

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

Receiving School: Community Schools (Community School's Lower School and Community School's High School)

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: February 27 – March 1, 2006

Monitoring Team: Ann Marie Bruder, Mark Lanzi, Greg Margolis, Zola Mills, Tammy Miller and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Community Schools (Lower School and High School Campuses) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Community Schools 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 Community 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 schools' special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, related service personnel and parents.

Schools' Strengths:

Community School's Lower School:

The Community School's Lower School is commended for providing a very supportive educational environment for its students. Each class has two certified teachers to provided instruction.

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The Community School's Lower School is also commended for its varied specialized approaches to increase proficiency in literacy and fine motor/handwriting. These programs include Orton-Gillingham, Wilson Reading, Project Read and Handwriting without Tears. The school also provides a strong behavior management system that focuses on positive behaviors as students earn points for appropriate behavior and academic effort. The behavior management system also incorporates levels for earning special activities or privileges.

The Community School's Lower School provides extensive professional development opportunities for staff. All staff members have the opportunity to be trained during the summer on the specific strategies, approaches and materials required for student learning. Wilson Reading, Project Read and other trainings are given in the summer. This comprehensive training allows for the consistent implementation of the program.

Additionally, the Community School's Lower School provides weekly in-service meetings and weekly departmentalized meetings. These meetings allow for professional development opportunities, curriculum conferencing, group instructional collaboration, and discussion of health related issues.

Community School's High School:

The Community School's High School is commended for providing a supportive educational environment for adolescent students. The school provides a large number of instructional course options for students that include: photography and production, drama class, music and instrumental classes, computer classes, graphic arts, sociology and psychology, journalism, Spanish, library, and study skills. The school also utilizes the Orton-Gillingham and Wilson Reading programs, which use a multi-sensory approach to instruction, for students experiencing difficulties in reading.

The Community School's High School also provides a strong transition program that includes professional speakers and representatives from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) who provide technical assistance to students. Every student is provided a structured learning experience designed for career awareness, career exploration and career orientation. The high school also has students participating in the "Dare to Dream" program allowing them to learn about self-determination skills, goal setting, self-discovery, and student self-advocacy preparing them for post-secondary education.

Additionally, the Community School's High School provides weekly in-service meetings and weekly departmentalized meetings. These meetings allow for professional development opportunities, curriculum conferencing and group instructional collaboration.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Discipline, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Community School's Lower School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

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General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Discipline were determined to be areas of compliance by the Community School's High School 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 Community Schools 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 therapy and counseling services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the Community Schools identified concerns in the areas regarding maintenance of hearing aids. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the Community Schools have implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Community School's Lower School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Community School's Lower School 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 Community School's Lower School identified concerns in the areas regarding fire drills. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and a review of records it was determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the nursing station at the Community School's Lower School campus.

Areas of Need:

Appropriate Nurse's Station- During the onsite visit, through a tour of the lower school facility and interviews with the school nurse, it was determined that the nurse's station does not meet code requirements under N.J.A.C. 6A:26-6.3(b)9. The bathroom facilities are not accessible. In addition, the area does not provide enough space for a private rest area and is out of view of the nurse.

- **Within thirty days of the receipt of this report, the school will contact the Bergen County Office of Education to ensure that an appropriate location**

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for a nurses' station is identified that meets all code requirements. Prior approval for use of the new space must be obtained from that office.

Section V: Individualized Education Program/Annual Review

Community School's High School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Community School's High School Campus accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP conducted with students as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, communication to sending districts 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 and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

During the self-assessment process, the Community School's High School campus identified concerns in the area regarding the lack of complete IEPs received from sending districts prior to implementation. 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 VII: Programs and Services

Community School's High School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Community High School 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, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services.

During the self-assessment process, the Community School's High School Campus identified concerns in the areas regarding medical exams for sports teams. 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.

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Section VIII: Student Records

Community School's High School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Community School's High School Campus accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to student records code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records limited to authorized persons, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences and written notice of placement to county office.

During the self-assessment process, the Community School's High School Campus identified concerns in the areas regarding maintenance of student health records. 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.

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 Community Schools' Lower School and High School Campuses on February 27–March 1, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Community Lower School and High School's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving schools' improvement plan.

The receiving schools are commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the receiving schools were able to identify all but one area of need. The receiving schools are further commended for the many areas verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Discipline, Programs and Services and **Student Records** were determined to be areas of compliance by the Community School's Lower School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and **Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by the Community School's High School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Community Schools 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), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP, programs provided in 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, communication to sending districts 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, 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, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, conformance to student records code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records limited to authorized persons, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences and written notice of placement to county office.

During the self-assessment process, the Community Schools identified areas of need regarding maintenance of hearing aids, fire drills, IEP prior to implementation and maintenance of student health records.

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The on-site visit identified one additional area of need within the various standards regarding an appropriate nursing station at the Community School's Lower School Campus.

Within thirty days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Community School will contact the county office to make arrangements to identify an appropriate nursing station. All follow up activities should be coordinated through that office.