

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

**Receiving School:** Somerset County Educational Services Commission (SCESC)

**County:** Somerset

**Monitoring Dates:** May 4 and May 5, 2004

**Monitoring Team:** Paul Bilik, Denise Wilkens

**Background Information:**

During the 2002– 2003 school year, the Somerset County Educational Services Commission (SCESC) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the SCESC 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 SCESC 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, related service personnel and parents.

**School Strengths:**

The SCESC is commended for the extensive collaboration among all staff to support the academic and behavioral success of students enrolled in the program. Staff members meet regularly both formally and informally to discuss the individual needs and progress of all SCESC students and communicate on behalf of students and their families with an established network of community agencies and resources.

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**Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Discipline and Programs and Services** were determined to be areas of compliance by the SCESC 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 SCESC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, program open to observation by LEA and DOE and provision of services and related services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the SCESC identified a concern in the area regarding the need to develop a procedure for the observation of class programs by non-school individuals, including parents and other visitors. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records 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 Plan/Annual Review**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the SCESC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

During the self-assessment process, the SCESC identified a concern in the area regarding the need to develop a consistent procedure for the observation of the proposed placement. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit concerning communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

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**Area of Need:**

**Communication to Sending District Regarding Missing IEP Components** - During the on-site visit, through a review of pupil records, it was noted that the SCESC lacks oversight of the procedure to ensure that missing IEP components are received on a timely basis. In addition, the school does not communicate with sending districts when IEPs were missing frequency, duration and location of counseling services and counseling goals and objectives.

- **The school should revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school communicates with the sending districts when any IEP components including the frequency, location and duration of counseling services and counseling goals and objectives are missing. 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 SCESC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records is limited to authorized persons, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit concerning the use of access sheets.

**Area of Need:**

**Use of Access Sheets** - During the on-site visit, through a review of pupil records, it was noted that access sheets were not present in many individual pupil records. The receiving school was informed of this non-compliance. Subsequently, the SCESC corrected the non-compliance before the conclusion of the monitoring visit.

- **The SCESC should revise its improvement plan to develop procedures to ensure access sheets are present in every pupil record. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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## Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the SCESC on May 4 and 5, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the SCESC'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 comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the receiving school was able to identify most 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, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Discipline and Programs and Services** were determined to be areas of compliance by the SCESC during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas of compliance include length of school day and year, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services and related services as per IEP, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records is limited to authorized persons, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the SCESC identified areas of need regarding observation of class programs and observation of proposed placement.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components and use of access sheets in pupil records.

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