

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

Receiving School: The Community School of Family Connections

County: Passaic

Monitoring Dates: January 9, 2006

Monitoring Team: Ann Marie Bruder and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, The Community School of Family Connections conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided The Community School of Family Connections 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 School of Family Connections 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.

Noncompliant items reflected in this report may result in nonallowable costs imposed by the Division of Finance in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-4.1 through 4.16.

School Strengths:

The Community School of Family Connections is commended for its educational approach that addresses students' social, emotional and educational needs. Staff members utilize an interdisciplinary team model to provide individual and group supports for students. The school holds weekly staff meetings which include social workers,

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

related service providers, teachers, teachers' assistants, the school nurse and administrative staff. These weekly meetings allow for collaboration between all staff members and provide opportunities to review policies, procedures and behavioral supports. The school offers a three to one student to adult ratio in each classroom. The principal has daily staff meetings to address day to day activities and concerns. The school also employs a part-time school psychiatrist who works with students, parents and staff on behavior and medical issues.

The Community School of Family Connections provides a structured behavior modification program that is based on token economy and positive reinforcement to develop a change from inappropriate behaviors to behaviors that are acceptable and promote self-esteem.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Facility Requirements and **Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by The Community School of Family Connections during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, The Community School of Family Connections accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding staff development, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified concerns in the areas regarding policies and procedures. 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 policies and procedures that are communicated with staff members annually and on an as needed basis. Therefore, the 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 Community School of Family Connections 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 and program open to observation by LEA and NJDOE.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified concerns in the areas regarding documentation of provision of physical education programs, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP, hearing aid policy and maintenance of hearing aids. 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 implemented appropriate schedules to document physical education programs, schedules and logs for the supervision of individual student therapy sessions. The receiving school has board approval for their hearing aid policy and has provided staff training on the implementation of the policy, should a student with a hearing aid become part of the school population. Therefore, the school has 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 Community School of Family Connections 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, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office and having an approved professional development plan.

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified concerns in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff and criminal history verification. 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 implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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 Community School of Family Connections accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding current IEP prior to service delivery, 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 and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified concerns in the area regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually. **The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that the school provides for collaboration and communication with local school districts to ensure that IEP meetings occur in a timely manner. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding IEP goals and objectives.

Area of Need:

IEP Goals and Objectives - During the on-site visit, through record reviews, it was determined that the Community School of Family Connections' staff provides IEP annual goals and objectives to the IEP team that are aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards. However, these goals and objectives are not observable or measurable.

- **The Community School of Family Connections must revise its improvement plan to provide for collaboration and communication with local school districts that results in 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.**

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, The Community School of Family Connections 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 the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCSs), collaboration for home instruction, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified concerns in the areas regarding dispensing medication and nursing services. **The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need. Although the school employs a registered nurse, they have been unable to hire a certified school nurse. The school must revise their plan to ensure that the required full range of nursing services is provided in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(e).**

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

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

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, The Community School of Family Connections accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil 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 and daily attendance available to LEA.

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified concerns in the areas regarding written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness and absences, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site a review of records and interviews indicated that the receiving school has implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

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

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in The Community School of Family Connections on January 9, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the receiving school'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 nearly all but one area 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 Community School of Family Connections during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by The Community School of Family Connections and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include staff development, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, program open to observation by LEA and NJDOE, supervision of physical therapy assistants (PTA) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, having an approved professional development plan, IEP meeting conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, communication to sending district 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 the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCSs), collaboration for home instruction, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, medical exams for sport teams, conformance to pupil 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 and daily attendance available to LEA.

During the self-assessment process, The Community School of Family Connections identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, documentation for provision of physical education programs, provision of services as per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech language therapy and counseling services as per IEP, hearing aid policy and procedures, maintenance of hearing aids, certified/licensed staff, criminal history verification, regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, current IEP prior to service delivery, dispensing medication,

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

nursing services, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness and absences, written notice of placement to county office and maintenance of student health records.

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need within the various standards regarding IEP goals and objectives written in observable and measurable terms.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, The Community School of Family Connections 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.