

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

Receiving School: JCC on the Palisades Therapeutic Nursery **County:** Bergen

Monitoring Dates: December 7, 2004

Monitoring Team: Gregory Margolis, Ann Marie Bruder

Background Information:

During the 2003– 2004 school year, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the JCC Therapeutic Nursery 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 JCC Therapeutic Nursery 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 principal, special education teachers, related service personnel and parents.

School Strengths:

The JCC Therapeutic Nursery is commended for its significant degree of parent involvement and integration into its overall provision of instruction and services. Through the program's structure, parents are provided with extensive didactic instruction in the strategies and skills required to both reinforce student's academic learning as well as manage their behaviors. This framework also affords them daily opportunities to observe and consult with staff regarding any specific presenting issues. Furthermore, the parent support groups and regular interaction with the other members of the staff further enhance the parents' ability to facilitate the generalization of program content into other environments.

The JCC Therapeutic Nursery also provides families with "wrap-around" consultation and intervention services. Staff routinely provides phone and on-site assistance and

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reference materials to schools and programs students may attend after completing their day at the JCC Therapeutic Nursery. Program staff members regularly consult with parents regarding “play-dates” and will provide in-home assistance in facilitating them.

The JCC Therapeutic Nursery also provides a strong emphasis on social skills and infuses lessons into both the curriculum and overall routine of the program. Through connections with a general education nursery and Kindergarten in the same building, students are afforded opportunities to socialize with same-age, non-disabled peers in a semi-structured environment. These interactions enable students to practice social skills and engage in “life-learning” opportunities with varying degrees of guidance and support from their teachers and parents.

The JCC Therapeutic Nursery provides a comprehensive approach to managing student behaviors, with particular emphasis on reshaping them into more appropriate patterns using positive supports. Because these efforts directly include the parents, they strengthen the connection between school and home and maximize students’ potential to consistently improve.

The small class size, low student to teacher ratio and infusion of related services enhances the overall provision of instruction and services. Because of the small physical size of the program area, the school administrators maintain close contact with the teaching and related services staff and provide ongoing structured and informal supervision.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Facility Requirements and **Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by the JCC Therapeutic Nursery during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding staff development, annual reports and amendments.

During the self-assessment process, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery identified concerns in the areas regarding policies and procedures. The JCC Therapeutic Nursery’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.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

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Area of Need:

Programs Provided in Nonsectarian Settings – During a tour of the school's instructional areas it was determined that religious symbols were extensively displayed in areas where students are being instructed. Although the JCC Therapeutic Nursery staff indicated that the program's instruction is nonsectarian and the primary classroom exhibited no religious symbols, the presence of these symbols in other areas in which the students participate in school sponsored functions, violates the JCC Therapeutic Nursery's signed affidavit assuring that all programs are nonsectarian.

- **Subsequent to the on-site visit, staff members from the school has informed the county supervisor of child study that a policy and procedures have been developed by the school to address this concern. The procedures included staff training and administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The improvement plan has been approved by the county office of education.**

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery 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 and extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery identified concerns in the areas regarding program open to observation by LEA and DOE and provision of occupational therapy (OT), speech language services and counseling services as per IEP. The receiving school'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 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.

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff, private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, job description of paraprofessional maintained at county office and criminal history verification.

During the self-assessment process, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery identified concerns in the areas regarding documentation of professional development activities for staff members. 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.

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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 JCC Therapeutic Nursery 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, observation of proposed placement, implementation of IEP components and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit concerning communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, progress reporting for speech services and speech language assessments.

Areas of Need:

Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components- During the on-site visit a review of records determined that the school does not communicate with sending districts when speech language goals and objectives are not present in IEPs. A review of records determined that speech goals and objectives are incorporated as part of the present levels of educational performance provided by the receiving school staff and are not specified as IEP goals and objectives.

- **The JCC Therapeutic Nursery must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the school communicates with sending districts when speech goals and objectives for speech language therapy are missing from student's IEPs. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Progress Reporting for Speech Language Services- During the on-site visit through record review and staff interviews, it was determined that the staff members provide information on student progress for speech language goals in a narrative format without addressing individual goals and objectives.

- **The school must revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that each progress reporting is related to IEP goals and objectives. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Speech Language Assessments – During the on-site visit, through record review and staff interviews it was determined that the speech language therapist at the JCC Therapeutic Nursery annually performs a full battery of standardized tests to determine the students' present levels of educational performance.

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- **The JCC Therapeutic Nursery must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students' speech language annual present levels of educational performance reflect such areas as previous evaluation data provided by the sending district, teacher reports, classroom observation, interests and preferences of the student, communication needs of the students and should not include formal assessment performed by receiving school staff. Any requests for additional formal evaluation must be coordinated through the sending district case manager. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding 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 and policies and procedures relating to school functions and services.

During the self-assessment process, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery identified concerns in the areas regarding exceptions for class size and age range. 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 VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery 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 notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery identified concerns in the areas regarding access sheets and written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness /absences. The receiving school'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 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 JCC Therapeutic Nursery on December 7, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the JCC Therapeutic Nursery'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 exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify nearly all 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.

Facility Requirements and **Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by the JCC Therapeutic Nursery during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the JCC Therapeutic Nursery during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, annual reports, amendments, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, certified/licensed staff, private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, job description of paraprofessional maintained at county office, criminal history verification, 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, observation of proposed placement, implementation of IEP components, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, 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 pupil record code, return of records upon termination, access to records is limited to authorized persons, 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 JCC Therapeutic Nursery identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of occupational therapy (OT), speech language services and counseling services as per IEP, having an approved professional development plan, documenting staff members' professional development activities, requesting class size/age range exceptions, student record access sheets and providing notification to LEA's regarding five days of tardiness/absences.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding programs provided in nonsectarian settings, communication to sending

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districts regarding missing IEP components, progress reporting for speech services and speech language assessments.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the JCC Therapeutic Nursery 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.