

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

Receiving School: Archway Schools (Upper School/Challenge Alternative School and Lower School)

County: Burlington/Camden Counties

Monitoring Dates: January 31-February 2 and 10, 2005

Monitoring Team: Catherine Thomas, Barbara Ciancaglini, Dolores Walther, Barbara Groff, Deborah Magee, Judyth Vazquez, Elaine Lerner

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Archway Schools (Upper School/Challenge Alternative School and Lower School) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Archway 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 Archway 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 school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, parents and related service personnel.

It should be noted that subsequent to the on-site monitoring visits, Archway Schools requested that the NJDOE allow it to incorporate the Archway Challenge program class into the Archway Upper School. The NJDOE has permitted this program change. As a result, the Challenge Alternative School is no longer in operation.

In addition, during the scheduled on-site visit, the Archway-Washington Township Campus experienced a fire in their building on February 6, 2005. The school requested an extension to their monitoring process to allow the school to complete the process

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during the 2005-2006 school year. As a result, the Archway-Washington Township Campus report will be issued following that visit.

School Strengths:

The Archway Schools operates the Archway Therapeutic Riding Academy which provides equestrian therapy for children attending the Lower School program. The physical therapist at the Lower School incorporates the children's goals of objectives into the riding activities.

The Upper School/Challenge Alternative School also provides interscholastic sports program in basketball, soccer and softball. In addition the upper school also provides a career exploration program including on and off campus work study programs.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Archway Schools during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Archway Schools

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Archway Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding 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, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) and counseling services as per IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the Archway Schools identified concerns in the areas regarding provision of speech services. **The schools' improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks a mechanism to ensure that all strategies and possible arrangements needed to hire speech language therapists are described in their plan. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding length of school day/year at the Upper School/Challenge Alternative School.

Upper School/Challenge Alternative School

Area of Need:

Length of School Day/Year- During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and a review of the school calendar and class schedules it was determined that Upper School/Challenge Alternative School maintains a 180 day school year calendar with 24 shortened school days. Since the minimum of four hours of instructional time is not

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provided on these days, the school calendar falls short of the required minimum of 180 school days.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that instruction is provided for a minimum of four hours during 180 days per school year. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Archway Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals and having an approved professional development plan.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at Archway Schools in the areas regarding criminal history verification and job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at the county office of education.

Areas of Need:

Criminal History Verification- During the on-site visit, through record reviews it was determined that the school does not consistently obtain criminal history verification for staff members who are either employed directly by the school or through contractual arrangements, prior to beginning their employment at the school. While the school staff members were preparing documents for the on-site monitoring, they confirmed that they did not have criminal history verification for all staff members currently employed by the school. As a result, the school is now implementing specific activities for correction in this area.

- **The school will immediately submit requests for emergent hiring through the County Superintendent's Office for all staff members in noncompliance and follow up with the criminal history review office for staff whose fingerprint data have not been returned in a timely manner. In addition, the school must revise their improvement plan to include procedures, and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Job Descriptions for Paraprofessionals- During the on-site visit, through record reviews conducted at the county office of education, it was determined that the school did not submit job descriptions of paraprofessionals to the county office of education.

- **The school will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school submits job descriptions for paraprofessionals to the county office of education on an annual basis. The plan must include**

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an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at the Upper School/Challenge Alternative School in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff.

Upper School/Challenge Alternative School

Area of Need:

Certified/Licensed Staff- During the on-site visit through record review and staff interviews it was determined that the school's secretary is functioning as the computer teacher without possessing appropriate educational certification. In addition, the staff member who is serving as the music teacher on a full time basis does not possess a New Jersey certification for teacher of music.

- **The school must immediately review their staff lists to ensure that all staff members are certified for the positions they hold. In addition, the school must revise their improvement plan to ensure that the school complies with all DOE requirements for certification. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Archway Schools accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding programs provided in approved facilities and certificates of occupancy and inspections.

Areas of need were identified at the Archway Schools during the on-site visit in the areas regarding frequency of fire drills and appropriate nurse's station.

Areas of Need:

Frequency of Fire Drills- During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and a review of fire drill logs it was determined that Archway School does not conduct at least two fire drills per month when students are in the building.

- **The school will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that fire drills are conducted at least twice a month when students are in the school building. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Appropriate Nurse's Station- During the on-site visit during a tour of the Upper School/Challenge Alternative School building, it was determined that the nursing station lacks bathroom facilities.

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- **The school will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to identify an appropriate location within the nursing station for bathroom facilities. Prior written approval for use of the new space must be obtained from the Burlington County Office of Education. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Archway Schools 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, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing and implementation of IEP components.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at the Archway Schools in the areas regarding student attendance at IEP meetings and communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components.

Area of Need:

Student Attendance at IEP Meetings- During the on-site visit through staff interviews and record review it was determined that, while it is the sending districts responsibility to schedule IEP meetings and invite students to participate where appropriate, IEP meetings are scheduled when students are not in school. The Archway school typically holds IEP meetings during the afternoon hours of scheduled shortened half days. Students are transported to their homes upon early dismissal and are not able to attend.

- **The school will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school works collaboratively with the sending districts to allow students the opportunity to attend IEP meetings. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure that students may attend IEP meetings when appropriate.**

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 communicate with sending districts when IEP components are missing. Areas consistently missing include but are not limited to transition plans, transfer of rights at age of majority and graduation requirements, when appropriate.

- **The school will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components such as transition plans, transfer of rights at age of majority and graduation requirements are missing. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Informing Parents of Progress Toward Goals and Objectives—During the on-site visit, through record review and staff interviews it was determined that report cards issued by the school do not address progress made towards individual goals and objectives.

- **The school must revise their improvement plans to include procedures to ensure that the school provides progress on goals and objectives. The school must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit in the Upper School/Challenge Alternative School in the areas regarding age range exceptions.

Upper School/Challenge Alternative School

Age Range Exceptions- During the on-site visit, through record reviews it was determined that the school has several classes that exceed the four year age range.

- The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that classes do not exceed the four year age requirement. The procedures must include collaboration with sending districts and follow up by Archway School to ensure that when exceptions are required; they are submitted by the district prior to the student being accepted into the class.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Archway Schools on January 31-February 2 and 10, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Archway Schools 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 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, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Archway Schools during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Archway Schools during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included 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, program open to observation by LEA and DOE, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) and counseling services as per IEP, appropriate supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA), and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, having an approved professional development plan, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, 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, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, class size, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar education needs, teacher trained and instructing in CCCS, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sports teams.

During the self-assessment process, the Archway School identified an area of need regarding provision of speech services.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards at Archway Schools regarding criminal history verification and job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at the county office of education, student attendance at IEP meetings, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards at Upper School/Challenge Alternative School in the areas regarding length of school day/year certified/licensed staff, frequency of fire drills, appropriate nurse's station and exceptions for age ranges.

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