

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

Receiving School: Durand Academy

County: Gloucester

Monitoring Dates: March 5, 6, 7, 2002

Monitoring Team: Mary Heade, Catherine Thomas, Elaine Lerner, Judyth Vazquez

Background Information

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, Durand Academy conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided Durand Academy with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- the provision of a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities;
- 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. Durand Academy developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Department of Education conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress made in implementing the plan.

Prior to the on-site visit, the monitoring team reviewed school documents, including receiving school policies and procedures, classroom schedules, related services schedules, individual student schedules, master student lists, class lists, school calendars and teacher schedules.

During the on-site visit, the monitoring team reviewed student count information, survey results used in developing the self-assessment, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records, criminal history checks, fire drill logs, suspension logs and therapy logs. The monitoring team conducted on-site observations of the school's special education programs. Interviews were conducted with Durand Academy's director, principal, special education teachers, physical education teacher, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and classroom assistants. Parents of students attending Durand Academy were interviewed by telephone.

School Strengths:

The receiving school is commended for the consistency it has achieved in maintaining its staff for a significant number of years. Several staff members reported that they have been with the school for more than 15 years.

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The staff members at Durand Academy foster a school community beyond the regular school day by participating at various special events. Rapport between staff and students was noteworthy even under occasional difficult circumstances. This commitment to meeting the emotional needs of the students throughout the school day was observed during the on-site visit.

Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Programs and Services was determined to be an area of compliance by the school and by the Department of Education during the on-site visit.

SECTION I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, Durand Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments and the provision of programs and services in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns in the area of staff development. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

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 school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of extended school year programs and services provided at no cost to the parents.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns regarding program observations. The school has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding length of school year, provision of health and physical education instruction and the provision of programs and services in accordance with IEPs.

Areas of Need:

School Year - During the on-site, a review of the school's calendar and information obtained through the interview process indicated that of the 189 instructional days, 19 of

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those days do not meet the four-hour minimum standard that would qualify those 19 days as instructional days.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it provides a minimum of 180 instructional days. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Health/Physical Education - During the on-site visit, a review of classroom schedules and student schedules indicated that the school is not providing the minimum of 150 minutes of health/physical education.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the school provides a minimum of 150 minutes of health/physical education. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Provision of Services/Decision-Making Process - During the on-site visit, through a review of related service logs, physical therapy schedules, IEPs and the staff interview process, it was determined the school does not provide the services required by the IEP during the first 30 days of a student's placement. Instead, services are reduced and/or altered to fit into existing staff schedules. Though the school convenes an IEP meeting after the 30-day period with all the required participants, the decisions regarding these revisions to the IEP are not based on the individualized needs of the students but, instead, on administrative barriers such as existing staff schedules.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it provides services required by a student's IEP from the date of enrollment. In the event the school is unable to provide the services required by the IEP, the school must not accept that student. The plan must further ensure any revisions to an IEP are based on the individual needs of the students and not on administrative factors. The plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

SECTION III. STAFF REQUIREMENTS

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of dual employment, job descriptions for classroom aides, criminal history verification and having an approved professional development plan.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding certification issues and the use of an unapproved clinic.

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Areas of Need:

Certification - During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and classroom observations that an individual who is employed on a substitute's license is assigned as a special education classroom teacher.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members are assigned to positions for which they are certified. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Use of an Unapproved Clinic - During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and a review of logs that staff from an unapproved clinic are providing OT services.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that related services are provided by clinics or agencies that are approved by the Department of Education. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

SECTION IV. FACILITY REQUIREMENTS

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of approved facilities.

An area of need was identified during the on-site regarding fire drills. Additionally, a staff member from the county office conducted an on-site facility inspection. A separate report regarding any issues identified by that staff member will be issued through the county office.

Area of Need:

Frequency of Fire Drills - During the on-site visit, a review of fire drill logs indicated that the school does not conduct at least two fire drills per month.

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

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SECTION V. IEP/ANNUAL REVIEW

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of staff attendance at IEP meetings, current IEPs, communication with sending districts, accessibility to IEPs, staff knowledge of accommodations and modifications, timely implementation of IEPs, observations of proposed placement and areas related to participation in statewide assessments.

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

Area of Need:

Goals and Objectives - During the on-site visit, staff interviews indicated that the teachers are providing parents with copies of proposed goals and objectives prior to IEP meetings.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure goals and objectives are developed by an appropriately configured IEP team during the IEP meeting. The plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

SECTION VI. DISCIPLINE

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of discipline procedures, changes to program/placement, tracking of suspensions, and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified concerns regarding procedures for use of time-out rooms, aversive therapy and restraints, and termination of the student's placement prior to the end of the school year. The school has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address the areas of time-out rooms, aversive therapy and restraints. The improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of termination because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

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SECTION VIII. STUDENT RECORDS

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of returning records, access to records, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance, written notification to the Department of Education, and mandated health records.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified a concern regarding the notification to districts of tardiness and absences. The school has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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 Durand Academy on May 5, 6, and 7, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the school's improvement plan. The school is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review, the school was able to identify many areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The school is further commended for the many areas that were determined by the school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

During parent interviews, many parents commented positively on both the school's program and the commitment to the students by the school's staff members. Observations during the on-site visit confirmed the comments expressed by the parents.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments, provision of programs in nonsectarian settings, extended school year programs, services at no cost to the parents, dual employment, job descriptions, criminal history verification and approved professional development plan, approved facility, staff attendance at IEP meetings, current IEPs, communication with sending districts, accessibility of IEPs, staff knowledge of accommodations and modifications, timely implementation of IEP, observation of proposed placement, areas related to statewide tests, discipline, changes to program/placement, tracking of suspensions and interim alternative educational setting, class sizes and age ranges, exceptions, special class programs, CCCS/CCCSSSD, home instruction, nursing and medical services, pupil record code, return of records, access and location of records, daily attendance, written notification to the DOE and health records.

During the self-assessment process, the school identified areas of need regarding staff development, observation of programs, time-out rooms, aversives and restraints, and procedures for tardiness and absences.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the length of the school year, provision of health and physical education, certification issues, provision of services, decision-making process, use of an unapproved clinic, fire drills, and goals and objectives.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the school will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.