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Orange Public Schools

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New Jersey K to 12 Education

Collaborative Monitoring Report May 2025

District:	Orange Public Schools
County:	Essex
Dates Monitored:	January 7, 8, 9 and 10, 2025
Case Number:	CM-04-25

Funding Sources:

Funding Award Program 2,945,134 Title I, Part A Title I SIA 75,000 Title II, Part A 260,762 Title III 231,203 Title III Immigrant 52,563 Title IV, Part A 173,525 IDEA Part B, Basic and Preschool 1,698,176 Perkins V 86,749 **Total Funds** 5,523,112

Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other Federal education laws require local education agencies (LEAs - school districts and charter schools) to provide programs and services to schools within their local jurisdiction. The provision of these programs and services is based on the pertinent authorizing statutes specified in each of the Federal education laws.

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 subrecipients. The monitors thereby determine whether the funds are being properly used by the district for their intended purposes and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

Introduction

The NJDOE visited the Orange Public Schools (OPS or district) virtually, except where noted, to monitor the district's use of Federal funds. The NJDOE also examined related program plans, as applicable, to determine whether the district'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 requirements of each program, Federal and state laws, and applicable regulations. The monitoring of OPS included staff interviews, as well as the review of documents and records related to the requirements of these programs:

- Title I, Part A (Title I);
- Title I SIA;
- Title II, Part A (Title II-A);
- Title III, Part A (Title III);
- Title III Immigrant;
- Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A);
- IDEA Part B Basic and Preschool; and
- Perkins V.

The scope of work performed included the review of records and documentation such as:

- accounting records
- annual audits
- board of education (board) meeting minutes
- grant applications program plans and needs assessments
- grant awards
- payroll records

• purchase orders

The scope of work also included interviews with appropriate district staff regarding the administration of the aforementioned programs/grants. In addition, a sampling of computing devices and equipment purchased with Federal funds was selected and physically examined without exception.

Expenditures Reviewed

The grants and programs reviewed included Title I, Title I SIA, Title II-A, Title III, Title III Immigrant, Title IV-A, IDEA Basic, IDEA Preschool and Perkins V from July 1, 2024 through November 27, 2024. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries and wages was selected from each program and reviewed for examination.

General Overview of Used of Federal Funds

Title I, Part A Projects

The purpose of Title I is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.

OPS is a PreK–12 school district and operates schoolwide programs in each of its eleven (11) Title I funded schools. In FY 2025, the district is using its Title I funds for the following:

- 1. increased learning time;
- 2. extended day/year programs;
- 3. professional development;
- 4. parent and family engagement activities;
- 5. social-emotional learning;
- 6. college and career readiness, and
- 7. STEM¹.

Title I SIA Projects

The School Improvement Award (SIA) is allocated to districts with schools identified as needing comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), targeted support and improvement (TSI), or additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI). SIA is used exclusively for resources that are necessary to implement evidence-based practices, as defined by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes, as reflected in studies with strong, moderate, or promising evidence of effectiveness.

¹ The acronym "STEM" stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

OPS has SIA funds for one school designated as ATSI and carryover for one school formerly designated as ATSI. FY 2025 SIA funds are budgeted for supplemental literacy resources and personnel, and related materials and supplies, to implement evidence-based extended learning opportunities, climate and culture initiatives and professional development.

Title II-A Projects

The purpose of Title II-A is to:

- 1. increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards;
- 2. improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals and other school leaders;
- 3. increase the number of teachers, principals and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and
- 4. provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals and other school leaders.

OPS uses its Title II-A funds to provide high-quality, personalized professional development which includes effective instructional leadership for all educators. Programs to teach students with disabilities and multilingual learners are also implemented with Title II-A funding.

Title III Projects

The purposes of the Title III, Part A and Title III, Immigrant program include the following:

- help ensure that multilingual learners (MLs), including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English;
- 2. assist all English learners, including immigrant children and youth, to achieve high levels in academic subjects so that all MLs can meet the same challenging, State academic standards that all children are expected to meet;
- 3. assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs designed to assist in teaching MLs, including immigrant children and youth;
- assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, and local educational agencies to develop and enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional programs designed to prepare MLs, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all English instructional settings; and
- 5. promote parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of MLs.

Note: The term multilingual learner is synonymous with "English learner" or "English language learner." Sources which are cited from the United States Department of Education may still reference the use of the term English learner or EL. The NJDOE recognizes that multilingual learners may enter New Jersey's schools with a level of proficiency in a world language other than English. The NJDOE will use "Multilingual Learner" and "ML," respectively, to shift to asset-based language and honor a student's primary language.

In FY 2025, OPS is using its Title III funds for the following:

- Enhancing effective language instruction educational programs (LIEPs).
- Professional development for content area knowledge development in English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science and facilitation of Adult English as a Second Language classes.

Title III Immigrant Projects

The purposes of the Title III Immigrant program include:

- 1. family literacy, parent and family outreach, and training activities designed to assist parents and families to become active participants in the education of their children;
- recruitment of, and support for, personnel, including teachers and paraprofessionals who have been specifically trained, or are being trained, to provide services to immigrant children and youth;
- 3. provision of tutorials, mentoring, and academic or career counseling for immigrant children and youth;
- 4. identification, development, and acquisition of curricular materials, educational software, and technologies to be used in the program carried out with awarded funds;
- 5. basic instructional services that are directly attributable to the presence of immigrant children and youth in the local educational agency involved, including the payment of costs of providing additional classroom supplies, costs of transportation, or such other costs as are directly attributable to such additional basic instructional services;
- 6. other instructional services that are designed to assist immigrant children and youth to achieve in elementary schools and secondary schools in the United States, such as programs of introduction to the educational system and civics education; and
- 7. activities, coordinated with community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, private sector entities, or other entities with expertise in working with immigrants, to assist parents and families of immigrant children and youth by offering comprehensive community services.

In FY 2025, OPS is using its Title III Immigrant funds for Family literacy and a Bilingual Outreach Team to assist families/students in assimilating to the educational environment and providing access to resources.

Title IV-A Projects

The purpose of Title IV-A is to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of LEAs to:

- 1. provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;
- 2. improve school conditions for student learning; and
- 3. improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

OPS uses its Title IV-A funds primarily for supporting students in dual enrollment programs and college and career preparation, as well as supporting the social and emotional needs of their students. The district has a monthly bullying awareness program and a Transition Counselor that provides programming focused on drug and violence prevention. In addition, the district provided their Digital Art classes with Wacom tablets to support the specialized curriculum.

IDEA

The purpose of the IDEA grant is to provide Federal entitlement funds to assist with the excess costs of providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. FY 2025 IDEA Basic funds are being used to reduce district tuition costs for students receiving special educational services in out-of-district settings. Preschool funds are being used to purchase instructional supplies, software, and equipment for students with disabilities. In addition, Preschool funds are being used to provide professional development for staff and to cover the costs of contracts with approved related service providers, as well as field trips that support specialized instruction.

PERKINS V

Perkins V is a Federal education program that invests in secondary and postsecondary career and technical education (CTE) programs. It is dedicated to increasing learner access to high-quality CTE programs of study with a focus on program improvement; alignment across grades 5–12, postsecondary and workforce; and economic development.

The NJDOE Office of Career Readiness (OCR) approved the district to operate programs of study (POS) at OPS under the following Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Codes:

CTE Program Name	CIP Code	OCR Effective Dates as POS
Amination, Interactive Technology, Video Graphics and Special Effects	100304	May 27, 2019
Health Services/Allied Health/Health Sciences, General Health Science	510000	December 16, 2020
Arts, Audio-Video Technology & Communications	500409	January 2, 2024
Culinary Arts/Chef Training	120503	March 5, 2024
Entrepreneurship/Entrepreneurial Studies	520701	March 5, 2024
Cosmetology/Cosmetologist, General Human Services	120401	October 15, 2024

The department approved the district to expend the award primarily for:

- 1. various instructional supplies;
- 2. payroll costs associated with middle school career exploration, work-based learning (WBL) and family engagement;
- 3. student field trips;
- 4. teacher professional development;
- 5. student technical skills assessments;
- 6. student tuition; and
- 7. site licenses.

The district is expending its FY 2025 Perkins V award in a manner consistent with these approved uses.

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

The Detailed Findings and Recommendations are disaggregated into the following sections:

- 1. Multiple Grants Section findings necessitating correction, or the reversal of charges due to the lack of adequate supporting documentation, for multiple grants.
- 2. Grant Specific Programmatic and Fiscal Section findings directly attributable to the Federal awards covered during the monitoring. The programmatic findings precede the fiscal findings unless otherwise denoted by an asterisk (*).
- 3. Administrative Section crosscutting administrative findings may be found in this section.

Multiple Grants Section

Title I and Title I SIA

Finding 1:

An examination of the district's Account Analysis by Location (AABL) reports for Title I and Title I SIA disclosed that expenditures for the district's schools funded by these Federal awards were incorrectly recorded under account numbers which lack location or school codes. Expenditures clearly spent at the school-level are required to be recorded at the school-level and those incurred for central administrative functions are recorded at the district-level. The coding and reporting of personnel and non-personnel expenditures impacts the Federal funds used to calculate the per-pupil expenditure figures that must be included on state and local report cards.

Also, unique subcodes are not being used to track the Title I reserves for parent and family engagement, and students experiencing homelessness. Amounts expended for these set-asides must be used for allowable program activities and accounted for separately to enhance the district's ability to monitor unexpended balances, which may be carried forward, provided the funds are spent for their intended purpose or returned to the state.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1111(h)(1)(C)(x) State Plans: Reports, Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302(b)(3) Financial management and The Uniform Minimum Chart of Accounts for New Jersey Public Schools and Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (UMCOA)

Required Action(s):

The district is required to implement procedures to ensure:

- the proper recording of expenditures in its accounting records and accuracy of fiscal information used for school level reporting as required under ESEA; and
- 2. reserves are accounted for separately.

Grant Specific Programmatic and Fiscal Section

Title I

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Title I programs yielded no programmatic findings, and fiscal findings which are addressed in the Multiple Grants Section and more broadly, in the Administrative Section.

Title I SIA

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Title I SIA programs yielded no programmatic findings, and fiscal findings which are addressed in the Multiple Grants Section and more broadly, in the Administrative Section.

Title II-A

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Title II-A programs yielded no programmatic findings, and fiscal findings which are addressed below and more broadly, in the Administrative Section.

Finding 1:

The district was asked to provide accounting and payroll records to support the compensation paid to staff members with Federal funds on payroll dates selected for testing. The district posted payroll costs to AABL reports that are not substantiated by timesheets, summarized as follows:

Payroll Dates	Employee	Amount
8/15/2024	G. Facchini	240
9/13/2024	G. Facchini	2,760
Total		3,000

In regard to the \$240 figure shown, the district paid the employee for 167 hours at an hourly board-approved rate of \$40, but only furnished timesheets to support 161 hours. No timesheets were furnished to support the employee's subsequent payment of \$2,760, in whole or in part.

Timesheets or pay forms must be completed by employees paid on an hourly or per diem basis. In addition, timesheets must reflect what grant-funded staff are doing, as well as when and where they are working. This documentation is necessary to verify that grant funded staff are performing activities allowable under each Federal award. To this end, copies of weekly schedules or job descriptions should also be affixed to semi-annual certifications when utilized.

Timesheets or pay forms should include at a minimum, the account number, payroll period, beginning/ending times, dates or days worked, number of hours/days, activities performed and the hourly or per diem rate.

Pursuant to the Uniform Grant Guidance, charges to Federal awards for salaries and wages must be, among other things:

- 1. necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the Federal award;
- 2. adequately documented; and
- 3. based on records that accurately reflect the work performed.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §§200.430(i) Standards for Documentation of Personnel Expenses and 200.403(g) Factors affecting allowability of costs

Required Action(s):

The district is required to upload timesheets to substantiate the Title II-A payroll costs of \$3,000. These records must be submitted to the Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) via the Collaborative Federal Monitoring (CFM) Homeroom Application within thirty (30) days from the issuance of this report of examination (ROE).

Otherwise, the district must upload a revised AABL report evidencing the reversal of Title II-A payroll costs totaling \$3,000 within the same timeframe.

Finding 2:

In FY 2025, the district issued PO 25-01675 to Inspo Consulting & Solutions LLC in the amount of \$1,995 for Part I of Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying (HIB) Compliance training. The use of Title II-A funds for training mandated by New Jersey's Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act is not allowable. In the absence of Federal funds, the district would have otherwise provided the same training with state or local resources in accordance with state law and the district's professional development plan.

Pursuant to ESEA legislation, Title II-A funds must be used to pay for the costs of additions or enhancements that supplement allowable program activities.

Citation(s):

ESEA §2301 Supplement, not Supplant and Uniform Grant Guidance and Subpart E – Cost Principles 2 C.F.R. §200.403 Factors affecting allowability of costs

Required Action(s):

The district is required to upload a revised AABL evidencing the reversal of PO 25-01675 in the amount of \$1,995 via the CFM Homeroom Application within thirty (days) from the date of this ROE.

Title III

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Title III programs yielded the following programmatic findings, and no fiscal findings:

Finding 1:

The district did not provide training for special education, bilingual-endorsed, and ESL-endorsed teachers who work with MLs with disabilities on how disabilities affect language acquisition. District staff indicated they intend on hold weekly meetings between the Bilingual/English as a Second Language and Special Services departments following the monitoring.

Citation(s):

ESEA §3115(c)(2) Subgrants To Eligible Entities: Required Subgrantee Activities

Required Action(s):

As part of the submission of its corrective action plan (CAP), the district must submit evidence that special education, Bilingual-endorsed, and ESL-endorsed teachers who work with MLs with disabilities will receive professional development on how disabilities affect language acquisition. This evidence can include a training/professional development plan, staff member job titles to be trained, proposed agendas, training materials, and sign-in sheets.

Recommended Action(s):

The department may wish to use <u>English Language Proficiency Screening for Students</u> <u>with Disabilities</u> and <u>Supporting all Multilingual Learners</u> as a component of the departmental meetings that will commence.

Finding 2:

The district did not have a written process to identify criteria that qualify its translation personnel.

Citation(s):

ESEA §3115(a)(1) Subgrants to Eligible Entities: Purposes of Subgrants

Required Action(s):

As part of the submission of its CAP, the district must submit the process used to qualify personnel used for translation purposes.

Title III Immigrant

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Title III Immigrant programs yielded no programmatic findings, and fiscal findings which are addressed more broadly, in the Administrative Section.

Title IV-A

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Title IV-A programs yielded no programmatic findings, and fiscal findings which are addressed below and more broadly, in the Administrative Section.

IDEA

The review of the district's 2024-2025 IDEA programs yielded no programmatic findings, and fiscal findings which are addressed more broadly, in the Administrative Section.

Perkins V

The review of the district's 2024-2025 Perkins V programs yielded no programmatic findings or fiscal findings.

Administrative Section

Finding 1:

The district submitted board policies for examination which address certain Uniform Grant Guidance provisions. Some of the policies omitted relevant Uniform Grant Guidance (UGG) citations (e.g., district's policy on travel) or lacked mention of pertinent requirements.

Moreover, the district did not submit the following written procedures:

- Mandatory Disclosures requires OPS to promptly disclose, in writing to the Federal awarding agency or to NJDOE, all violations of Federal criminal law except for the requirement to disclose conflict of interest violations.
- Written cost allowability procedures necessary to implement the district's cost allowability policy. To be compliant, such procedures cannot simply reiterate the Federal requirements or policies or goals.

Rather, the procedures should be robust and clearly identify roles and responsibilities. They should also provide a series of steps to be followed for determining the allowability of costs in accordance with Federal cost principles and the terms and conditions of the Federal award. Steps that—

- o offer a detailed description of activities;
- describe the process used throughout the entire grant life cycle, including the proper submission of applications and amendments in accordance with department instructions; and
- serve as guide and training tool for employees.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §§200.112 Conflict of interest, 200.113 Mandatory disclosures, 200.302(b)(6)-(7) Financial management, 200.334 Record retention requirements and 2 C.F.R. §§200.400 – 200.476 Subpart E - Cost Principles

Required Action(s):

The district must develop, revise, adopt and implement board policies and written procedures which address the requirements of the Uniform Grant Guidance, and include relevant citations and references to current legislation, where appropriate. The district may opt to utilize a vendor for the preparation and revision of the requisite board policies and procedures.

Finding 2:

The district did not post its entire Title I allocation as anticipated revenues, nor the dates and dollar amounts of funds received via reimbursements, on its Title I Revenue Report.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302 Financial management

Required Action(s):

The district must implement a process to ensure the dollar amount of all Federal grants are recorded appropriately in its financial records, including Revenue Reports.

Finding 3:

On a few occasions, the district failed to issue a purchase order prior to goods being purchased or services being rendered (confirming order). State regulations require that a *properly executed* purchase order be issued *prior* to the purchase of goods or the rendering of services.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.302(b)(4) Financial management and N.J.S.A. 18A:18A(2)(v) Definitions: Purchase Order

Required Action(s):

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

Finding 4:

A number of purchase orders were examined during the monitoring with dollar amounts equal to or greater than \$25,000. Such purchase orders meet one of a number of definitions of a covered transaction in 2 C.F.R. §180.220. Before entering into covered transactions, these regulations require the district to determine whether the vendor is not debarred, suspended, or otherwise excluded from or ineligible for participation in Federal assistance programs or activities. The covered transactions tested lacked any indication that verifications of this nature are being performed. Verifications may be accomplished by:

- 1. checking the System Award Management (SAM) Exclusions maintained by the General Services Administration and available at SAM.gov | Home;
- 2. collecting a certification from the entity; or
- 3. adding a clause or condition to the covered transaction with that entity (2 C.F.R. section 180.300).

Copies of written evidence demonstrating performance of the requisite verifications must be maintained. In addition to items 1 and 2 above, other examples of evidence include printouts of search results from SAM, imprints from an ink stamp, or Avery labels affixed to purchase orders memorializing performance of this verification.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.214 Suspension and debarment

Required Action(s):

The district is required to implement procedures to confirm vendors are neither debarred, nor suspended prior to entering into purchase orders or contracts equal to or in excess of \$25,000. In addition, the district must maintain written records evidencing performance of these verifications on file for monitoring and audit purposes.

Finding 5:

A number of purchase order voucher packets were selected and examined during monitoring. The district was unable to provide evidence that bids or quotes were obtained for various purchase orders (POs). Examples include but are not limited to PO numbers 25-00457 and 25-01338. These POs exceeded the threshold necessitating bids and quotes in accordance with:

- 1. the New Jersey Public School Contracts Law (PSCL) and district policy; or
- 2. procurement standards under Uniform Grant Guidance.

When the Federal and state legislation and regulations governing procurement are in conflict, the most restrictive prevails. Federal procurement standards do not include all exemptions allowed under the PSCL, specifically, professional services.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §§200.317 - 327 Procurement Standards and N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-37(a) Award of purchases, contracts or agreement

Required Action(s):

The district must adhere to the PSCL or applicable provisions of the Uniform Grant Guidance, whichever is most restrictive, when obtaining goods and services.

Finding 6:

The district was unable to furnish board of education meeting minutes resolving to approve the award of certain contracts in excess of the bid threshold as required by state statute. Specifically, the district did not provide minutes evidencing the board's authorization for the placement of special education students in approved private schools for students with disabilities.

Citation(s):

N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-4 Contract awarded by board of education resolution; disqualification conditions

Required Action(s):

The district must ensure every contract for the provision or performance of any goods or services in which the aggregate cost exceeds the bid threshold are awarded only by board resolution.

Finding 7:

After notification of its virtual monitoring visit, the district opted not submit to reimbursement requests for a number of grants or certain expenditures in the event the department required the reversal of unallowable costs. The district is reminded to submit reimbursement requests on a monthly basis.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.305 Federal Payment and <u>NJDOE Policies and</u> <u>Procedures for Reimbursement of Federal and Other Grant Expenditures</u>

Required Action(s):

The district is required to submit reimbursement requests on a monthly basis. In addition, the district is responsible for maintaining supporting documentation for seven (7) years and for making it available to the NJDOE, the United States Department of Education, and/or their authorized representatives upon request.

Advisory Notice

Preventing Improper Use of Taxpayer Funds

Pursuant to ESEA §9203(1), each recipient of a grant or subgrant under ESEA must display, in a public place, the hotline contact information of the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Education (USDEOIG) so that any individual who observes, detects, or suspects improper use of taxpayer funds can easily report such improper use.

Federal guidance relating to the prevention of fraud is accessible from <u>USDEOIG Brochures</u>; scroll past multiple tables to the Brochures, Flyers & Posters (Download Free) section. Use this link, <u>For K–12: Preventing Fraud and Corruption in Federal Education (2021)</u>, to access a video training presentation.

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

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa D. McCormick via phone at (609) 376-3608 or via email at <u>lisa.mccormick@doe.nj.gov</u>.