

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

Receiving School: The Demonstration Program at Montclair State University

County: Essex

Monitoring Dates: September 22, 2003

Monitoring Team: Susan Smahl, Sandra Gogerty, Ursula Cargill

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Montclair Demonstration Program conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Montclair Demonstration Program 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 Montclair Demonstration Program 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 and related service personnel.

School Strengths:

The Montclair Demonstration Program is commended for its nurturing, well trained staff dedicated to delivering and implementing a Developmental, Individual-differences, Relationship-based (DIR) approach for pre-school children with autism. Through this approach developmentally appropriate activities and practices are supplemented with strategies that meet the individual needs of each child. In addition speech and language, occupational and physical therapy are infused into the classroom resulting in constant modeling by the specialist, enabling other staff members to reinforce the therapy when the specialist is not present. Staff members address the symptoms of behavior of the child not only within the school context, but also within the context of the caregivers by

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offering home visits to help facilitate a sharing of knowledge between school staff and families. A six session program that explores the DIR approach is offered to each family. The families meet with the school psychologist monthly for coaching sessions that address understanding the child and generating intervention strategies that promote growth. Finally, the school's program is enhanced by the participation of Montclair State University's faculty members and students. As part of the Psychoeducational Center at Montclair State University, the mission of the Demonstration Program is to provide on-campus opportunities for university students to observe and participate in model clinical and educational programs serving individuals who have special needs. This mission is accomplished by providing high quality services for children with special education needs.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

General Provisions IEP/Annual Review, Discipline and Programs/Services were determined to be areas of compliance by the Montclair Demonstration Program during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Montclair Demonstration Program 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, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT) as per IEP, provision of physical therapy (PT) services as per IEP and provision of speech language services as per IEP.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding hearing aids.

Area of Need:

Policy and Procedure for Maintenance of Hearing Aids - During the on site visit, through interviews and a review of documentation of Lakeview Learning Center's current policies and procedures, it was determined that the school does not have a policy and procedure for the maintenance of hearing aids.

- **The receiving school will develop a policy and procedure to ensure that hearing aids are functioning properly and will provide staff training when students who use hearing aids are enrolled in the school.**

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Montclair Demonstration Program accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding use of PTA/COTA, private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals and job descriptions of paraprofessional maintained at the county office.

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During the self-assessment process, the Montclair Demonstration Program identified concerns in the areas regarding professional development. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. **The improvement plan submitted by the school included timelines to address these areas that have not been met and must be revised.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site regarding certification of staff and criminal history verification.

Areas of Need:

Nursing Services- During the on-site visit, through staff interviews, it was determined that the nurse does not possess Department of Education certification as a school nurse.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to employ a certified school nurse, or to develop a nursing services plan for review and approval by the county superintendent. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Criminal History Verification – During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that not all staff has criminal history clearance to be working in the school program. Applications have been filed and are in process. However, emergent hiring forms were never completed and filed with the county office.

- **The school must immediately ensure that all staff members have authorization for emergent hiring from the county superintendent prior to employment. In addition, the receiving school must revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members who require them are fingerprinted. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Montclair Demonstration Program accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections.

During the self-assessment process, an area of need was identified regarding wheelchair accessibility. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site regarding fire drills.

Area of Need:

Fire Drills – During the on-site visit interviews and record review indicated that fire drills are not consistently conducted two times each month, as required.

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- **The receiving school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that there are two fire drills held each month. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Montclair Demonstration Program accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absence and written notification of placement to county office.

During the self-assessment process, the Montclair Demonstration Program identified concerns in the areas regarding access to records and health records. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of health records. The receiving school's plan is insufficient to address the area of access to records because it lacks procedures and administrative oversight component to ensure that only certificated staff with direct instructional responsibilities should have access to student records. The plan must be revised to include these components.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Montclair Demonstration Program on September 22, 2003. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the receiving school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify nearly all 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.

General Provisions IEP/Annual Review, Discipline and Programs/Services were determined to be areas of compliance by the Montclair Demonstration Program during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Montclair Demonstration Program during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of related services as per IEP, private school dual employment, use of PTA/COTA, job description and supervision of paraprofessionals, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, conformance to pupil record code, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding 5 days of tardiness and absences and written notice of placement to county office.

During the self-assessment process, the Montclair Demonstration Program identified areas of need regarding professional development, facilities, certification of school nurse, access to records and health records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding maintenance of hearing aids, staff certifications, criminal history background check and fire drills held twice monthly.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Montclair Demonstration Program will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the county office of education and the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions. Please be advised that one area of need requires immediate attention on the part of the school.