



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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June 9, 2010

Dr. Patrick Martin, Superintendent
Ringwood School District
121 Carletondale Road
Ringwood, NJ 07456

Subject: Special Education Monitoring Report – Ringwood School District

Dear Dr. Martin:

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 Ringwood School District's implementation of federal and state special education requirements. On November 17 and 18, 2009, the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (NJOSEP), conducted an onsite monitoring visit to determine compliance with federal and state special education requirements. Verification of the correction of findings of noncompliance identified in your district's self-assessment was also conducted on March 19, 2010. The members of the monitoring team were Tracey Pettiford-Bugg, Samuel Jordan, Gladys Miller and Linda Chavez.

NJOSEP initiated a new five year self-assessment/monitoring cycle during the 2006-2007 school year. The 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 NJOSEP 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***
- ***Discipline Procedures***
- ***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*

The Ringwood School District was selected randomly for the self-assessment process for the 2007-2008 school year.

The NJDOE Self-Assessment/Monitoring Process

The first step in the monitoring process was completion of a self-assessment which required the district to review student outcome data and policies, procedures and practices related to federal monitoring priorities. The district was provided with a comparison of district student outcome data to relevant targets established in New Jersey's SPP. Based on the data review and the self-assessment findings, the district developed an improvement plan that addressed areas for "Continuous Improvement" and Areas of Noncompliance with federal and state regulations related to the priority areas. The self-assessment and improvement plan were submitted to NJOSEP in September 2008.

Following review of the self-assessment and the improvement plan, an onsite monitoring visit was conducted. A review of specific federal and state requirements related to the education of students with disabilities was completed during the visit. The monitoring team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, a sample of student records, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related services personnel and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Monitoring Results

The enclosed Table of Findings details the onsite monitoring results with regard to the following:

Status of improvement plan activities

For each area in need of continuous improvement identified by the district, the status of improvement activities designed to improve student outcomes is provided. If not identified as completed, the district must demonstrate implementation of improvement plan activities in accordance with the timelines delineated in the improvement plan. NJOSEP will continue to monitor implementation of the continuous improvement plan activities through additional onsite visits and desk audit.

Findings of noncompliance identified by the district during the self-assessment

For any finding of noncompliance identified by the district during self-assessment, the status of correction is provided. One finding of noncompliance identified during self-assessment remains uncorrected. **This finding must be corrected within one year of the date of this report. Corrective action activities, along with timelines for completion, are included in the attached Table of Findings.**

Findings of noncompliance identified during onsite monitoring

For any finding of noncompliance identified by the district during the onsite monitoring visit, the status of correction is provided. **Findings of noncompliance identified as a result of the onsite visit 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. The monitoring team leader, Ms. Linda Chavez, will contact Ms. Victoria Wilson to discuss procedures for verification of correction of the findings of noncompliance listed in the Table of Findings.

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:

Ms. Linda Chavez, Monitor
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.

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

Sincerely,



Roberta Wohle, Director
Office of Special Education Programs

RW/PM/lc

Enclosure

c: Division of Field Services
Barbara Gantwerk
Peggy McDonald
Linda Chavez
Robert Gilmartin
Gladys Miller
Victoria Wilson

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Section I: TRANSITION TO ADULT LIFE—Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment.

Section II: STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT—Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Area	Status of Improvement Plan
The district developed improvement plan activities to analyze school and district-level achievement data for students with IEPs. The plan also included the development of policies and procedures for collaboration between special education and general education teachers across curriculum areas to evaluate student progress. The district planned to review IEPs for alignment with the curriculum. New policies and procedures were to be developed to ensure the collaboration between special and general education teachers and to ensure that parents and guardians receive meaningful feedback on student performance.	The district is in the process of implementing its improvement plan activities in accordance with the established timelines.

Section III: DISCIPLINE—Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Area	Status of Improvement Plan
The district devised improvement plan activities that included the development of a new, comprehensive discipline referral form and new procedures for conveying discipline data to staff at least 3 times per year. Additionally, they planned to create a new school improvement plan to include behavioral supports as one of the top three priorities.	The district is in the process of implementing its improvement plan activities in accordance with the established timelines.

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Section IV: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT—Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or onsite monitoring.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Area	Status of Improvement Plan
The district developed improvement plan activities that included additional training for staff in the utilization of positive behavior supports. Additionally, the district planned to facilitate the collaboration between general education and special education teachers to develop differentiated instruction techniques and maximize the use of adaptations and accommodations in the general education setting. The plan also included the expansion of in-district supports for students with behavioral and multiple disabilities.	The district is in the process of implementing its improvement plan activities in accordance with the established timelines.

Section V: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Results of Parent Interviews:

Parents interviewed by telephone indicated that they had good working relationships with the child study team. Parents also indicated that they were pleased with the quality of teaching their children received.

Areas of Noncompliance Identified during Self-Assessment

Area	Status of Compliance/Corrective Action
4) Parental consent shall be obtained whenever a member of the IEP team is excused from participating in a meeting, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(a)6; 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d)(1)(C)(i) through (iii); and 34 CFR §300.321(e).	Noncompliance identified during the self-assessment process was verified as corrected during the onsite monitoring visit.

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6) Each district shall ensure that a Special Education Parent Advisory group is in place in the district, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.2(h).	Noncompliance identified during the self-assessment process was verified as corrected during the onsite monitoring visit.
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Areas of Noncompliance Identified during the Onsite Monitoring Visit

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 and 5; 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(1); and 34 CFR §300.304(a).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that notices of meetings were not provided consistently, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures. Additionally, the notices of IEP meetings did not always inform the parent that he or she could invite another with expertise, 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); and 34 CFR §300.304(a)(4) and §300.305(a).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that written notices were not provided consistently, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures. Written notices which document evaluation plans (initials and reevaluations) and eligibility determinations for students eligible for special education and related services and for students eligible for speech/language services did not include 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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that eligibility meetings did not consistently include required participants, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

Section VI: DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION – Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment.

Area(s) in Need of Continuous Improvement

Areas	Status of Improvement Plan
The district developed improvement plan activities that included professional development to increase the staff's understanding of the ways race, culture, ethnicity and language can influence student learning and achievement.	The district is in the process of implementing its improvement plan activities in accordance with the established timelines.

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Section VII: EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATION

Areas of Noncompliance Identified during Self-Assessment

Area	Status of Compliance/Corrective Action	Corrective Action Requirements	Documentation Required and Timeline
15) When an initial evaluation is completed, a copy of the evaluation report(s) and documentation and information that will be used for determination of eligibility shall be provided to the parent not less than 10 calendar days prior to the meeting to determine eligibility, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(a and b); 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(4); and 34 CFR §300.306(a).	Review of records indicated that the district has not implemented its improvement plan activities for this area within established timelines. Copies of evaluation reports and documentation and information to be used for determination of eligibility were not provided to parents within the required timeline, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.	The district is required to conduct training for its child study team members and speech-language specialists regarding district procedures for the provision of copies of evaluation reports and information that will be used for determination of eligibility to the parent not less than 10 calendar days prior to the eligibility meeting. The Director of Special Services is required to conduct oversight activities to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.	Copies of training agenda and sign-in sheets are to be provided by November 1, 2010. Verification will be conducted beginning December 2010.

Areas of Noncompliance Identified during the Onsite Monitoring Visit

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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently convene identification meetings with required participants within 20 calendar days of receipt of the written request for an evaluation, 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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently ensure that results of vision and audiometric screenings and health summaries were provided to the case manager prior to the identification meeting for students referred to the child study team, due to a lack of district procedures.

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6) The school district shall ensure that the hearing aids worn by children who are deaf or hard of hearing are functioning properly, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-1.1(f) and 34 CFR §300.113(a).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not have procedures for ensuring that hearing aids are functioning properly.
7) The district shall obtain consent from the parent or adult student, at required times, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(a); 20 U.S.C. § 1414(a)(1)(D); and 34 CFR §300.300(a).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently maintain documentation of consent from the parent to conduct initial evaluations or reevaluations, 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:14-3.4(f)4(i-vi); 20 U.S.C. § 1414(b)(4) and (5); and 34 CFR §300.306(c)(i).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently conduct all required components of functional assessments as part of initial evaluations of students, 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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently complete multi-disciplinary reevaluations within three years of the previous classification, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures regarding both the three year and sixty day timelines.
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(c)(1)(A)(i); and 34 CFR §300.305(a).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently include and document the participation of all required participants at reevaluation planning meetings, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
12) By June 30 of a student's last year in a program for preschoolers with disabilities, a reevaluation shall be conducted, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.8(g); 20 U.S.C. § 1414(c); and 34 CFR §300.305(b)(2)(e).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently conduct reevaluations by June 30 of a student's last year in a program for preschoolers with disabilities, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
14) Each child study team member shall certify in writing whether his or her report is in accordance with the conclusion of eligibility of the student, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(h)5.	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently have child study team members certify in writing whether their reports were in accordance with the conclusion of eligibility, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

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Section VIII: IEP – Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment.

Areas of Noncompliance Identified during the Onsite Monitoring Visit

Area	Status of Compliance
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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently hold IEP meetings with appropriately configured IEP teams, due to a lack of implementation of 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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently include all required considerations and statements in IEPs, due to incorrect 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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently conduct IEP meetings annually or more often, if necessary, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.
4) The annual review of the IEP for a preschool student with a disability shall be completed by June 30 of the student's last year in the preschool program, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(i)1; 20 U.S.C. § 1414(d); and 34 CFR §300.324(b)(1).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not consistently complete annual reviews of IEPs for preschool students by June 30 of their last year in the preschool program, 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).	Review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that the district did not implement IEPs as written, due to a lack of implementation of district procedures.

Required Corrective Actions for Section VIII, Area 2: The district is directed to conduct IEP review meetings for each student whose IEP was identified as noncompliant by the NJOSEP monitors and ensure that each IEP is revised to include all required considerations and components. Names of students whose IEPs were found to be noncompliant by the NJOSEP monitors will be provided to the Director of Special Services. The district is directed to review the IEPs of all students with disabilities to ensure that all required considerations and components are included. For any IEP where documentation of considerations or components are missing, a meeting of the IEP team must be convened to review and revise the IEP.

Required Corrective Action for Section VIII, Area 6: The district is directed to ensure that the IEPs of all students identified by the NJOSEP monitors are implemented as written. The district must also ensure that the IEPs of all students with disabilities are implemented as written. At the next annual review for each student with an IEP that was not implemented, the IEP team must determine the need, if any, for compensatory services.

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The Director of Special Services is directed to conduct oversight activities to ensure correction and ongoing compliance for both Area 2 and Area 6. These activities must include periodic IEP and program review.

Section IX: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES—Noncompliance was not identified during self-assessment or the onsite monitoring visit.

All documentation required to demonstrate completion of corrective action activities must be submitted to the following address in accordance with the timelines listed in the above Table of Findings.

Ms. Linda Chavez, Monitor
 New Jersey Department of Education
 Passaic County Office of Education
 501 River Street
 Paterson, NJ 07524