

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Receiving School: South Bergen Jointure Commission
(Maywood, Lyndhurst, Lodi and Moonachie Campuses)

County: Bergen County

Monitoring Dates: November 14 – 18, 2005

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Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the South Bergen Jointure Commission (Maywood, Lyndhurst, Lodi and Moonachie Campuses) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the South Bergen Jointure Commission 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 South Bergen Jointure Commission 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.

School Strengths:

The **Maywood Campus** offers training twice a year to bus staff on behavioral and safety concerns that could occur on the bus. The staff also provides a home component for students receiving Applied Behavioral Analysis during the school day. The home program provides parents with training on behavioral issues and self-help skills which allows teachers to work on the generalization of skills.

The **Lyndhurst Campus** includes two programs: The ACES (Alternative Classrooms for Exceptional Students) and The Life Skills Program. The commission promotes collaboration

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between home and school facilitated through the homeroom teachers. The staff reinforces independence and self-advocacy skills. In addition, the Lyndhurst Campus provides job/career exploration. Their transition program includes mobility training and transportation skills. The commission has a service-based learning project in which students prepare baked goods for local soup kitchens and participate in the meal service program within the commission. Several students are placed in the community for work related experiences.

Therapists and teachers at the **Lodi Campus** use a multidisciplinary approach in their work with students. The therapists are involved with various activities to make the necessary accommodations/modifications for the students to be as efficient and independent as possible. Activities consist of mail distribution, school food service programs, shopping, and crafts. The Lodi Campus utilizes a variety of materials to educate their student population. The commission is currently using the Muzzy Program to teach Spanish to students. The speech therapist assists the teachers in implementing this program. The commission also utilizes various reading approaches that are specific to the individual needs of their students. Some reading approaches include: Orton-Gillingham, Prevention of Academic Failure (PAF), Wilson Reading and Reading Milestones.

The **Moonachie and Lyndhurst Campuses** provide opportunities for students to be included in a general education school environment with non-disabled peers for part of the school day. These schools have the students participate in age/grade appropriate activities and classes, field trips, after school activities, and assemblies. This setting also promotes socialization and peer modeling.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding staff development. 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the area regarding services at no cost to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding length of school day as indicated in the IEP, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, extended school year, observation of programs and provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to

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address these areas 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 to the areas of length of school day reflected in the IEP, provision of physical education, extended school year and observation of programs.

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

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), supervision of paraprofessionals, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office and having an approved professional development plan.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff and criminal history verification. The commission's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the commission has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in the area of certified/licensed staff.

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

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and fire drills.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding documentation of the boiler inspection at the Maywood Campus. The commission's improvement plan was sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the commission had the necessary paper work to determine the boiler was recently inspected.

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 South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, statewide testing and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

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During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP conducted annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, IEP accessibility and observation of proposed placement. The commission's improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas of IEP conducted annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, IEP accessibility and observation of proposed placement. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the commission has implemented specific activities to bring to the areas of IEP meeting conducted annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, IEP accessibility and observation of proposed placements into compliance. **The commission's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area regarding communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components because it lacks procedures to ensure that the Maywood Campus to collaborate and communicate with local school districts that results in individualized, observable and measurable goals and objectives being used to develop IEPs. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. In addition, the commission must revise their plan to include procedures to ensure that the Lodi campus communicates with sending districts when IEPs do not include goals and objectives for counseling for students who require them. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at the South Bergen Jointure Commission in the area regarding provision of evaluations and the development of behavioral intervention plans.

Implementation of IEP – During the on-site visit, through record reviews and staff interviews, it was determined that the receiving school staff implements changes in the provision of related services prior to participating in an IEP meeting.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the receiving school does not make unilateral decisions regarding the provision of related services. Only the IEP team can alter the student's program. If the school staff believes that a change in the program is appropriate they must contact the district of residence to request an IEP meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) – During the on-site visit through record reviews and staff interviews, it was determined that the receiving school staff are developing and implementing behavioral intervention plans for students without an appropriately configured IEP team.

- **The receiving school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when it believes that a student may require a behavior intervention plan, the school communicates with the sending district to ensure that BIPs are developed by an appropriately configured IEP team during an IEP meeting. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions and removal of student to interim alternative educational setting.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversive therapies, removal of student pending mediation and due process and procedures for termination of student placement. The commission's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the commission has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission 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, teachers instructing in Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), dispensing medication and medical exams for sports teams.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding class size/age range exceptions, teachers trained in CCCSs, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and maintenance of attendance records. The commission's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit a review of records and staff interviews determined the commission has appropriately implemented specific areas to bring correction in all areas with the exception of nursing services at the Lyndhurst Campus. **The commission's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area regarding nursing services at the Lyndhurst Campus because it lacks procedures to ensure that a certified school nurse is employed to conduct activities specified in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(e). During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews confirmed that the Lyndhurst Campus does not employ a certified school nurse or possess a nursing services waiver that addresses the requirements outlined by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(e). Staff interviews found that the present nurse employed by the commission only holds a license as an LPN. Within 45 days, the South Bergen Jointure Commission must ensure that they will employ a fully certified school nurse at the Lyndhurst Campus. In addition, the commission will revise its improvement plan and nursing services plan to include activities to ensure that the required full range of nursing services is provided by employing a certified school nurse.**

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

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Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the South Bergen Jointure Commission accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified concerns in the areas regarding access to records, written notice to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences. The commission's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the commission has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the South Bergen Jointure Commission on November 14 – 18, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the South Bergen Jointure Commission's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the South Bergen Jointure Commission during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, services at not cost to the parents, appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), supervision of paraprofessionals, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, having an approved professional development plan, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy, fire drills, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service delivery, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, statewide testing, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, teachers instructing in CCCSs, dispensing medication, medical exams for sport teams, conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the South Bergen Jointure Commission identified areas of need regarding staff development, length of school day as specified in IEPs, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, extended school year, observation of programs, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT) physical therapy (PT), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP, certified/licensed staff, criminal history verifications, boiler inspection at the Maywood School location, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, IEP accessibility, observation of proposed placement, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversive therapies, removal of student pending mediation and due process, procedures for termination of a student placement, class size/age range exceptions, teachers trained in CCCSs, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, maintenance of attendance records, access to records, written notice to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding implementation of IEP components and development of behavioral intervention plans

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the South Bergen Jointure Commission 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.