

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

**Receiving School:** Midway School

**County:** Burlington

**Monitoring Dates:** May 20, 21, 22, 23, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Deborah Knauss, Catherine Thomas, Elaine Lerner, Judyth Vazquez, Barbara Ciancaglini

**Background Information**

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, Midway School conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided Midway School with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- the provision of a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities;
- 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. Midway School developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Department of Education conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress made in implementing the plan.

Prior to the on-site visit, the monitoring team reviewed school documents, including receiving school policies and procedures, classroom schedules, related services schedules, master student lists, class lists, school calendars and teacher schedules.

During the on-site visit, the monitoring team reviewed student count information, survey results used in developing the self-assessment, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records, criminal history checks, fire drill, attendance, suspension and therapy logs. The monitoring team conducted on-site observations of the school's special education programs. Interviews were conducted with Midway School's director, principal, special education teachers, physical education teacher, speech therapists, school social worker, disciplinarian and classroom assistants. Parents of students attending Midway School were interviewed by telephone.

**School Strengths:**

The receiving school is commended for the efforts made in communicating with parents. School staff indicated that they send daily point sheets home for parent review and signature as well as bus behavioral reports. In addition, Midway's principal consistently attends IEP meetings for all students.

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The school's commitment to meet the emotional needs of the students was evident throughout the school day. In addition, the monitoring team observed positive rapport between school staff and students.

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

**Facility Requirements** was determined to be an area of compliance by the school and by the Department of Education during the on-site visit.

## **SECTION I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, Midway School accurately identified themselves compliant in annual reports, amendments and the provision of programs and services in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures for staff development. Prior to the on-site visit, the county office approved Midway School's policies and procedures. The school has developed an improvement plan for staff development that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it requires additional to ensure that staff receives training in accordance with approved policies and procedures. The plan must include administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The school has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address the area of changes to amendments required for policies, procedures and programs because it lacks procedures to ensure implementation. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

## **SECTION II. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of hearing aids, length of school day/year and provision of health and physical education instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns regarding procedures for observation of programs by sending districts and the Department of Education and the related service of occupational therapy. The school has developed an improvement plan for observation of programs that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the development and implementation of the procedures. The school has developed an improvement plan to address the provision of occupational therapy services. The plan does not sufficiently address this area of need because the identified procedures are insufficient to ensure that it provides services required by a student's IEP from the date of enrollment. The procedures must include steps to ensure that districts are notified in writing when the school is unable to provide this or any other service required by an IEP

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and the arrangements that Midway will make to provide compensatory services. Midway school should not accept students for enrollment if they cannot implement the IEP. The school needs a mechanism to determine whether sufficient staff members are employed to implement the IEPs. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year, services at no cost to the parents and the provision of programs and services in accordance with IEPs.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Extended School Year Approval** – Prior to the on-site visit, through a review of materials maintained at the county office, it was determined that the school is not approved to provide an extended school year program.

- **The school has submitted the New Jersey Department of Education Request for Approval to Add, Eliminate or Change a Class form to the county office of education for review and approval. No further action is required.**

**Extended School Year's Length of School Day-** During the on-site visit, through interviews with staff, it was determined that the educational component of the extended school year day does not meet the required minimum of four hours of instructional time.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to ensure that Midway's extended school year meets the minimum requirement of four hours of instructional time. The plan must also address how districts will be notified that the required hours for their extended school year program have not been provided and the arrangements that Midway will make to provide compensatory services.**

**Services at No Cost to Parents-** During the on-site visit, interviews with staff and review of school-generated documents indicate that the school provides both an extended school year program and a camp program. Interviews with staff and review of documents indicate that there is conflicting information regarding these programs as to fees charged to parents. An April 2002 letter describes the camp program as a continuum of the extended school year program. No option to attend only the extended school year program is discussed. The letter goes on to list the current monthly camp fee of \$100 per month. Administrative staff stated that this correspondence is only sent to those parents of camp attendees and not to those attending the extended school year program. However, the April letter addresses both categories of parents. Administrative staff stated that all students who attend the ESY program also attend the camp, but that the camp fees are paid via a Burlington County Freeholders Grant. The school was not able to produce documentation to support this.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parents are not paying for extended school year programs. In addition, the school must determine if any parents were required to pay for their extended school year program. If it is determined that parents paid for the extended school year program, the school must reimburse those**

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parents. The plan must include staff training and administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.

### **SECTION III. STAFF REQUIREMENTS**

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

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of certification, dual employment, job descriptions for classroom aides, and having an approved professional development plan.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding criminal history verification and the provision of speech services.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Criminal History Verification-** During the on-site visit, through a review of staff lists and criminal history documentation, it was determined that the school does not maintain verification of the criminal history check for all staff members employed by the school.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members are fingerprinted for criminal history review. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Provision of Speech Services -** During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and a review of logs that staff members providing speech services are employed through a clinic.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that staff members are either employed by the school or that services are provided through a direct contractual arrangement with an appropriately certified practitioner. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **SECTION V. IEP/ANNUAL REVIEW**

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

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings conducted at least annually, staff attendance at IEP meetings, signatures present on IEPs, staff knowledgeable in IEP responsibilities, IEP accessibility, staff knowledge of accommodations and modifications, timely implementation of IEPs, observations of proposed placement, areas related to participation in statewide assessments and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified noncompliance in the areas of implementation of IEP components. The improvement plan is insufficient because the

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activities identified are not appropriate to address the compliance indicator. The plan needs to be revised to ensure that IEPs are implemented as written.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding current IEPs, and requests for communication to sending districts regarding IEP components.

### **Area of Need:**

**Current IEPs-** During the on-site visit, through record reviews and classroom observations, it was determined that the school does not consistently maintain current IEPs for students enrolled at their school.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures for tracking IEPs and notifying the district when an IEP is not current. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Communication to Sending Districts-** During the on-site visit, through record reviews and interviews, it was determined that the school does not consistently communicate to sending districts when IEPs are missing components.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components are missing. The plan must also be revised to include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

## **SECTION VI. DISCIPLINE**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the changes to program/placement, and interim alternative educational settings, removal and termination of students and tracking of suspensions.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns regarding standard disciplinary procedures for all students, development and implementation of procedures for use of time out rooms, aversives, restraints, and the removal of students. The school has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address the area of standard disciplinary procedures because it lacks appropriate activities to communicate changes to staff, parents and students, and an oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The improvement plan does not sufficiently address the area of time out rooms because it lacks evidence of time out procedures, staff training and an oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The improvement plan for the area of restraints does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks appropriate staff training on the use of restraints and holds and administrative oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The procedures regarding the removal of students are insufficient to address this area of need. In addition, the plan must be revised to

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include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.

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

### **SECTION VII. PROGRAM AND SERVICES**

#### **Summary of Findings**

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class sizes and age ranges, exceptions, certifications, special classes implementing IEPs, administering medication, nursing and medical services

During the self-assessment process the school identified concerns in the areas of description of special class programs, home instruction, and school functions and services. The school has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient because the activity identified regarding the description of special class programs is not appropriate to address the compliance indicator. The indicator requires the development of descriptions for each class type, not for individual classes. The improvement plan developed for collaboration with sending school districts for home instruction lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure continuous implementation. The improvement plan concerning school functions and services is insufficient to address this area of need because it needs additional activities, staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit in the areas of core curriculum content standards (CCCSs), including core curriculum content standards for students with severe disabilities (CCCSsSDs), and evaluation and provision of services to students without referral to the child study team of the responsible school district and determination by the IEP team that an evaluation is warranted.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Instruction in CCCSs-** During the on-site, interviews and record reviews indicate that IEPs include goals and objectives provided by private school, which are not consistently aligned to the CCCSs.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to ensure that programs offer instruction in the CCCSs. The improvement plan must include procedures that ensure that IEP goals and objectives are aligned with the CCCSs. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Evaluation without referral-** During the on-site visit, it was determined that related services staff members conduct evaluations for students in attendance at the school, and then proceed to provide related services not listed in the IEPs. When the receiving school believes that an enrolled student may benefit from a related services not assigned in the IEP, regulations require a referral to the child study team of the sending

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school district. The IEP team determines whether or not an evaluation is warranted and if the related service should be added to the IEP.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to ensure that when it is determined that a student requires an evaluation for provision of related services, a referral must be made to the child study team of the sending district. The improvement 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 school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets, location of records, daily attendance and mandated health records.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns regarding the areas of conformance of pupil record code, return of records, access to records, tardiness and absences, and written notification to the Department of Education. The school has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address the areas of conformance of pupil record code and return of records because they lack an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The school has developed an improvement plan in the area of access to records to ensure that records are appropriately secured. Additional procedures to the improvement plan are required to ensure that access to records is limited to appropriately certified staff members. The revisions must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of approved procedures regarding access to and security of records. The school has developed an improvement plan for the area of tardiness and absences that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The improvement plan needs to be revised to include these components. The school has developed an improvement plan in the area of notification to the department of education that is sufficient to meet this area of need.

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 Midway School on May 20, 21, 22, 23, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the school's improvement plan. The school is commended for identifying many areas of need and developing an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The school is further commended for the many areas that were determined by the school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

During parent interviews, many parents commented positively on both the school's program and the commitment to the students by the school's staff members. Observations during the on-site visit confirmed the comments expressed by the parents.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included, annual reports, amendments, nonsectarian, length of day/year, health and physical education, hearing aids, certification, dual employment, employment/job descriptions of classroom aides, approved professional development plan, approved facility, certificates of occupancy and inspection, fire drills, current IEPs, staff attendance at IEP meetings, IEP accessibility, staff knowledge of accommodations and modifications, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placements, areas relating to participation of statewide assessments and progress reports, changes to program/placement and interim alternative educational settings, removal and termination of student, tracking of suspensions, class sizes and age ranges, exceptions, certifications, special class programs implementing IEP, administering medication, nursing and medical services, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance and mandated health records.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures for staff development, observation of programs, related services for occupational therapy, implementation of IEP components, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures and implementation for time-out rooms, aversives and restraints, removal of students, description of special class programs, home instruction, school functions and services, conformance of pupil record code, return of records, access to records, tardiness and absences, and written notification to DOE within 10 days of student's first day in attendance.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year programs, services at no cost to parents, and the provision of services in accordance with IEPs, criminal history verification, use of a clinic for speech services, current IEPs, communication to sending districts, core curriculum content standards including core curriculum content standards for students with severe disabilities and evaluation without referral.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the school will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.