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New Jersey K to 12 Education

Collaborative Monitoring Report
July 2019

District: Orange Township School District
County: Essex
Dates On-Site: June 10, 11 and 12, 2019
Case #: CM-002-19

Funding Sources

Program	Funding Award
Title I, Part A	\$2,229,348
IDEA Basic	1,421,277
IDEA Preschool	48,573
Title II, Part A	292,573
Title III	116,865
Title III Immigrant	34,585
Title IV, Part A	141,774
Carl D. Perkins Grant	24,343
Total Funds	<u>\$4,309,338</u>

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Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and other federal laws require local education agencies (LEAs) to provide programs and services to their districts based on the requirements specified in each of the authorizing statutes (ESSA, IDEA and Carl D. Perkins). The laws further require that state education agencies such as the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitor the implementation of federal programs by sub recipients and determine whether the funds are being used by the district for their intended purpose and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

Introduction

The NJDOE visited the Orange Township Public Schools to monitor the district's use of federal funds and the related program plans, where applicable, to determine whether the district's programs are meeting the intended purposes and objectives, as specified in the current year applications and authorizing statutes and to determine whether the funds were spent in accordance with the program requirements, federal and state laws, and applicable regulations. The on-site visit included staff interviews and documentation reviews related to the requirements of the following programs: Title I, Part A (Title I); Title II, Part A (Title II); Title III; Title III Immigrant, Title IV, Part A (Title IV), IDEA Basic and Preschool and Carl D. Perkins for the period July 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019.

The scope of work performed included the review of documentation including grant applications, program plans and needs assessments, grant awards, annual audits, board minutes, payroll records, accounting records, purchase orders, a review of student records, classroom visitations and interviews with instructional staff to verify implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEP), a review of student class and related service schedules, interviews of child study team members and speech-language specialists and an interview of the program administrator regarding the IDEA grant, as well as current district policies and procedures. The monitoring team members also conducted interviews with district personnel, reviewed the supporting documentation for a sample of expenditures and conducted internal control reviews.

Expenditures Reviewed

The grants reviewed included Title I, Title II, Title III, Title III Immigrant, Title IV, IDEA Basic and Preschool and Carl D. Perkins from July 1, 2018 through May 31, 2019. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries was taken from each program reviewed.

General District Overview of Uses of Title I and IDEA Funds

Title I Projects

The district utilized Title I funds for teacher salaries and benefits. In addition, funds were used for instructional supplies, educational services and parent involvement.

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Title II-A Projects

Title II-A funds supplement local job-embedded professional development (PD) programs in Language Arts Literacy and Mathematics; teacher stipends to attend PD after contract hours; four teachers to provide curriculum and intervention strategies; and supplies for specific book studies aligned with the needs of the Orange School district.

Title III and Title III Immigrant Projects

The district is using its fiscal year 2018-2019 Title III funds to implement a Newcomer Academy program in a magnet school for grades 2nd – 7th. Primarily, the district provides supplemental instructional opportunities through targeted instruction for students new to the country. Most Title III Immigrant funds are used for supplemental online language tutorial assistance and to host a community outreach bilingual/ESL fair. The district had an enrollment of 756 English language learners (ELLs) in May 2019.

Title IV-A Projects

The Orange Board of Education used their Title IV-A allocation to support a drug & violence parent/student program; an after-school career program to help with navigating colleges and scholarships; Social, Emotional Learning training; a Restorative Justice program and on-site college visits.

IDEA Projects (Special Education)

The majority of the IDEA Basic funds are being used to reduce district tuition costs for students receiving special educational services in other public school districts and approved private schools for the disabled. Additionally, the district uses IDEA funds for salaries and contracted services for the provision of related services.

Carl D. Perkins Grant

The district is operating the following approved Career and Technical Education program of study at Orange High School: Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences (CIP Code 51.0000).

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

Title I

Finding 1:

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The district did not have an updated *district-level* Parent and Family Engagement Policy in compliance with ESSA, developed jointly with, agreed on with, and distributed to, parents and family members of participating children.

Citation:

ESEA §1116(a)(2) [20 U.S.C. 6318] Parent and Family Engagement

Required Action:

- The district shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written district-level parent and family engagement policy. Parents shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language the parents can understand.
- The district must provide evidence of an updated, board approved, district-level Parent and Family Engagement Policy for review to NJDOE, along with evidence of parent input in the development of the policy, and availability of policy in an understandable and uniform format in a language parents can understand.

Finding 2:

The district did not have a *school-level* Parent and Family Engagement Policy in compliance with ESSA, developed jointly with, agreed on with, and distributed to, parents and family members of participating children.

Citation:

ESEA §1116(b)(1) School Parent and Family Engagement Policy

Required Action:

- The district shall develop jointly with, agree on with, and distribute to, parents and family members of participating children a written school parent and family engagement policy. Parents shall be notified of the policy in an understandable and uniform format and, to the extent practicable, provided in a language the parents can understand. Such policy shall be made available to the local community and updated periodically to meet the changing needs of parents and the school. (Note ESEA Section 1116 (b)(2-3) regarding special rule).
- The district must provide evidence of board an approved, School Parent and Family Engagement Policy for review to NJDOE, along with evidence of parent input in the development of the policy, and availability of the policy in an understandable and uniform format in a language parents can understand.

Recommended Actions:

Parent and Family Engagement

- Annually distribute, within four weeks of the beginning of the school year, parent-engagement policies and school-parent compacts to parents of participating Title I

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children by means such as mail, e-mail, backpack or through a school booklet, such as in the school code handbook. Continue to post the policies on your district/school web site.

- Ensure that the district and its Title I schools work with their stakeholder groups to develop and revisit the district and school-level policies as well as parent-school compacts annually.
- Ensure outreach to engage parents of non-public school students receiving Title I services. Per the legislative requirement, parents/guardians of Title 1 students have a right to be involved in the development of the written parent engagement policy. Parents of non-public school students who are receiving Title 1 services need to have the same opportunities as their public school counterparts.
- Ensure Parent and Family Engagement policies are board-approved annually to meet the changing needs of parents and the school.
- Make school-level policies available to the local community.
- Continue to provide parents/guardians with notification letters in the three main languages in the district - English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. Consider developing a template cover page in native language informing parents of the availability of interpreters, if needed. The cover page may be attached to English written notification letters going to parents/guardians who speak other less frequently spoken home languages.
- Refer to [Title I Parent and Family Engagement Requirements and sample policies](#) for assistance: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/title1/program/parent>
- Note ESEA Section §1116(b)(2-3) special rule: “If the school has a parent and family engagement policy that applies to all parents and family members, such school may amend that policy, if necessary to meet the requirements of this subsection.”
- Consider including in the parent-school compacts a link to the district-level parent and family engagement policy with instructions on how to obtain a printed copy if needed.
- Ensure the annual meeting convened by Title I schools informs parents of their school’s participation under ESEA §1116 Parent and Family Engagement and ESEA §1114 Schoolwide Program Plan and explains the requirements of this part and the right of parents to be involved.
- Maintain documentation that Parent and Family Engagement “School Allocations” tab (per EWEG) are aligned to district/school accounting records of Parent and Family Engagement school-level reserves.

ESEA §1117 Participation of Children Enrolled in Private Schools

- Ensure that signatures/e-signatures are received by all nonpublic schools with regards to documentation of consultation, particularly with regard to Affirmation of Consultation forms.

Needs Assessment Stakeholder Groups

- Expand stakeholders *when appropriate and applicable* to include additional community partners/community-based organizations/community members, early

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childhood education programs, higher education and students (i.e., high schools) in the Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Title II-A

A review of the expenditures charged to the Title II grant yielded no findings.

Title III and Title III Immigrant

There were no Title III or Title III Immigrant findings. However, there were several recommendations communicated to the Supervisor of Bilingual, ESL, and World Languages and to the District's Federal Program Coordinator.

Recommendation 1:

The district demonstrated several best practice programs and services to support newly arrived ELLs in becoming academically successful. The district hosts a Bilingual/ESL fair in collaboration with the district's block party. The Supervisor of Bilingual, ESL, and World Language in consultation with the Business Administrator must ensure expenditures are used to support supplemental activities specific to ELLs for allowable uses only. The district must include equitable support for ELLs for any activity provided to general education students. While district local funds and other Title program funds may be used for auxiliary services, Title III allowable uses must be used to improve the English language proficiency of ELLs. The district may refer to a [Guide to Spending Title III and Title III Immigrant Funds](#) on the Department's Bilingual/ESL webpage.

Citation:

ESEA §3115(g): Supplement not supplant

Recommendation 2:

Documentation of activities funded with Title III immigrant funds, including agendas, sign-in sheets, participant lists, purchase orders, invoices, calendar of events must be updated to reflect the current state assessment, NJSLA, formerly PARCC. The district must also ensure all communication reflect language and updates from the [ESSA ELL Entry and Exit Guidance](#) (May 2019).

Citation:

ESEA §3115(e): Allowable use

Recommendation 3:

The district does an effective job providing parents/guardians with notification letters in the three main languages, English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole. The district should consider developing a template cover page in the appropriate native language informing parents of the availability of interpreters, if needed. The cover page may be attached to the English written notification letters going to parents/guardians who speak other less frequently spoken home languages. Also, the notification letters sent to the parents/guardians of identified ELLs must include the date and to

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whom it is addressed. A copy must be retained in the district/school office. The district must ensure all communication reflect language and updates from the [ESSA ELL Entry and Exit Guidance](#) (May 2019). Identification of students for English language services is no longer based only on a language other than English being indicated on the Home Language Survey, but on multiple criteria (steps 1-3 of ELL identification).

In addition, the district must ensure all staff maintain copies of letters sent to parents regarding student's reclassification from ELL status, as well as evidence and/or documents to support continued progress in English-medium instruction classes for two years post ELL exit.

Citation:

ESEA §1112(e): Parent notification; ESEA §3121: Monitoring

Title IV-A

A review of the expenditures charged to the Title IV grant yielded no findings.

IDEA (Special Education)

Finding 3:

The district did not consistently provide parents of students referred and/or eligible for special education and related services and students referred and/or eligible for speech-language services, notice of a meeting for identification, annual review, reevaluation planning, and eligibility meetings.

Citation:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(1); and 34 CFR §300.304(a)

Required Action:

The district must provide parents notice of a meeting in writing that contains all required components, early enough to ensure they have an opportunity to attend. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members and speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation listed above. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to interview staff, review meeting documentation for meetings conducted between September 2019 and December 2019, and review the oversight procedures.

Finding 4:

The district did not consistently document in the IEPs of students removed from the general education setting for more than 20 percent of the school day, including students placed in separate settings, consideration of placement in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Specifically, IEPs did not consistently include:

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- the supplementary aids and services considered and an explanation of why the supplementary aids and services were rejected;
- the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a placement in general education may have on the students with disabilities or other students in the class; and
- for those students placed in separate settings, activities to transition the student to a less restrictive environment.

Citation:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2 (a) 4 and 8(ii).

Required Action:

The district must ensure that when determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, the IEP team considers the general education class first and that all required decisions regarding the placement are documented in the IEP for each student removed from general education for more than 20 percent of the school day. The district must also ensure that for students placed in separate settings, the IEP team identifies activities to transition the student to a less restrictive environment and document them in each IEP. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. To demonstrate that the district has corrected the individual instances of noncompliance, the district must conduct annual review meetings and revise the IEPs for specific students with IEPs that were identified as noncompliant. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to interview staff, review the revised IEPs along with a random sample of additional IEPs developed at meetings conducted between September 2019 and December 2019, and review the oversight procedures. The names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the district by the monitor.

Carl D. Perkins Grant

Finding 5:

All district boards of education operating Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs shall develop and implement a written CTE safety and health plan. The safety and health plan observed by the monitors was substantially outdated (2004).

Citation:

N.J.A.C. 6A:19-6.4

Required Action:

The district must review and revise its safety and health plan. Further, insure that it sufficiently describes the safety and health policies and practices being used in the district to protect students and staff from safety and health risks on and offsite. Finally, please forward to the Office of Career Readiness a memo from the district chief school

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administrator confirming that the revised health and safety plan was adopted and approved by the district board of education.

Administrative

Finding 6:

The district did not comply with required timekeeping standards for federally funded grants. Employees with 100 percent of their salary paid with federal funds must complete a semi-annual certification attesting to their performance of grant related duties, and employees with less than 100 percent of their salary paid with federal funds must complete monthly personal activity reports.

Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302

Required Action:

The district must ensure that employees submit personal activity reports that have been verified by supervisors, as required.

Finding 7:

The board minutes contained some but not all the required information such as funding source, account number, position, annual/funded salary and percentage charged for federally funded positions. Also, the board minutes contained - for stipend compensation - some but not all of the required information such as account number, position, hourly rate, number of hours and not to exceed amount.

Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302

Required Action:

The district should update its internal controls to ensure that the board minutes contain the required information.

Finding 8:

The district is charging expenditures for several grants to the incorrect program codes in the general ledger. Title II is being charged to program code 264; a code between 270 and 279 should be used for Title II. Title IV is being charged to program code 233; a code between 280 and 289 should be used for Title IV. The Carl D. Perkins grant is being charged to program code 348; a code between 361 and 399 should be used for the Carl D. Perkins grant.

Citation:

Uniform Minimum Chart of Accounts for New Jersey Public Schools.

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Required Action:

The district must establish accounts using appropriate program codes in the general ledger.

The NJDOE thanks you for your time and cooperation during the monitoring visit and looks forward to a successful resolution of all findings and implementation of all recommendations contained in this report.

If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hoffmann via phone at (973) 621-2750 or via email at steven.hoffmann@doe.nj.gov.