

**THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION MONITORING**

District: Estell Manor School District

Monitoring Dates: May 10, 2005

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2003 - 2004 school years, the Estell Manor School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Estell Manor School District with an opportunity to evaluate strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment;
- The protection of procedural safeguards for students and their families;
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and,
- The organization and delivery of programs and services resulting in positive student outcomes.

The self-assessment was designed to identify areas of strength, promising practices, areas that need improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Estell Manor School District developed an improvement plan to address the identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a comprehensive desk audit, held a public focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Estell Manor School on May 10, 2005 to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of identified need.

District Strengths:

The Estell Manor School District is commended for providing a variety of programs for students such as; Problem Solving Group which is facilitated by the school psychologist. The group consists of students who like to participate in discussions, games, crafts and other activities in an effort to solve school related problems. The purpose of this group is to allow the students to aid each other in solving problems in a secure, confidential environment.

The district has a Social Skills Group which provides the services of group counseling in the area of self-esteem and social skills development to students. Groups are coordinated based on each individual's emotional and educational development. Some of the social skills addressed include increasing self-esteem, recognizing one's own

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strengths, friendship development skills, respect for self and others, anger management and conflict resolution.

The district has developed a new program this year called Reading and Math Helpers. Students are grouped according to grade levels and meet for one hour after school, once a week to assist students who need help in reading or math.

Part One Data Summary:

The data submitted by the Estell Manor School District as a result of the self-assessment process indicated 53.3% of student are placed in general education more then 80% of the day which is higher then the state average of 41.9%. The district's classification rate is 14.40% which is lower then the state average of 16.57%.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with all Standards:

Free Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Individual Education Plan, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during the self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of professional development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district implemented the improvement plan prior to the desk audit.

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

Section III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, written notice, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of content of notice of meeting. The district's plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected child find procedures prior to the desk audit.

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

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Section IV. Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of vision and hearing screenings. The district's plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected vision and hearing screenings procedures prior to the desk audit.

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

Section V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports signed and dated and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of acceptance and rejection of reports. The district's plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected acceptance and rejection of reports prior to the desk audit.

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

Section VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility and signature of agreement/disagreement and rationale.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to meeting. The district's plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected copy of evaluation reports to parents ten day prior to a meeting prior to the desk audit.

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

Section: XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicted compliance in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of documentation to case managers. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected documentation to case managers prior to the desk audit.

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

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SUMMARY

A desk audit for special education monitoring was conducted in the Estell Manor School District on May 10, 2005. The purpose of the desk audit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify all areas of need originally identified in the self-assessment. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address all areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, all of the identified areas were determined to be compliant as part of the desk audit. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas that were determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of district data indicated that the district's average is lower than the state average for classification and higher than the state average for placement in general education settings. The district provides appropriate programs and services, with the majority of students with disabilities in general education programs.

A focus group meeting was held prior to the desk audit and parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. They were pleased with the accessibility of the child study team and student's access to general education programs. Parents felt their students were receiving a high quality of education.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Free Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Individual Education Plan, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Student Records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the desk audit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, surrogate parents, consent, written notice, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, meeting participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, signature of agreement/disagreement rationale, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative education setting and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development, notice of meetings, vision and hearing screenings, acceptance and rejection of reports, copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to meeting and documentation to case managers. Although these areas were initially identified as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has brought about correction in all areas.

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No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit. The improvement plan submitted in June 2004 will be forwarded to the county office for final approval and, since the plan was implemented prior to the monitoring activities, no further action by the district with regard to the plan is necessary at this time.