assessments, written reports, and educational impact statements. During the on-site it was determined that the district had implemented activities regarding functional assessments that corrected the identified issues prior to the on-site monitoring visit. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the other areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure procedures are fully implemented. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of eligibility and copies of evaluation reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

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

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VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age of majority, annual review timelines, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements, goals and objectives related to the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), implementation dates, teacher knowledge and access, copies of IEPs to parents, out-of-district placements, present levels of educational performance (PLEP), transition from elementary to secondary school, modifications and supports, and supplemental aids and services. During the on-site it was determined that improvement plan activities for considerations and required statements, implementation dates, teacher knowledge and access, copies of IEPs to parents, out-of-district placement, PLEP, transition from elementary school to secondary school, modifications and supports, and supplemental aids and services have been implemented and have corrected the identified issues prior to the on-site monitoring visit. The district did not submit an improvement plan to address the area of goals and objectives/CCCS. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, staff training, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding participants.

Area of Need:

Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that regular education teachers do not consistently participate in IEP meetings.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure regular education teachers attend IEP meetings, when required. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

IX. LRE

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of supplemental aids and services, and nonacademic and extracurricular participation for both in-district and out-of-district placements. During the on-site it was determined that the district had implemented activities that corrected the identified issues prior to the on-site monitoring visit.

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

X. Transition—School to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences, EIP to PSD by age 3, student invitation, age 14 transition service needs, including courses and preferences and interests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of agency involvement and transition from elementary to secondary school. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. It should be noted that agency involvement was corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit and is now determined to be compliant.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding agency invitation and age 16 needed transition services.

Areas of Need:

Agency Invitation—During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district is not issuing invitations to community agencies.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that community agencies are invited to transition planning meetings for students with disabilities. The improvement plan must include a mechanism for staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

Age 16 Needed Transition Services—During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not identify a liaison for post-secondary resources.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that a liaison for post-secondary resources is identified and utilized for students age 16. The improvement plan must include a mechanism for staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of this procedure.**

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, suspension tracking, behavior intervention plans (BIPs), functional

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behavioral assessments (FBAs), manifestation determinations, and interim alternate education services (IAES).

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to case managers and short-term removals. During the on-site it was determined that the district had implemented activities related to documentation to case managers and was corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the other areas because it lacks procedures and staff training to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation and IEP documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of approved accommodations and modifications, alternate assessments for out-of-district placements, and local assessments. During the on-site monitoring it was determined that improvement plan activities for these areas have been implemented and that these areas are now compliant.

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

XIII. Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of written notice.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP requirements, diploma, and participation. During the on-site visit, it was determined that the district had implemented activities related to the provision of diplomas and was corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the other areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

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XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size and age range waivers, and home instruction approvals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consultation time, established special education classes, particularly multi-disabled classes at the secondary level, and team-teaching descriptions. During the on-site monitoring it was determined that improvement plan activities for these areas have been implemented and that these areas are now compliant.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified no areas of concern.

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

Area of Need:

Documentation of Location of Student Files—During the on-site visit, it was determined through record review of central files that these files do not identify the locations of other records in the district.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District on February 4, 2002. 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 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 the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of these identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit.

At a focus group meeting 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. Issues raised by parents included inconsistent levels of programs and services among the three schools, inclusion for non-academic activities at the high school level, and a lack of notification of nonacademic and extracurricular activities for out-of-district students.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the policies and procedures, parent development, dissemination of IDEA information, length of school day/year, oversight of IEP implementation, certifications, consent, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, direct referrals for staff and parents, summer referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings and participants, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation process, eligibility criteria and meetings, documentation of eligibility, age of majority, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, Oberti, considerations and documentation, regular education access, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention program to preschool disabled by age three, age 14 transition service needs, courses of study, preferences and interests, discipline standards, participation in statewide assessment, approved accommodations and modifications when participating in statewide assessments, alternate assessments, participating in graduation activities, class size, age range, and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, transfer students, the provision of counseling services, notice of meetings, parent participation, child find 3-21, potentially disabled students, multi-disciplinary assessments, functional assessments, educational impact, copies of evaluation reports to parents, considerations and required statements in the present level of performance, implementation dates, teacher knowledge and access, out-of-district placements, transition from elementary to secondary school, modifications and supports, supplemental aids and services, nonacademic and extracurricular participation for in-district and out-of-district students, agency involvement, documentation of

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disciplinary actions, short-term removals, approved accommodations and modifications, local assessments, IEP graduation requirements, diploma, graduation participation, and common planning time for teachers. It should be noted, however, that many of these areas originally identified as areas of noncompliance have now been corrected and are currently compliant.

During the on-site additional areas of need were identified in the various standards regarding professional development, related services, surrogate parents, written notice, IEP meeting participants, agency invitation, age 16 needed transition services, group sizes for speech therapy, and documentation of other locations.

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 on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.

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