

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

Receiving School: Gateway School

County: Middlesex

Monitoring Dates: April 12, 2005

Monitoring Team: Denise Wilkens, Paul Bilik and Heather Mills-Pevonis

Background Information:

During the 2003– 2004 school year, the Gateway School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Gateway School 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 Gateway School 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 Gateway School is commended for its exemplary adaptive physical education program which affords students of all ability levels opportunities to participate in swimming at the neighboring YMCA, horseback riding, outdoor educational experiences and bowling as well as participation in inter-school sports with affiliates Alpha School and Harbor School. Supplementing this are recreational opportunities to strengthen motor skills and increase coordination through participation in Special Olympics teams for bowling, bocce ball, golf, track and field and powerlifting.

The Gateway School provides socialization and functional life skills in natural settings through regular outings with students to stores, the library, restaurants and opportunities for students to use public transportation and attend events held in the community.

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Workplace readiness skills are taught in the job sampling program that rotates students through job-sampling experiences at a local K-Mart and Shop-Rite while providing them a job coach or teacher supervisor, as necessary. In-school job sampling also takes place through the school store, the school office and in the weekly purchase for and preparation of meals.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and **Programs and Services** were determined to be areas of compliance by the Gateway School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Gateway School 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 Gateway School identified concerns in the area regarding approval from the county office of its written procedures. The Gateway School's policies and procedures have been reviewed and approved by the Middlesex County Office of Education. Therefore, the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for 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 Gateway School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no costs to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, provision of services per IEP, and provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT) speech-language and counseling services as per IEP.

The Gateway School identified concerns in the areas regarding maintenance of hearing aids and observation of program. The Gateway School's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of policies 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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Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Gateway School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

During the self-assessment process, the Gateway School identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP meetings conducted with appropriate participants, communication to sending districts regarding timely provision of revised IEPs and oversight of implementation of the IEP component regarding behavioral intervention plans. The Gateway School's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of policies, records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Area of Need:

Current IEP – During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that sending districts do not consistently provide goals and objectives for counseling and speech services prior to a student's entrance to Gateway School. In addition, the therapeutic staff at Gateway assesses these needs and at a subsequent IEP meeting recommends the specific goals and objectives to be incorporated into the student's IEP.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school does not accept students into their program when the IEP is missing components such as goals and objectives for counseling and speech services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure that IEPs are reviewed by receiving school staff members to identify missing components and to ensure that communication to sending districts occurs when components are missing.**

Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the Gateway School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting and procedures for termination of student placement.

During the self-assessment process, the Gateway School identified a concern in the area regarding notification to sending districts regarding suspensions. The Gateway

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School's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of policies, 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 Gateway School 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, 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 maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the Gateway School identified a concern in the area regarding administrative oversight of the Notification of Placement form from the sending school district which must be signed and returned to the county superintendent of school's office. The Gateway School's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of policies, 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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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Gateway School on April 12, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Gateway School's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

Gateway 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 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.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Programs and Services were determined to be areas of compliance by the Gateway School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Gateway School during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no costs to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, provision of services per IEP, provision of occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), speech-language and counseling services as per IEP, IEP meeting conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting, procedures for termination of student placement, conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records is 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 maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the Gateway School identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, maintenance of hearing aids, observation of programs, IEP meeting conducted annually, IEP meeting conducted with appropriate participants, communication to sending district regarding missing components, implementation of IEP components, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions, and written notice of attendance.

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards regarding current IEPs.

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