

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

**Receiving School:** Shepard Academy and Shepard High School (Shepard Schools)

**County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** January 21-24, 2003

**Monitoring Team:** Theresa Schiffenhaus, Gary Molenaar, Mitchell Badiner

### **Background Information:**

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Shepard Academy and Shepard High School (Shepard Schools) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Shepard School 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 Shepard 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 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 Shepard Schools are commended for the many programs they provide for students with behavioral disabilities. Shepard Academy consists of two classes which are taught by certified teachers with three aides in each class. Students in this program require a slower academic pace with emphasis on basic skills and life skills as well. Shepard High School is for those students with behavioral disabilities that require a structured college preparatory program. Both programs consist of a full academic schedule and include art, music, physical education and drama. Both programs are very structured and involve a unique behavior modification system, which motivates and encourages students to

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perform and behave well. Components of this system include a school store and a "level" system with privileges that include athletic teams, clubs, trips and luncheons.

Shepard Schools provide computers in each class and a full computer lab where instruction is given by a specialist. In addition, all students have a portable desktop processor that can be taken home for assignments. Counseling is a related service offered to all students and infused in the program. Shepard Schools also employs child study team members specifically for the purpose of acting as a liaison to district child study teams to ensure timely completion of meetings, IEPs, etc.

Shepard Schools also provide a strong parental component to their program which includes weekly calls, back to school nights, conferences, parent workshops and invitations to performances and award assemblies. Shepard Schools also have a strong interscholastic sports component. Shepard Schools offer basketball, wrestling and volleyball to its students. Students have time on a weekly basis to practice and compete among themselves in these sports. The goal of these programs is to develop self esteem and encourage teamwork and sportsmanship among participants. All interested students are given the opportunity to participate assuming they are maintaining appropriate levels on the behavior modification system. Each of the seasons culminates with games and matches against other private school programs.

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

**Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Individualized Education Program/Annual Review, and Student Records** were determined to be areas of compliance by the Shepard Schools during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

### **Section I: General Provisions**

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

During self-assessment the Shepard Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of annual reports, amendments, and the provision of programs in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, both the Shepard Schools identified concerns in the areas of policy and procedures and staff development. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

### **Section VI: Discipline**

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment the Shepard Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversive therapy, removal of student, changes to program/placement, suspensions, and interim alternative educational setting.

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An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding termination of students.

### **Area of Need:**

**Termination of Student** - During the on-site visit through staff interviews and record reviews, it was determined that Shepard Schools were sending letters to the district notifying them of termination of students.

- **The Shepard Schools will revise their improvement plans to include procedures to ensure that the school notifies sending districts when they are considering termination of students and includes a request for subsequent IEP meetings. The plan must also include in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section VII: Programs and Services**

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

During self-assessment the Shepard Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size/age range, exceptions, description of special class programs, certifications, special classes implementing IEP, home instruction, dispensing medication, and nursing services.

During the self-assessment process, the Shepard Schools identified concerns in the areas of core curriculum content standards/core curriculum content standards for students with severe disabilities (CCCSs/CCCSSSDs) and medical exams for sport teams. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of CCCSs/CCCSSSDs because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.** The improvement plan must be revised to include this component. The school's improvement plan for medical exams for sport teams is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

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**Summary**

The on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Shepard Schools on January 21-24, 2003. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Shepard Schools' report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

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

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Shepard Schools during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included; annual reports, amendments, nonsectarian, 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 including occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech and counseling, certified/licensed staff, use of physical therapy assistants/certified occupational therapy assistants, private school dual employment, employment/job descriptions of paraprofessionals, criminal history, professional development, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, fire drills, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEPs, current IEP, communication to sending district regarding missing components, IEP accessibility, inform teachers/providers of IEP responsibilities, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, progress reports, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints, and aversive, removal of student, changes to program/placement, suspensions, interim alternative educational setting, description of special class programs, certifications, special classes implementing IEP, home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services, conformance to pupil record code, return of records, access to records, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance, tardiness/absences, written notice of attendance, student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the Shepard Schools identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, staff development, CCCSs/CCCSSSD, and medical exams for sport teams.

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

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