

**State of New Jersey
Department of Education
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The Ethical Community Charter School

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New Jersey K to 12 Education

Collaborative Monitoring Report
April 2021

School: The Ethical Community Charter School
County: Hudson
Dates Monitored: January 20 and 21, 2021
Case #: CM-03-21

Funding Sources

Program	Funding Award
Title I, Part A	\$187,897
Title I SIA	13,800
ESSER	140,352
Title II	20,255
IDEA Basic	74,893
IDEA Preschool	1,380
Total Funds	<hr/> \$438,577 <hr/>

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Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and other federal laws require local education agencies (LEAs) to provide programs and services to schools within their local jurisdiction. The provision of these programs and services is based on the requirements as specified in each of the pertinent authorizing statutes [ESSA, IDEA or other federal law(s)].

The laws further require that state education agencies, in this case, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to monitor the implementation and execution of federal programs by the sub recipients. The monitors thereby determine whether the funds are being properly used by the school for their intended purposes and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

Introduction

The NJDOE visited The Ethical Community Charter School (school) to monitor the school's use of federal funds. It also monitors related program plans, as applicable, to determine whether the school's programs are meeting the intended purposes and objectives, as specified in the current year's applications and authorizing statutes.

The goal of the monitoring is to determine whether the funds were spent in accordance with the program's requirements, federal and state law and applicable regulations.

The on-site visit included: staff interviews, document and documentation reviews related to the requirements of the following programs: Title I, Part A (Title I); Title I SIA; Title II, Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief fund and IDEA Basic and Preschool for the period July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

The scope of work performed included the review of documents and documentation which included:

- accounting records
- annual audits
- board minutes
- current school policies and procedures
- grant applications program plans and needs assessments,
- grant awards
- payroll records
- purchase orders
- student records

The scope of work performed also included:

- classroom visitations and interviews with instructional staff to verify implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- interviews of child study team members and speech-language specialists
- interview of the program administrator regarding the IDEA grant

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Expenditures Reviewed

The grants reviewed included Title I, Title I SIA; ESSER, Title II and IDEA Basic and Preschool from July 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries was taken from each program reviewed.

General Overview of Uses of Federal Funds

Title I Projects

The Ethical Community Charter School serves grades K–8 and operates a Title I targeted assistance school program. During the 2020-2021 school year, the school programmed and budgeted its Title I, Part A allocation for activities in the following areas:

- instructional staff for in-class support programs
- increased learning time
- professional development

Please Note: Over the last two years, the Ethical Community Charter School has experienced significant turnover in school administration positions (i.e., principal, vice-principal, and business administrator).

The current principal has been in her position for approximately six months, the current vice-principal for approximately one month, and the current business administrator for approximately 18 months. The prior administration did not establish policies and procedures regarding the implementation of Title I, Part A funded programs and services or the grants management process regarding the usage of all FY 2021 ESEA funds.

This type of information would have provided the incoming administration officials an historical perspective on how the school identified the specific needs to be addressed by the FY 2021 Title I, Part A funds (as well as all other ESEA allocated funds). As a result, the current administration officials were unable to clearly articulate how identified needs were selected or why Title I, Part A funds were used for the budgeted costs in the school’s FY 2021 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application.

Recommended Actions:

The following recommendations are presented to assist the school in strengthening and implementing a viable Title I, Part A program, as well as other ESEA title programs for which the school receives an allocation of funds:

- The school administration should review the ESEA legislation, to gain an enhanced understanding of the rules and regulations for each title program under ESEA
- The school administration should turnkey this information to the entire staff of the school, as well as to parents and families and other relevant community members

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The school administration officials should establish policies and procedures to be approved by its Board in the following areas:

- Completion and evaluation of the comprehensive needs assessment, to include the following elements:
- Data Collection – the identification and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data
- Stakeholder Engagement - the establishment of a team of all relevant stakeholders to actively participate in the comprehensive needs assessment process (e.g., administration officials, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, support personnel, parents, and other community members)
- Progress Monitoring (Evaluation) – the mechanisms by which the school will continually monitor (evaluate) progress toward established program outcomes
- Completion and submission of all future ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Applications to occur through the collaborative work of the ESEA Program Coordinator and the School Business Administrator
- Ongoing monitoring of the Title I-funded programs and services (as well as all other titles) for effectiveness and fidelity of implementation
- Monthly submission of reimbursement requests through the EWEG system

Title I SIA

The Title I SIA funds are budgeted for extended-day instructional staff salaries. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the school's instructional day is fully remote; hence, as of January 21, 2021 (the date of the virtual SIA monitoring session), the school had not commenced with its 2020-21 extended-day program. The school's leadership is exploring and identifying appropriate and effective program design options to implement in the near future.

Title II Projects

The school used Title IIA funds to support teacher professional development in reading, math and for the new teacher academy.

Title III Projects

Title III and Title III Immigrant

The school refused federal funds; hence no findings were made. Technical Assistance was provided to the school, including completing needs assessment on EWEG and reviewing allowable use of funds.

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IDEA Grant

The FY 2021 IDEA Basic funds are used to pay for contracted related services and Orton Gillingham reading program.

There were no findings with the IDEA grant.

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

Title I

Finding 1:

The school did not provide documented evidence that it conducted a comprehensive need assessment (CNA) to include the active participation of all representative stakeholder groups (e.g., administrators, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, support personnel, parents, other community members).

The CNA did not identify target populations, specific causes of needs based on data analysis, specific school performance targets, or prior year outcomes. Rather, the CNA seemed to repeat many of the same elements that had appeared in the CNAs in the school's ESEA Applications from the last several years, with no direct connection to data analysis.

Since the CNA is an ongoing process, not a one-time event, the school must institute processes to ensure its annual comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) includes a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data that results in the identification of specific needs for students, staff, and/or parents and families.

Citation:

ESEA §1112(c)(6) Local Educational Agency Plans - Assurances

Required Action:

Since the CNA is an ongoing process, not a one-time event, the school must institute processes to ensure its annual comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) includes a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data that results in the identification of specific needs for students, staff, and/or parents and families. The school must submit evidence of established processes to ensure:

- The CNA includes a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data in order to identify specific needs for students, staff, and/or parents and families
- The CNA process involves all relevant stakeholders, including administrators, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, support personnel, parents and families, and other community members

Recommended Action:

It is important to note that the comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) serves as the basis for which all budgeted costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable and allocable to

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the Title I, Part A grant program (as well as to all other ESEA title programs). Consequently, it is recommended the school institute the following steps for the development of a more robust annual CNA that clearly articulates the identified needs not only for the FY 2021 ESEA project period, but also for all subsequent ESEA project periods:

- Assign specific staff to coordinate the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of the CNA
- Include more specific and quantifiable details for each identified need. This may be accomplished by providing more exact and specific information regarding each identified need (e.g., target populations, grade levels, performance targets, academic and non-academic outcomes, root causes of the needs, evaluation of prior year outcomes, etc.)
- Ensure the active engagement of parents and families, as well as other community members in the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of the CNA
- Incorporate a formal evaluation process as part of the CNA to strengthen the progress monitoring elements (evaluation) required in ESEA

Finding 2:

The school did not provide contemporaneously dated evidence showing the school held the required Annual Title I Meeting for parents and families of participating children, including the following materials:

- invitational letter/flyer
- meeting agenda
- meeting minutes
- sign-in sheets

Per the ESEA legislation, a Title I-funded school must convene an annual meeting on a date at the beginning of the school year to inform parents and families of the school's:

- Title I, Part A program(s)
- Title I, Part A legislative requirements
- the ways in which parents and families can be engaged actively in helping their children succeed academically

Citation:

ESEA §1116(c) Parent and Family Engagement: Policy Involvement

Required Action:

The school must submit the following documents/documentation (as evidence of its FY 2021 Annual Title I Meeting) to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review:

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- invitational letter/flyer
- meeting agenda
- meeting minutes
- sign-in sheets or a list of staff and parents who attended the meeting

Each piece of documentation must include the exact date on which the school held (or will hold) the required FY 2021 Annual Title I Meeting.

Recommended Action:

To further enhance knowledge regarding meaningful and timely parent and family engagement it is recommended the school administrators and staff review the parent and family engagement resources available on the NJDOE website at [Title I, Part A Parent Family Engagement](#). For additional assistance, please contact the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs at titleone@doe.nj.gov.

Finding 3:

The school did not provide documented evidence that it had a Board approved school-school level policy or that this policy was widely distributed to parents and families. Additionally, the school did not provide documented evidence to show how it actively engaged parents and families in the development of the school-school level parental and/or family engagement policy.

Citation:

ESEA §1116 (a)(2): Local Educational Agency Policy: Written Policy; ESEA §1116(b)(1): School Parent and Family Engagement Policy

Required Action:

The school must submit the following documented evidence to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review:

- The dated school-school level parent and family engagement policy that certifies the date on which the policy was instituted
- Information certifying the exact date(s) on which the policy was widely distributed to parents and families
- Information certifying the method(s) by which the school-school level parent and family engagement policy was widely distributed through various venues to parents and families (i.e., posted to school's website, contained in student handbook, etc.)
- Information detailing the ways in which the school will actively engage parents and families in the ongoing monitoring and implementation of its school-school level parent and family engagement policy

Per ESEA legislation, parents and families must be involved in the development of the written school-school level parent and family engagement policy, as well as be informed of ways they can further participate in the academic performance and achievement of their children.

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Finding 4:

The school did not provide evidence that it had a Board approved school-parent compact, that parents and families were actively involved in the development of the compact, or how the school widely distributed the compact to parents and families.

Per ESEA legislation, the school-parent compact must outline how parents, the entire school staff and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement. The school-parent compact must also outline the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State academic standards.

The exclusion of parents and families in the development of the school-parent compact resulted in these stakeholders being excluded from active participation in their children's educational programs.

Citation:

ESEA §1116(d)(2): Parent and Family Engagement (Shared responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement)

Required Action:

During the remainder of the FY 2021 ESEA project period, as well as all subsequent ESEA project periods, the school must include parents and families in the ongoing monitoring and continued development and implementation of all elements of the written school-parent compact. The school must submit documented evidence of the following information to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review:

- Board approved school-parent compact
- The mechanisms in which the school will actively involve parents and families in the ongoing monitoring and continued development and implementation of all elements of the written school-parent compact
- The ways the school will widely distribute the school-parent compact to parents and families

Finding 5:

The school did not provide documented evidence of a required parental notification letter to parents of English learners. Additionally, the school did not provide evidence of the distribution of the notification letters to the parents and/or families of English learners.

Per ESEA legislation, local educational agencies (LEAs) using Title I or Title III funds to provide a language instruction educational program, as determined under Title III, shall, not later than 30 days after the beginning of the school year, inform parents [and/or families of an English learner identified for participation or participating in such program], of specific requirements.

Citation:

ESEA §1112(e)(3): Parents Right to Know – Language Instruction

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Required Action:

The school must submit documented evidence of the development of its Parents Right-to-Know letter for Language Instruction. Additionally, the school must submit documented evidence of the methods by which it distributed this letter to parents and/or families of English learners. Both types of documentation must be submitted to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review.

Finding 6:

The school did not provide documented evidence regarding the Educational Stability Policies enacted under ESEA as follows:

- The name of the staff member who serves as the Educational Stability Coordinator
- In the school's FY 2021 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application, the required upload of a current, Board approved copy, of its written transportation procedures to delineate how transportation to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin, when in their best interest, will be provided, arranged, and funded in a cost-effective manner for the duration of the children's time in foster care

The school's Educational Stability Policies were not in effect as of December 10, 2016 (per ESEA legislation). Rather, the policies presented were adopted on January 23, 2017. The policies did not reflect the correct requirements as articulated in ESEA legislation.

Citations:

ESEA §1112 Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care
ESEA §1112(c)(5)(B) Assurances – Written Policies and Procedures

Required Action:

The school must immediately amend its FY 2021 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application and upload a current, Board approved copy of its written transportation procedures. This plan shall delineate how transportation, to maintain children in foster care in their school of origin, when in their best interest, will be provided, arranged and funded, in a cost-effective manner for the duration of the children's time in foster care. In addition, the school must revise its Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care policies and procedures, to reflect the correct requirements as articulated in ESEA legislation. These revised policies and procedures must be submitted to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review.

Recommended Action:

The school is encouraged to access the NJDOE website [Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care](#) for specific information regarding the establishment of its Educational Stability policies and procedures and turnkey this information with all staff members.

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Finding 7:

The school provided class schedules for four (4) paraprofessionals (teacher assistants) however, the name of each paraprofessional was not listed on each schedule. In addition, the school did not provide approved Board minutes that listed the names and salary amounts for the four paraprofessionals funded with Title I, Part A funds or the percentage of time in which each individual provided allowable Title I, Part A services. As a result, it was impossible to determine the actual time each paraprofessional spent providing Title I-funded instructional support.

Citations:

ESEA §1112(c)(6) Local Educational Agency Plans - Assurances; 2 CFR §200.404 and §200.405 Cost Principles: Subpart E (Reasonable Costs and Allocable Costs)

Required Action:

The school must submit to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs class schedules that document the names of each applicable paraprofessional. In addition, the school must submit copies of approved Board minutes that certifies and lists the names of the four (4) paraprofessionals found in the school's FY 2021 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application as being funded with Title I, Part A monies, as well as the percentage of time each paraprofessional spent providing instructional support.

Recommended Action:

It is recommended the school institute policies and procedures to ensure all Board minutes clearly delineate the names and position titles of all staff members whose salaries and benefits are funded with Title I, Part A monies.

Finding 8:

The school did not provide the required time and activity reports for the four Title I-funded paraprofessionals; therefore, it was impossible to determine whether these four paraprofessional positions were allowable under the Title I, Part A grant program. Time and activity documentation must reflect what Title I-funded staff are doing, when and where they are working, and must match the staff member's funded percentage of time providing the Title I-funded services. This documentation is necessary to verify that Title I-funded staff are performing allowable Title I, Part A activities.

Citation:

2 CFR §200.430 Cost Principles: Subpart E (Compensation – personal services)

Required Action:

The school must submit the time and activity reports for each of the four paraprofessionals to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review.

If the school is unable to provide this supporting documentation the school must amend its FY 2021 ESEA Application to remove the associated salary and benefit amounts for these paraprofessionals and then re-budget these funds for other allowable Title I, Part A

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uses that align with the school's identified needs, as articulated in its comprehensive needs assessment.

Recommended Action:

It is recommended that both program and fiscal staff work collaboratively, to establish a mechanism that ensures all Title I, Part A budgeted salary costs accurately reflect the total number of Title I-funded staff members, in all future, ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Applications.

Finding 9:

Questions arose concerning the allowability of using Title I, Part A funds for the contract with New Jersey City University (NJCU), which articulated payment of funds to interns to provide instructional support to identified academically at-risk students.

Per ESEA legislation, Title I, Part A funds may be used to pay the salaries of highly effective teachers (holding NJ teacher certifications) and paraprofessionals who meet highly qualified requirements, but not individuals who do not meet these requirements.

The school did not provide job descriptions for the interns nor did it specifically describe the types of services the interns provided to the identified academically at-risk students. Unless additional information is provided, the cost of \$55,397 budgeted for the NJCU contract for interns is not allowable under the Title I, Part A grant program.

Citations:

ESEA §1111(g)(2)(j)(m): Other Plan Provisions - Assurances; ESEA §1112(c)(6): Local Educational Agency Plans – Assurances; 2 CFR §200.404 and §200.405 Cost Principles: Subpart E (Reasonable Costs and Allocable Costs); 2 CFR §200.430 Cost Principles: Subpart E (Compensation – personal services)

Required Action:

For the school to use Title I, Part A funds for the NJCU contract to provide interns for instructional support, the school must ascertain whether the interns meet the highly qualified requirements for paraprofessionals as articulated in the ESEA. As such, the school must obtain college/university transcript information for the interns to determine if they meet the requirements for instructional support paraprofessionals who are supported by Title I, Part A funds. The school must verify the following criteria for each intern in order for each to be employed by the school as instructional support paraprofessionals:

- Completed at least two (2) years of study at an institution of higher education
- Obtained an Associates degree (or higher)
- Met a rigorous standard of quality through a formal state assessment [e.g., the Para Pro exam issued by the Educational Testing Services (ETS)] or a commercially developed assessment

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The school must submit documented evidence that each intern meets the highly qualified paraprofessional requirements, per ESEA, to the Office of Supplemental Educational Programs for review. If the school is unable to verify the interns meet the above referenced ESEA requirements for paraprofessionals, the school must amend its FY 2021 ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application to show the total cost for the NJCU contract (\$55,397) has been re-budgeted for other allowable Title I, Part A uses that align with the school's identified needs, as articulated in its comprehensive needs assessment.

Title I SIA

Finding 1:

The school did not show evidence of a complete Annual School Plan for the FY 2019-20 or FY 2020-21 that met the ESSA requirements including:

Developing and implementing a school-level plan “in partnership with stakeholders (including principals and other school leaders, teachers and parents),” to improve student outcomes based on the indicators in the statewide accountability system established under subsection (c)(4), for each subgroup of students that was the subject of notification that:

- is informed by all indicators described in subsection (c)(4)(B), including student performance against long-term goals
- includes evidence-based interventions as approved by the LEA prior to the implementation of such plan. Said plan to be monitored, upon submission and implementation by the LEA
- is informed by all indicators described in subsection (c)(4)(B), including student performance against long-term goals
- includes evidence-based interventions are approved by the LEA prior to implementation of such plan
- is monitored, upon submission and implementation, by the LEA

Citation:

ESEA §1111(d) 2 (B): Targeted Support and Improvement Plan

Required Actions:

- The school shall develop, complete and implement the FY 20-21 Annual School Plan in the ASPS system including all required components. The plan must be developed jointly with a broad group of stakeholders and be based on a comprehensive needs assessment informed by data (including student performance against long-term goals) and including evidence-based interventions
- SIA funds must be used toward implementing SMART Goals included in the ASP plan. SIA budget detail in the ASPS must align with the SIA budget detail in the ESEA consolidated/Title I SIA application in EWEG
- The school shall develop, complete and implement the FY 21-22 Annual School Plan in the ASPS system as described above by the anticipated due date of June 30, 2021

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Recommended Actions:

- Members of the ASP Team and the Primary ASP School Reviewer should review all ASP resources embedded in the ASPs under Getting Started/Resources and participate in the 2021-22 ASP professional learning opportunities offered by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), Office of Comprehensive Support Network (CSN)
- Members of the ASP Team and the Primary ASP School Reviewer should contact the ASP Helpdesk at help.asp@doe.nj.gov to receive technical assistance on the use of the ASPs and support with the completion of the 2020-21 ASP prior to the launch of the 2021-22 ASP (anticipated March 2021)
- Ensure students receiving Title I (SIA/1003) programs and services are Title I-eligible students (meet school's Title I entrance criteria)
- As a Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) school, ensure the priority performance needs of the identified TSI subgroup of "Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander" (if still applicable), are prioritized in planning and implementing SIA programs and services

Title II

The review of Title II expenditures yielded no findings.

IDEA Program

Finding 1:

The school does not employ child study team members who are employees of a local education agency. Primary child study team services are provided by contracted independent consultants.

Citations:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.1(b) and 5.1(a)1, 2 and 3.

Required Actions:

The school must ensure that it employs or contracts with child study members in accordance with the citations listed above.

To demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the school must:

- employ a Learning Disabilities Teaching-Consultant, School Psychologist, and Social Worker through hiring the staff members directly or contracting with a local education agency
- 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 documentation verifying the hiring or contracting of child study team staff

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- review the oversight procedures

Finding 2:

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

Citations:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)3,5; 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(1); and 34 CFR §300.304(a)

Required Actions:

The school must provide parents notice of a meeting in writing early enough to ensure they have an opportunity to attend.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the school 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(s) listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review copies of notices of meetings conducted between June 2021 and September 2021
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 3:

The school did not consistently convene meetings with required participants for students referred and/or eligible for special education and related services and for students referred and/or eligible for speech-language services.

Citations:

N.J.A.C 6A:14-2.3(k)1(i-vii), 2(i-x); 3.3(e); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B); and 34 CFR §300.321(a)

Required Actions:

The school must ensure all meetings are conducted with required participants and documentation of participation is maintained in students' records.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the school must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation(s) listed above.

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A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review meeting documentation, including the sign in sheets, for meetings conducted between June 2021 and September 2021
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 4:

The charter school did not consistently conduct identification meetings within 20 calendar days of receipt of a written request for evaluation for special education and related services or speech-language services to determine if an evaluation was warranted.

Citations:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.5(b)6; 3.3(e) and 3.6(b)

Required Actions:

The school must ensure identification meetings are conducted within 20 calendar days of receipt of a written request for an evaluation.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the school 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(s) listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review meeting documentation, including the sign in sheets, for meetings conducted between June 2021 and September 2021
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 5:

The school did not consistently conduct multidisciplinary initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services by obtaining an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher.

Citations:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.5(b)6 and 3.6(b)

Required Actions:

The school must ensure a multidisciplinary evaluation is conducted for students referred for speech-language services by obtaining a written statement from the general education teacher that details the educational impact of the speech problem on the student's progress in general education.

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In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the school must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation(s) listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review initial evaluation reports for students referred for speech-language services between June 2021 and September 2021
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 6:

The school did not consistently conduct all required sections of the functional assessment as a component of initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services. Initial evaluation reports did not contain:

- observations in non-testing setting
- parent interview
- teacher interview
- a review of prior interventions documented by the teacher(s) or others who work with the student, and other informal measures

Citations:

N.J.A.C.6A:14-3.4(f)4(i-vi); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(4) and (5); and 34 CFR §300.306(c)(i)

Required Actions:

The school must ensure all components of the functional assessment are conducted as part of all initial evaluations.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the school 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(s) listed above. The school is referred to the sample report form for speech-language evaluations which is located at: <https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form>.

Monitors from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review initial evaluation reports for students evaluated between June 2021 and September 2021
- review the oversight procedures

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Finding 7:

The school did not consistently document all required considerations and statements in the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) of students eligible for speech-language services.

IEPs developed did not consistently include:

- participation in school wide assessments
- approved accommodations and modification on school wide assessments
- student's status in speech-language performance, including how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in general education
- other academic and functional needs that result from the student's disability

Citations:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e) 1-17, and (f); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(A)(B); and 34 CFR §300.324(a)(1)(2)

Required Actions:

The school must ensure each IEP contains the required considerations and statements.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the charter school 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 citations listed above. To demonstrate that the school has corrected the individual instances of noncompliance the school must conduct annual review meetings and revise IEPs for specific students for whom their IEPs were identified as noncompliant.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review the revised IEPs
- review a sample of IEPs for students whose annual review meetings were conducted between June 2021 and September 2021
- review the oversight procedures

Names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the school by the special education monitor. For assistance with correction of noncompliance the school is referred to the state IEP sample forms which are located on the [Special Education Legal Protections & Responsibilities](https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form) webpage:
<https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form>.

Finding 8:

The school did not consistently provide written notice of identification and reevaluation meetings to parents of students referred and/or eligible for special education and related services and students referred and/or eligible for speech-language services.

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Citation:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(a-i)

Required Action:

The school must ensure that parents are provided written notice of a meeting that contains all required components within 15 calendar days of the meeting.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the school must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citation(s) listed above.

A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to:

- interview staff
- review copies of written notice provided to parents following initial and reevaluation planning meetings
- review the oversight procedures

Finding 9:

The school did not consistently obtain written parental consent prior to conducting assessments as part of the initial evaluation for students referred for speech-language services.

Citation:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4 (a)3(b)

Required Action:

The school must ensure that informed parental consent is obtained and maintained in student files prior to conducting assessments as part of the initial evaluation.

In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance the school 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 documentation of participants at meetings
- review the oversight procedures

Administrative

Finding 1:

As of the date of the monitoring visit January 20, 2021 the school had not drawn down any of their federal fund allocations.

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Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.305.

Required Action:

The school must establish and maintain effective internal control over federal awards that ensures compliance with federal statutes and regulations. It is recommended that federal funds drawdowns be made on a monthly basis but never less than quarterly.

Finding 2:

On several occasions, the school failed to issue a purchase order prior to goods being purchased or services being rendered (confirming order). School policy and state regulations require that a properly executed purchase order be issued prior to the purchase of goods or the rendering of services.

Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.300; N.J.S.A. 18A:18A(2)(v) Public School Contracts Law.

Required Action:

The school must issue purchase orders to all vendors prior to goods or services being provided.

Finding 3:

On several occasions, the school did not obtain multiple quotes for purchases as required by New Jersey Public School Contracts Law (PSCL) and school policy.

Citation:

N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-37 Award of purchases, contracts or agreements.

Required Action:

The school must comply with current N.J.S.A. 18A:18A(2)(v) Public School Contracts Law.

Finding 4:

The amounts appropriated for several federal grants in the school's accounting records could not be reconciled with corresponding amounts awarded in the Electronic Web Enabled Grant system (EWEG).

Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.300

Required Action:

The school must implement a process to ensure that amounts awarded through a grant are recorded appropriately in the financial records.

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Finding 5:

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

Finding 6:

The school was not approving employees charged to federal grants by board resolution. Board minutes should include information such as funding grant, account number, position, annual/funded salary and percentage charged.

Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.300

Required Action:

The school should update its internal controls to ensure that the board minutes contain accurate and complete information.

Finding 7:

The school charged several expenditures related to federal grants to incorrect general ledger codes. For example, computers used for instruction, were charged to non-instructional supplies in the general ledger.

Citation:

Uniform Minimum Chart of Accounts for New Jersey Public Schools

Required Action:

The school must charge expenditures to the appropriate general ledger account in accordance with the Uniform Minimum Chart of Accounts for New Jersey Public Schools.

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 (609) 376-3593 or via email at steven.hoffmann@doe.nj.gov.