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Achieve Community Charter School
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New Jersey K to 12 Education

Collaborative Monitoring Report
August 2020

District: Achieve Community Charter School
County: Essex
Dates On-Site: March 12 and 13, 2020
Case #: FM-001-20

Funding Sources

Program	Funding Award
Title I, Part A	\$194,071
IDEA Basic	47,874
IDEA Preschool	1,298
Total Funds	<u>\$243,243</u>

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Background

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

Introduction

The NJDOE visited the Achieve Community Charter School to monitor the schools use of federal funds and the related program plans, where applicable, to determine whether the schools 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, IDEA Basic and Preschool for the period July 1, 2019 through February 29, 2020.

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 school policies and procedures. The monitoring team members also conducted interviews with school personnel, reviewed the supporting documentation for a sample of expenditures and conducted internal control reviews.

Expenditures Reviewed

The grants reviewed included Title I, IDEA Basic and Preschool from July 1, 2019 through February 29, 2020. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries was taken from each program reviewed.

General District Overview of Uses of Federal Funds

Title I Projects

The district is using its fiscal year 2019-2020 Title I funds to implement a targeted assistance program. Primarily, the district provides supplemental instructional opportunities through push-in and pull-out programs.

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IDEA Projects (Special Education)

The FY 2020 IDEA Basic funds are being used to purchase instructional supplies and professional development.

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

Title I

Finding 1:

The school did not provide evidence of a Title I parent and family engagement policy, and the school did not provide evidence that the school-parent compact was developed in collaboration with parents.

Citation:

ESEA §1116(a)(2): Parent and Family Engagement (Written Policy); ESEA §1116(b): Parent and Family Engagement (School Parent and Family Engagement Policy). ESEA §1116(d): Parent and Family Engagement (Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement).?

Required Action:

The school must provide copies to NJDOE for review of the written parent and family engagement policy, along with evidence that stakeholders participated in the development of the policy and the school-parent compact.

Finding 2:

The school did not provide evidence of distributing the ELL parent notification letter to the parents of the school's identified English learners. Parents must be notified within 30 days of the start of the school year if their child has been identified as limited English proficient and in need of English language instructional services. Schools are also required to provide information to parents of participating students in a language that is understandable and in a uniform format, and to the extent practicable in a language that the parents understand.

Citation:

ESEA §1112(e)(3)(4): Local Educational Agency Plans (Parents Right-to-Know)

Required Action:

The school must provide a copy of its ELL parent notification letter to the NJDOE for review. Information regarding [ELL parent notification requirements](https://www.nj.gov/education/bilingual/title3/accountability/notification/) may be found at: <https://www.nj.gov/education/bilingual/title3/accountability/notification/>. Additionally, the school must have all required documents translated into a language that is understandable to the parents of the students served. The documents that must be in multiple languages are the District/School Parent and Family Engagement Policy, Parent-School Compact, Title I and ELL Parent Notification Letter, and the Parents' Right to Know Letter, at a minimum.

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Finding 3:

The school did not provide evidence of established entrance and exit criteria used to determine Title I student eligibility. The monitors were unable to verify the process used to select and serve Title I students.

Citation:

ESEA §1115: Targeted Assistance Schools.

Required Action:

The school must establish entrance and exit criteria and a tracking mechanism for proper Title I student identification. This mechanism must include documentation of the use of multiple, educationally related, objective criteria to identify students for eligibility to receive Title I services.

Finding 4:

The school did not submit evidence of notification letters sent to the parents/guardians of identified Title I students. The parents/guardians of identified Title I students must be informed of the multiple educationally related criteria used to identify their child/children for Title I services.

Citations:

ESEA §1115: Targeted Assistance Schools; ESEA §1118(c): Parental Involvement (Policy Involvement).

Required Action:

Parent notification letters must include clearly defined entrance and exit criteria. The school must provide a copy of its parent notification letter for 2020-2021 to the NJDOE for review.

IDEA (Special Education)

IDEA Grant

There were no findings with the IDEA grant.

IDEA Program

Finding 1:

The school did not consistently provide parents of students referred and/or eligible for special education and related services notice of a meeting for eligibility and IEP team meetings.

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 Action:

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,

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the school must conduct training for child study team members 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 the provision of notice of a meeting for meetings conducted between December 2020 and March 2021, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 2:

The 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 for 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 Action:

The school must ensure identification meetings are conducted within 20 calendar days of receipt of a written request for 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 from meetings conducted between December 2020 and March 2021, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 3:

The school did not consistently conduct reevaluations within three years of previous classification date for students referred for special education and related services.

Citation:

N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.8(a)

Required Action:

The school must ensure reevaluations are conducted within required timelines. 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 listed above. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct a site visit to interview staff, review documentation of eligibility meetings held as part of the reevaluation process between December 2020 and March 2021, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 4:

The school did not consistently conduct all required sections of the functional assessment as a component of initial evaluations for students referred for special education and related services. Initial evaluation reports did not contain observations in a non-testing setting.

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).

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Required Action:

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 develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. The school is referred to the sample report form for speech-language evaluations which is located on the [Special Education Legal Protections and Responsibilities](https://www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form/) webpage: <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 December 2020 and March 2021, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 5:

The school did not consistently convene meetings with required participants for students referred and/or eligible for special education and related 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 Action:

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 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 December 2020 and March 2021, and to review the oversight procedures.

Administrative

Finding 1:

The school did not comply with all 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 school must ensure that split-funded employees submit personal activity reports on a monthly basis, as required.

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Finding 2:

As of the date of the monitoring visit (March 12, 2020), the school had not filed or paid their New Jersey TPAF and FICA reimbursement for FY 2018-2019. The report and payment was due October 1, 2019.

Citation:

N.J.S.A. 18A:66-90.

Required Action:

The school must file and remit funds due for the 2018/2019 New Jersey TPAF and FICA reimbursement. Future reimbursements must be filed timely.

Finding 3:

The board minutes contained - for fully and partially funded employees - some but not all the required information such as grant, account number, position, annual/funded salary and percentage charged.

Citation:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302.

Required Action:

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

Finding 4:

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

Citations:

Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302; N.J.S.A. 18A:18A(2)(v) Public School Contracts Law.

Required Action:

Purchase orders should be issued to all vendors prior to goods or services being provided.

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.