

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

Receiving School: Salem County Special Services School District (SCSSSD)

County: Salem

Monitoring Dates: February 4, 9, 10, 11, 2004

Monitoring Team: Barbara Ciancaglini, Elaine Lerner, Barbara Groff, Dolores Walther

Background Information:

During the 2002 – 2003 school year, the Salem County Special Services School District (SCSSSD) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. Included were the Daretown School, Pennsville Behavioral and Multiple Disabilities programs, and those SCSSSD programs at the Penns Grove - Carney's Point Regional School District, Olivet School, and Upper Pittsgrove Schools. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the SCSSSD 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 SCSSSD 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 SCSSSD is commended for their efforts to provide programs in a general education setting. The programs that are housed in public school buildings provide an opportunity for disabled students to interact with non-disabled peers.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions and **Staff Requirements** were determined to be areas of compliance by the SCSSSD 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 SCSSSD 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, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech language and counseling services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the SCSSSD identified concerns in the areas regarding maintenance of hearing aids. The improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, through a review of records and interviews it was determined that the school has appropriately implemented correction in this area.

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

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the SCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding inspections, programs provided in approved facilities and fire drills.

During the self-assessment process, the SCSSSD identified concerns in the areas regarding certificates of occupancy for the **Daretown School**. The improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, through a review of records and interviews it was determined that the school has appropriately implemented correction in this area.

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

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the SCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, 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, and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

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SCSSSD

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at **SCSSSD** regarding provisional placement of students and procedures for communicating to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

Area of Need:

Provisional Placement and Exit Criteria- During the on-site visit, through record review, it was determined that the school's policy is to admit students with a provisional status, pending a thirty (30) day review. The school should determine whether the IEP can be implemented as written, prior to student acceptance into the school. In addition, SCSSSD provides districts with a brochure that includes specific exit criteria students must meet prior to the termination of placement at SCSSSD.

- **The SCSSSD will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school accepts students when it is determined that the IEP can be implemented as written. The acceptance letter and brochure must be revised to demonstrate the school's ability to meet the IEP. In addition, the school should develop procedures to ensure that any change in placement is determined by the sending district through the IEP team rather than based on exit criteria developed by SCSSSD. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components- During the on-site visit, through record reviews and interviews it was determined that the school does not have procedures for communicating to sending districts when IEP components are missing. Areas consistently missing at the **Daretown, Penns Grove - Carney's Point Regional School District** and **Pennsville Campus** include but are not limited to counseling goals and objectives, frequency and duration of counseling services, transition plans, and goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards. In addition, IEPs at the **Daretown Campus** do not always include documentation of extended school year consideration.

- **The SCSSSD will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components such as counseling goals and objectives, frequency and duration of counseling services, transition plans, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, and documentation of extended school year consideration (Daretown Campus) are missing. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Daretown and Pennsville Behavioral Disabilities Program

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

Area of Need:

Provision of Counseling Services- During the on-site visit, through record reviews and interviews it was determined that the schools do not provide or document counseling services as indicated in IEPs. Schedules of counseling services did not match IEPs in frequency and duration.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all students receive counseling services as specified in IEPs. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Daretown Campus

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at the **Daretown Campus** in the area regarding IEP conducted with required receiving school participants.

Area of Need:

IEP Conducted with Required Receiving School Participants- During the on-site visit, through record reviews it was determined that the principal had attended IEP meetings and signed IEPs in place of a special education teacher, particularly during the summer months.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that teachers are in attendance at IEP meetings and sign as participants. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the SCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding procedures for removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting and procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives.

During the self-assessment process, the SCSSSD identified concerns in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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Area of Need:

Procedures for Termination of Placement - During the on-site visit, through record review and interviews, it was determined that the school did not have procedures in place regarding the termination of placement prior to the end of the academic year, however documentation has since been submitted that demonstrates compliance with this area.

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the SCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding 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, and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the SCSSSD identified concerns in the areas regarding policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and nursing services. The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of nursing services relating to school functions and services because it fails to identify the entity providing the nursing services in the SCSSSD classes that are located in other public school buildings. **The receiving school must revise its improvement plan to include documentation of arrangements made to provide nursing services in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16.**

SCSSSD

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding exceptions for class size and age.

Area of Need:

Exceptions for Class Size and Age Range- During the on-site visit, through record review and interviews it was determined that the school does not have a procedure in place to collaborate with sending districts when exceptions are required. Prior to the on-site visit at Pennsville Behavioral Disabilities Program, it was determined that in some cases, age ranges were out of compliance. The school subsequently took appropriate corrective action by contacting sending district personnel who then filed the needed age range exceptions.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school collaborates with sending districts when exceptions are required. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Daretown and Pennsville Behavioral Disabilities Program

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at the in the area regarding teacher knowledge of the core curriculum content standards (CCCS) and provision of instruction in CCCS.

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Area of Need:

Teacher Knowledge of and Provision of Instruction in CCCS-During the on-site visit, through record reviews, classroom observation and interviews it was determined that the teachers have not received comprehensive training and are not consistently providing instruction in the CCCS.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all students receive instruction in CCCS. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the SCSSSD accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination, access to records is limited to authorized persons, access sheets, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five (5) days of tardiness/absences, written notice of placement to county office, and maintenance of student health records

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding location of other records specified in central file.

Area of Need:

Location of Records- During the on-site visit, through record reviews it was determined that the school does not identify the location of other records in the main record.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school specifies the location of other records in the main student record. The plan must include administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Salem County Special Services School District (SCSSSD) on February 4, 9, 10, 11, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the SCSSSDs report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the receiving school was able to identify many areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The receiving 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, many of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the receiving school is commended for the many areas that were determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

General Provisions and **Staff Requirements** were determined to be areas of compliance by the SCSSSD and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the SCSSSD 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 programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) services, speech language services as per IEP and counseling services as per IEP, inspections, programs provided in approved facilities, fire drills, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs , 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, procedures for removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, and removal of student to interim alternative educational setting, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, 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, medical exams for sport teams, conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination, access to records is limited to authorized persons, access sheets, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five (5) days of tardiness/absences, written notice of placement to county office, and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the SCSSSD identified areas of need regarding maintenance of hearing aids, certificates of occupancy for the Daretown School, standard disciplinary procedures, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and nursing services.

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards for SCSSSD regarding the location of other records specified in central file, exceptions for class size and age range, procedures for termination of placement, current IEP prior to service delivery, and procedures for communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components. Additional areas of need were identified for individual sites regarding IEP conducted with required receiving school participants (Daretown), teacher knowledge of and provision of instruction in CCCS, (Daretown and Pennsville Behavioral Disabilities Program), and the provision of counseling services (Daretown and Pennsville Behavioral Disabilities Program).

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the SCSSSD 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.