

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

**Receiving School:** Washington Academy      **County:** Essex

**Monitoring Dates:** December 2, 3, and 4, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Susan Smahl, Mitchell Badiner, Elaine Lerner, Cecelia Downey

**Background Information:**

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Washington Academy conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Washington Academy 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 development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

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. Washington Academy did not identify any areas of need during the self-assessment process.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed receiving school documents such as policies and procedures, student records from sending districts, lesson plans, services as indicated in IEPs, staff evaluations, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the receiving school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers and related service personnel.

**School Strengths:**

The Washington Academy is commended for creating programs that provide a structured academic environment infused with a counseling component for their students, the majority of whom are classified emotionally disturbed or multiply handicapped. Most classrooms have both a special education teacher and a regular education teacher, providing a rich complement of both content area expertise and teaching strategies' expertise. In addition, an academic enrichment teacher provides additional support when necessary. Teaching assistants in many classes result in a low student to teacher ratio. Washington Academy has a comprehensive Fine Arts curriculum culminating in an annual Arts Expo in which all students participate. In addition, a Reading Lab offers students the opportunity to research, write, edit, illustrate and publish their own books. At the time of the on-site visit, the Reading Lab was transformed into a Rainforest, illustrating the integration of Language Arts, Fine Arts,

## **New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring**

Social Studies and Science. Washington Academy has a state of the art computer lab and a well-equipped graphic arts studio that is available to all students.

Washington Academy provides group counseling for all students and additional therapeutic support if necessary, eliminating the need for more restrictive disciplinary measures such as a time out room. Parents report that the staff is always available for consultation and corresponds on a daily basis when the need arises. Although the student population at Washington Academy is comprised of students with severe emotional disabilities, it is clear that an attitude of mutual respect exists between teachers and students, and that the school provided a caring, nurturing environment for all. Additionally, as the students at the school are from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, Washington Academy provides all school supplies ensuring that all students have appropriate learning materials.

This report identifies activities the school must take in order to comply with federal and state requirements. Please be advised that several of these activities require immediate action on the part of the school.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**General Provisions, FAPE and Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by the receiving school during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

### **Section III: Staff Requirements**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, Washington Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of use of PTA and COTA, private school dual employment, employment/job description of classroom aid, criminal history verification and having an approved professional development plan.

During the on-site visit an area of need was identified concerning certified/licensed staff.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Certified/Licensed Staff** – During the on-site visit, through a review of records, it was determined that the school nurse and a social worker do not have Department of Education certification.

- **Within 45 days, Washington Academy will employ only staff members who are appropriately certified. In addition, Washington Academy will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members employed by the school are appropriately certified. The plan must also include an administrative oversight to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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

**Section IV: Facility Requirements**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, Washington Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of certificates of occupancy and inspection and fire drills.

An area of need was identified during the on-site concerning programs provided in approved facilities.

**Area of Need:**

**Program Provided in Approved Facilities** – During the on-site visit, through record review and observation, it was determined that Washington Academy has not received final approval for its new facilities from the county office of education and has not filed a Dual Use form for a classroom that is currently divided for both Graphic Arts and Fine Arts.

- **Washington Academy will immediately file the Dual Use Form to the county office of education. Washington Academy will develop an improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that it files and receives facilities approvals in a timely manner.**

**Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, Washington Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP held with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEPs, IEP accessibility, inform teachers/staff of IEP responsibilities, no delay in IEP implementation; observation of proposed placements, statewide testing and implementation of IEP components.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP meetings held annually, communication with sending districts regarding missing IEP components, implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

**Areas of Need:**

**Communication with Sending District Regarding Missing IEP Components and Annual Review Meetings**– During the on-site visit, through record reviews and staff interviews, it was determined that sending districts are not consistently informed in writing when IEP components are missing or when annual reviews have not been scheduled within mandated timelines.

- **Washington Academy will develop an improvement plan to ensure that sending districts are contacted when IEPs are not complete or when annual review meetings are not scheduled in a timely manner. The plan must include procedures, staff training and an administrative oversight to ensure that procedures are implemented consistently. The plan must also include a mechanism to address how the school will communicate with districts to**

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

obtain complete IEPs for those students currently in attendance at the school.

**Progress Reports** – During the on-site visit, through a review of records, it was not consistently documented that progress reports are issued to parents and districts.

- **Washington Academy will develop an improvement plan to include procedures that ensure that progress reports are consistently issued to parents and districts. The plan must also include an administrative, oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section VII: Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, Washington Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class sizes and age ranges, exceptions, special classes implementing IEP, CCCSs/CCCSSSD, home instruction, administering medication, nursing and medical services, school functions and services and interscholastic sports.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding description of special class programs.

**Area of Need:**

**Description of Special Class Programs** – During the on-site visit, through record review and staff interviews, it was determined that Washington Academy has more classes in operation than has been approved by the County Office.

- **Washington Academy will develop an improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative, oversight component to ensure that Add/Change Class forms are submitted to the county office of education in a timely manner.**

**Section VIII: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, Washington Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of conformance of pupil records, return of records, access to records, access sheets procedures and implementation, location of records, daily attendance, tardiness and absences, and mandated health records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding written notification to DOE within 10 days of student's first day in attendance.

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

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Written Notification to Doe Within 10 Days of Student's First Day of Attendance –**  
During the on-site visit, through record review, it was determined that not all student records included a Notification of Placement Form.

- **Washington Academy will develop an improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative, oversight component to ensure that a Notification of Placement Form is filed with the County office within 10 days of each student's first day of attendance.**

# **New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring**

## **Summary**

Washington Academy is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. The school is commended for the many areas determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at the Washington Academy on December 2, 3, 4, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify Washington Academy's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by Washington Academy during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, program provided in nonsectarian settings, length of day/year, physical education, hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, observation of programs, provision of services as per IEP, related services, such as OT, PT, speech, counseling, use of PTA/COTA, private school dual employment, employment/job description of classroom aides, criminal history verification, having an approved professional development plan, certificates of occupancy and inspections, fire drills, IEP meeting conducted with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEPs, IEP accessibility, inform teacher/staff of IEP responsibilities, no delay in IEP implementation, observation of proposed placements, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures and implementation for time out rooms, use of aversives and restraints, removal of student, changes to program/placement, suspensions, interim alternative educational setting, termination of student, exceptions, special classes implementing IEP, CCCS/CCSSSD, home instruction, administering medication, nursing and medical services, school functions and services, interscholastic sports, conformance of pupil record code, return of records, access to records, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance, tardiness and absences and mandated health records.

During the self-assessment process, the receiving school identified no areas of need.

The on-site visit identified areas of need within the various standards regarding certified/licensed staff, programs provided in approved facilities, IEP meetings held annually, current IEPs, communication with sending districts, progress reports, descriptions of special class programs, and notifications of placements.

This report identifies some areas of non-compliance that requires immediate action by the school administration. Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, Washington Academy will submit an improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs and to the county office of education to address those areas of need.