



**State of New Jersey**

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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*Governor*

KIM GUADAGNO  
*Lt. Governor*

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*Acting Commissioner*

April 18, 2011

Dr. Daniel Fishbein, Superintendent  
Ridgewood School District  
Education Center  
49 Cottage Place  
Ridgewood, NJ 07451

Dear Dr. Fishbein:

Subject: Special Education Monitoring Report – Ridgewood School District

This correspondence has been sent to inform you of the results of the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs' onsite monitoring regarding the Ridgewood School District's implementation of federal and state special education requirements. Between November, 2010 and the present, the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSPEP), conducted onsite monitoring visits, verification visits and desk audits in the Ridgewood School District to determine compliance with federal and state special education requirements. The members of the monitoring team were Tracey Pettiford-Bugg, Steven Pasternak and Linda Chavez.

The special education monitoring system is data driven and aligned with the federally required State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators, including the federal monitoring priorities established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). Specifically, the NJOSPEP monitoring process is focused on improving educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities and ensuring compliance with those special education requirements related to positive student outcomes.

The special education self-assessment and monitoring process focused on requirements related to the following areas:

- ***Transition to Adult Life***
- ***State Assessment***
- ***Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment***
- ***Parent Involvement***
- ***Disproportionate Representation of Specific Racial-Ethnic Groups in Special Education***
- ***Evaluation and Reevaluation***
- ***Individualized Education Program***
- ***Programs and Services***

[www.nj.gov/education](http://www.nj.gov/education)

**The Ridgewood School District was chosen for the self-assessment/monitoring process through random selection.**

**Monitoring Results**

The enclosed Table of Findings details the findings of noncompliance resulting from the onsite monitoring. All findings must be corrected within one year of the date of this report. Corrective action should include, as necessary: development and/or revision of policies and procedures, staff training, implementation of the identified IDEA and N.J.A.C. requirements and implementation of an oversight mechanism to ensure ongoing compliance. A state monitor will contact Ms. Kerry Huntington to discuss procedures for verification of correction of the findings of noncompliance listed in the Table of Findings. For any finding of noncompliance related to the development or implementation of IEPs or the delivery of programs and services, **corrective action activities have been directed by the NJOSEP.**

The results of the special education monitoring must be reviewed at the next meeting of the district's board of education. A copy of the minutes from the board of education meeting documenting the review by the board must be submitted to the following address:

Northern Special Education Monitoring Team  
New Jersey Department of Education  
Passaic County Office of Education  
501 River Street  
Paterson, NJ 07524

Questions regarding the enclosed monitoring report should be directed to Dr. Peggy McDonald, manager of the Bureau of Program Accountability, at 609-292-7605.

The NJOSEP appreciates the cooperation of district staff members during the self-assessment/monitoring process.

Sincerely,



Barbara Gantwerk, Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Student Services

BG/PM/lc  
Enclosure

c: Gregg Edwards  
Andrew Smarick  
Peggy McDonald  
Linda Chavez  
Robert Gilmartin  
Steven Pasternak  
Kerry Huntington

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**Noncompliance was not identified with requirements in the following sections of the self-assessment:**

**Section I: TRANSITION TO ADULT LIFE**

**Section II: STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT**

**Section V: DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION**

**Section VIII: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**Section III: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

**Areas of Noncompliance**

Area	Status of Compliance
2) IEPs shall include an explanation of the extent, if any, to which child will not participate with nondisabled children. [20 U.S.C. §1412(a)(5) and 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(V); 34 CFR §300.115 and §300.320(a)(5) and N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e)6]	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs did not include an explanation of the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
4) IEPs shall include a comparison of the benefits provided in the regular class and the benefits provided in the special education class, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2(a)8(ii).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs did not consistently include a comparison of the benefits provided in the regular class and the benefits provided in the special education class, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
5) IEPs shall include the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a placement (general education) may have on the student with disabilities or the other students in the class. [20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5); 34 CFR §300.116(d)]	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs did not consistently include the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a general education placement may have on the student with disabilities or the other students in the class, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
6) For students in a separate setting, IEPs shall include activities to transition students to a less restrictive environment, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2(a)4.	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs for students in a separate setting did not consistently include activities to transition students to a less restrictive environment, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

**Corrective Action for Areas 2, 4, 5 and 6 above:** The district is required to conduct training with child study team members regarding procedures for individualized decision-making regarding educational placements and documentation of placement decisions in IEPs.

The district is required to conduct a meeting of the IEP team for each student whose IEP was identified as noncompliant by the NJOSEP monitors and ensure that each IEP is revised to include the required components. Names of students whose IEPs were found to be noncompliant by the monitors will be provided to the Director of Special Education by NJOSEP.

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The district must review the IEPs of all students with disabilities removed from general education settings for greater than 20% of the school day. For any IEP where the rationale for removal is noncompliant and/or does not include the activities to transition students in a separate setting to a less restrictive environment, a meeting of the IEP team must be convened to review and revise the IEP.

**Section IV: PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

**Areas of Noncompliance**

Area	Status of Compliance
1) Parents shall be given written notice of a meeting containing all the required components, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)3,5; 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(1); and 34 CFR §300.304(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently provide parents with written notice of a meeting containing all the required components, due to incorrect district procedures.
2) Written notice, which includes required components, shall be provided to parents following meetings, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(f) and 2.3(g)1-7; 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(1)(c)(4)(A); 34 CFR §300.304(a)(4); and 34 CFR §300.305(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently provide parents with written notices including all required components, due to incorrect district procedures.
3) Eligibility meetings shall include required participants in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)1(i-vii); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B); and 34 CFR §300.321(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently include all required participants at eligibility meetings, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

**Section VI: EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATION**

**Areas of Noncompliance**

Area	Status of Compliance
4) Within 20 calendar days of receipt of the written request for an evaluation, the district shall convene a meeting with required participants, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3(e).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently convene timely identification meetings with all required participants, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
5) A vision and audiometric screening shall be conducted for every student referred to the child study team for evaluation. The school nurse shall review and summarize available health and medical information and transmit the summary to the child study team, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(j).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that vision and audiometric screenings were not consistently conducted prior to eligibility meetings for every student referred to the child study team for evaluation, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
9) Each evaluation of a student shall include functional assessment, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that evaluations of students did not consistently include all required components of functional

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3.4(f)4(i-vi); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(4) and (5); and 34 CFR §300.306(c)(i).	assessment, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
10) Within three years of the previous classification, a multi-disciplinary reevaluation shall be completed, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.8(a) and 20 U.S.C. §1414(a)(2)(B)(ii).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that multidisciplinary reevaluations were not consistently conducted within 60 day and three year timelines, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
11) Reevaluation planning meetings shall include required participants, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)2(i-x); 20 U.S.C. §1414©(1)(A)(i); and 34 CFR §300.305(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that reevaluation planning meetings did not consistently include all required participants, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
15) A copy of the evaluation report(s) and documentation and information that will be used for a determination of eligibility shall be given to the parent or adult student not less than 10 calendar days prior to the eligibility meeting, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(a); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(4); and 34 CFR §300.306(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that copies of evaluation reports were not consistently given to the parent or adult student not less than 10 calendar days prior to the determination of eligibility, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

**Section VII: IEP**

**Areas of Noncompliance**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Status of Compliance</b>
1) IEP meetings shall be held with an appropriately configured IEP team, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)2(i-x)1; 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B); and 34 CFR §300.321(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs were not consistently held with appropriately configured IEP teams, due to incorrect district procedures.
2) IEPs shall include required considerations and statements, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(c)1-11, (e) 1-17, and (f); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(A)(B); and 34 CFR §300.324(a)(1)(2).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs did not consistently include all required considerations and statements, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
3) IEP meetings shall be conducted annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP and determine placement, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(i); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d); and 34 CFR §300.324(b)(1).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEP meetings were not consistently conducted annually, or more often if necessary, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
6) IEPs shall be implemented as written, in accordance with 20 U.S.C. § 1412 (a)(16)(D).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEPs were not consistently implemented as written, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

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**Corrective Action for Area 2 above:** The district is required to conduct training with child study team members regarding procedures for documenting the following components in IEPs: the consideration of extended school year; beginning and ending dates for related services; transition activities from elementary to secondary programs; and the strengths of the student.

The district is required to conduct a meeting of the IEP team for each student whose IEP was identified as noncompliant by the NJOSEP monitors and ensure that each IEP is revised to include the required components. Names of students whose IEPs were found to be noncompliant by the monitors will be provided to the Director of Special Education by NJOSEP.

The district must review the IEPs of all students with disabilities. For any IEP that does not include the required components, a meeting of the IEP team must be convened to review and revise the IEP.

**All documentation required to demonstrate completion of corrective action activities must be submitted to the following address:**

Northern Special Education Monitoring Team  
New Jersey Department of Education  
Passaic County Office of Education  
501 River Street  
Paterson, NJ 07524