

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

Receiving School: Palisades Learning Center **County:** Bergen

Monitoring Dates: February 7, 2006

Monitoring Team: Ann Marie Bruder and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Palisades Learning Center conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Palisades Learning Center 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 Palisades Learning Center 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, parents and related service personnel.

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

School Strengths:

The Palisades Learning Center utilizes a multi-disciplinary team model that allows staff members to work collaboratively to address students' needs. The administration has morning articulation meetings to organize the school day and inform all staff of schoolwide activities. The administration provides opportunities for staff participation in professional training. The school collaborates with Planned Parenthood to provide programs on adolescent issues and challenges.

The Palisades Learning Center provides a strong therapeutic component. Behavioral and counseling supports are designed and implemented to be proactive and encourage

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

students to self-advocate. Communication sheets are utilized so students can talk to a counselor on an as needed basis.

The Palisades Learning Center also provides transition and vocational programs through exploration of career options, job seeking and independent living skills. The school has also developed many liaisons within the community including an apprenticeship program and community service. Palisades Learning Center has developed a relationship with the Liberty Science Center that allows students to explore a variety of careers including those not typically available within traditional settings. The school to careers program encourages students to develop work related skills needed for successful employment.

The Palisades Learning Center is also commended for its state of the art technology center which allows the students to learn to use technology skills and to generalize skills to meaningful activities. The technology center is located within walking distance to the school and is used by all of the students.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE, Staff Requirements, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Palisades Learning Center during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Palisades Learning Center accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding programs provided in approved facilities and certificates of occupancy and inspections.

During the self-assessment process, the Palisades Learning Center identified concerns in the areas regarding fire drills. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, record review and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section V: Individualized Education Program/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Palisades Learning Center accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing and implementation of IEP components relating to informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP goals and objectives.

Area of Need:

IEP Goals and Objectives - During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and record reviews, it was determined that Palisades Learning Center staff provides IEP annual goals and objectives to the IEP team that are aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards. However, these goals and objectives are not observable or measurable.

- **The Palisades Learning Center must revise its improvement plan to provide for collaboration and communication with local school districts that results in observable and measurable goals and objectives that are being used to develop IEPs. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Palisades Learning Center 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, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sports teams.

During the self-assessment process, the Palisades Learning Center identified concerns in the areas regarding teachers instructing in NJCCCS. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and a review of records indicated that the receiving school has provided their staff with the appropriate training in NJCCCS to bring about correction in this area.

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

Area of Need:

Certified School Nurse- During the on-site visit, staff interviews confirmed that the school's current nurse does not hold a NJDOE certification and is not employed full-time as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(e).

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the required full range of nursing services is provided by employing a full time certified school nurse. The school may request a waiver of full-time status through the Regulatory Equivalency and Waiver process in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:5-1.1**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Palisades Learning Center on February 7, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Palisades Learning Center's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

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

General Provisions, FAPE, Staff Requirements, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Palisades Learning Center during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Palisades Learning Center during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, 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 relating to informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, 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, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sports teams.

During the self-assessment process, the Palisades Learning Center identified areas of need regarding fire drills and teachers instructing in the NJCCCS.

The on-site visit identified two additional areas of need within the various standards regarding goals and objectives that are observable and measurable and nursing services.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Palisades Learning Center 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.