

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Receiving School: Cape May County Special Services School District (CMCSSSD)

County: Cape May

Monitoring Dates: May 3-6, 2004

Monitoring Team: Barbara Groff, Debra Magee, Barbara Ciancaglini, Carmen Fanucci, Elaine Lerner

Background Information:

During the 2002– 2003 school year, the Cape May County Special Services School District (CMCSSSD) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the CMCSSSD 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. The CMCSSSD developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) 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.

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/related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the receiving school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, related service personnel, a student and parents.

School Strengths:

CMCSSSD is commended for providing a program for students with auditory impairments in the Dennis Township Public Schools. All students in the program are included in general education classes at various times throughout the school day and participate in all extracurricular activities with their nondisabled peers.

CMCSSSD offers a multi-faceted Social Skills Curriculum/Character Education Program which incorporates the Rutgers Social Decision-Making Program as an instructional model. All staff members are trained in this research-based program which is designed

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with the school's specific student population in mind. Teaching Tolerance Through the Arts is one aspect of this program that utilizes song, instrumentation, dance, artwork, drama and poetry as well as academic integration to teach tolerance.

CMCSSSD provides an exceptional Assistive Technology Center which works in conjunction with Camden County ETTC. Equipment, services, training and follow-up services are provided to ensure the student's continued progress. Distance Learning is offered through CMCSSSD which links students via video conferencing to schools, museums and institutions around the world. In addition, the district is a member of the Garden State Distance Learning Consortium, committed to giving students expanded opportunities and access to learning.

CMCSSSD provides its middle and high school students with a strong transition program focusing on career awareness and job activities. Examples of activities include job shadowing at nursing homes, youth shelters and at the police academy. Additional vocational training opportunities include a "mini" ShopRite store; a school-run café and a horticulture program. Some students enroll in classes provided by Atlantic Cape Community College.

CMCSSSD also offers a Pet Therapy program which currently includes two dogs. The Outdoor Experiential Education (OXE) offered at the school provides a variety of outdoor and indoor activities for students in the community.

The elementary school should be commended for its 4-H program, which is the largest in the State of New Jersey and their Food Bank program in which students, in participating classes, plan nutritious meals and stock the food bank to provide food baskets to as many as 27 families on a monthly basis and at the holidays.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Discipline were determined to be areas of compliance by the CMCSSSD during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the CMCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding staff development, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, the CMCSSSD identified concerns in the areas regarding policies and procedures relating to missing IEP components, maintenance, access to and confidentiality of student records and joint training of staff and parents. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in the areas regarding missing IEP components and joint training of staff and parents.

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

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Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the CMCS SSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT) services as per IEP, provision of physical therapy (PT) services as per IEP, provision of speech language services as per IEP and provision of counseling services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the CMCS SSD identified concerns in the areas regarding maintenance of hearing aids. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in this area.

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

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the CMCS SSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, signatures present on IEPs, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, IEP accessibility, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement and statewide testing.

During the self-assessment process, the CMCS SSD identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP conducted with required receiving school participants for reevaluation meetings, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, implementation of IEP components relating to assistive technology and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

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

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the CMCS SSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, teachers trained and instructing in CCCs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the CMCS SSD identified concerns in the areas regarding class sizes for group speech and policies and procedures relating to school

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functions and services. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding age ranges.

Area of Need :

Age Ranges- During the on-site visit, a review of records and classroom observations determined that several high school classes exceeded the maximum four year age range.

- **The school must immediately contact the sending districts and request an age range exception for those classes that exceed the four year age range. The school must also revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all classes do not exceed the maximum age range requirement or that an exception is requested prior to student placement. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the CMCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination, access to records limited to authorized persons, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the CMCSSSD identified concerns in the areas regarding written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures to ensure that the sending districts are notified when students reach five days of tardiness/absences. The plan must be revised to include this component.**

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 CMCS SSD on May 3-6, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the CMCS SSD report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The CMCS SSD is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the receiving school was able to identify all but one all area of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address most areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the receiving school is commended for the many areas that were determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Discipline were determined to be areas of compliance by the CMCS SSD during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the CMCS SSD during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT) services as per IEP, provision of physical therapy (PT) services as per IEP, provision of speech language services as per IEP and provision of counseling services as per IEP, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, signatures present on IEPs, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, IEP accessibility, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services and medical exams for sport teams, conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination, access to records limited to authorized persons, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the CMCS SSD identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures relating to missing IEP components, maintenance, access to and confidentiality of student records, joint training of staff and parents, maintenance of hearing aids, IEP conducted with required receiving school participants for reevaluation meetings, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, implementation of IEP components relating to assistive technology, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, group sizes for speech, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness /absences.

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The on-site visit identified one additional area of need within the various standards regarding age range.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the CMCSSSD will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the county office of education and to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.