

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Receiving School: New Beginnings Schools (New Beginnings-Fairfield and New Beginnings Annex- West Milford)

Counties: Essex and Passaic

Monitoring Dates: September 26, 27 and 29, 2005

Monitoring Team: Mark Lanzi, Diane Mari, Ann Marie Bruder, Greg Margolis, Heather Mills-Pevonis, Zola Mills

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the New Beginnings Schools (New Beginnings-Fairfield and New Beginnings Annex- West Milford) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the New Beginning Schools 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 New Beginning Schools 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 New Beginning Schools' documents such as policies and procedures, student records from sending districts, lesson plans, services as indicated in Individualized Education Plans (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 New Beginnings' special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, parents and related service personnel.

Noncompliant items reflected in this report may result in nonallowable costs imposed by the Division of Finance in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-4.1 through 4.16.

School Strengths:

New Beginnings Schools (New Beginnings-Fairfield and New Beginnings Annex- West Milford) are commended for their extensive technology program which provides a schoolwide wireless network and several of the classrooms have individual student

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laptops and assistive technology. New Beginnings Schools provide inclusion opportunities at both locations. The New Beginnings Annex-West Milford is situated within a public school, which encourages both academic and extracurricular inclusion opportunities. There is extensive collaboration between the school administration and the receiving school head teacher that creates a smooth transition for students reintegrating into the West Milford School System. Similarly the New Beginnings-Fairfield location offers inclusion opportunities through a relationship with the Roseland Public School District, whereas select New Beginnings' students spend a portion of their day in an inclusion class at the elementary school.

New Beginnings Schools also provide in-service workshops to the participating school districts to ensure the cohesiveness of the program and provides the staff with the essential tools necessary to work with students with developmental disabilities in an inclusive environment.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Facility Requirements was determined to be an area of compliance by New Beginnings- Fairfield during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

FAPE, and Facility Requirements were determined to be areas of compliance by New Beginnings Annex – West Milford during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

New Beginning Schools

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, New Beginnings Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, New Beginnings Schools identified concerns in the area regarding staff development. The receiving schools' improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. Additionally, the schools must update and revise their professional development plan and submit to the county professional development board for review and approval.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

New Beginnings-Fairfield

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, New Beginnings-Fairfield 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,

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provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, New Beginnings-Fairfield identified concerns in the area regarding maintenance of hearing aids. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

No additional areas were identified during the on-site visit at New Beginnings Schools.

Section III: Staff Requirements

New Beginnings Schools

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, New Beginnings Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals and job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding criminal history verification.

Area of Need:

Criminal History Verification- During the on-site visit through record reviews and staff interviews it was determined that the schools have not submitted emergent hiring forms for staff members who require them. In addition, it was determined that that the schools do not have criminal history verification documentation for staff members employed by the schools.

- **The schools will immediately submit requests for emergent hiring through the county superintendent's office for all staff members in noncompliance. In addition, the schools must revise their improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all staff members obtain criminal history clearance prior to starting employment by the schools.**

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

New Beginning Schools

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, New Beginnings Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP

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responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

During the self-assessment process, New Beginnings Schools identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP conducted annually. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components including missing goals and objectives for counseling.

Area of Need:

Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components- During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school does not have a formal mechanism for obtaining missing IEP components. Components consistently missing include goals and objectives for counseling.

- **The receiving school must revise its improvement plan to develop procedures to ensure that the school communicates with sending districts when IEPs are missing components. Areas consistently missing include goals and objectives for counseling. In addition, the school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that individualized counseling goals and objectives are developed in collaboration with the sending district and included in students IEPs when appropriate. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Discipline

New Beginnings Schools

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, New Beginnings Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, removal of student pending mediation and due process changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting and procedures for termination of student placement.

During the self-assessment process, New Beginnings Schools identified concerns in the areas regarding the inclusion of the behavioral intervention plans to the students' IEPs. **The receiving schools improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that behavioral intervention plans are developed in collaboration with the sending district and appropriately discussed and documented at IEP meetings. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

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No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at New Beginnings Schools.

Section VII: Programs and Services

New Beginnings Schools

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the New Beginnings Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the New Beginnings Schools identified a concern in the areas regarding a nursing services plan. **The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks clear procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes along with county approval of the plan. The plan needs to be revised to include these components. In addition, the New Beginnings Annex-West Milford must hire a full-time certified school nurse or apply for approval of a nursing equivalency waiver. In addition, the school must submit a nursing services plan for review and approval by the county office.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at the New Beginnings Schools in the area regarding core curriculum content standards (CCCS).

Area of Need:

Instruction in the CCCS- During the on-site visit through record review, and classroom observations indicated that instruction in the CCCS was not consistently documented.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that teachers document the provision of instruction in the CCCS. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Student Records

New Beginnings Schools

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the New Beginnings Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

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During the self-assessment process, the New Beginnings Schools identified concerns in the areas regarding access to records and access sheets. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at New Beginnings Schools.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the New Beginnings Schools on September 26, 27, and 29, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the New Beginnings Schools report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the schools' improvement plan.

The receiving schools' are commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further 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.

Facility Requirements was determined to be an area of compliance by New Beginnings-Fairfield during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

FAPE and Facility Requirements were determined to be areas of compliance by New Beginnings Annex–West Milford during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the New Beginnings Schools during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments, 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 IEP's, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) speech language and counseling services as per IEP, certified/licensed staff, appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals and job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, IEP meetings conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meetings conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, removal of student pending mediation and due process changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting, and procedures for termination of student, class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, medical exams for sport teams, conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness /absences, written notice of placement to county office, and maintenance of student health records.

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During the self-assessment process, the New Beginnings Schools identified areas of need regarding staff development, criminal history, IEP's conducted annually, behavior management plans, nursing services plan, access to records and access sheets. Also, New Beginnings- Fairfield identified concerns in the area regarding maintenance of hearing aids.

The on-site visit at New Beginnings Schools identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding criminal history verification, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components relating to goals and objectives for counseling and documentation of CCCS in lesson plans.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the New Beginnings Schools 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.