

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Galloway Township School District

County: Atlantic

Monitoring Dates: April 22, 23, and 24, 2002

Monitoring Team: Caryl Carthew, Julia Harmelin, Patricia Fair, Arlene Popovici, Ken Richards, and Jane Marano

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Galloway Township School District conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Galloway Township School District with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free, 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 Galloway Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Reed Road School on April 16, 2002. This information was used in addition to the self-assessment document to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, the NJDOE team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals and vice principals, general education and special education teachers, child study team members, and parents.

District Strengths:

The district sponsors a number of innovative school-wide programs including: a Child Care program that operates before and after school hours; the AIM/Challenge program,

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that provides after-school remedial instruction utilizing a project-based approach; and an extensive counseling program for students, including monthly psychiatric services.

The district has implemented the Fast ForWord program for students with weaknesses in phonemic awareness. The district is commended for the commitment of both time and resources in the training and implementation of this highly individualized program.

In preparation for IEP meetings, the child study team members provide parents with a pre-meeting questionnaire that asks for their input regarding student strengths and weaknesses, as well as projected goals for the coming year. Interviews with district personnel and parents indicate that this process has enhanced IEP development and has made the process more collaborative.

In 2001, the Reeds Road Elementary School was recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education as a Star School. This school's philosophy of Character Education is infused into the Core Curriculum Content Standards and supports the vision of developing respect, compassion, honesty, responsibility, and fairness. The school operates a number of innovative programs based on this philosophy including: Goodwill Ambassadors who are assigned to new students to facilitate school adjustment; the DeBug program that helps students resolve conflicts; Project HOPE (Helping Others through Public Education) which is a series of altruistic community outreach projects; and an Anti-Bullying Program.

Rogers Elementary School operates a number of innovative programs in addition to the school-wide initiatives, including: a mentoring program that pairs elementary students with high school varsity athletes, and motivational programs, such as "Brag Board Lunch", where teachers nominate students to have lunch with the school principal as a reward for academic and behavioral achievements.

Galloway Middle School operates its own TV studio. Students learn about producing and editing TV programs. In addition, students broadcast morning announcements for the building.

The district is further commended for its commitment to establishing programs that address the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of special education policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of parent and professional development. Although the district's improvement plan did not identify a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of staff development efforts, on-site monitoring indicated that the district has a successful mechanism in place. Therefore, the district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

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

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of related services, length of school day/year, oversight of IEP implementation, and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, transfer procedures, and adaptive PE. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding facilities and goals and objectives for extended school year. The county office has been notified of this situation.

Area of Need:

Extended School Year – During the on-site visit, a review of IEPs indicated that IEPs do not include a description of the ESY program nor do they include goals and objectives that will be addressed during the ESY program.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs include a description of the ESY program and goals and objectives when they differ from those developed for the regular school year. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent and the provision of independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notice of a meeting, meetings, and native language. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding components of notice of a meeting and written notice of eighth grade transition IEPs.

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Areas of Need:

Notice of a Meeting – During the on-site monitoring, a review of student records indicated that notice of an IEP meeting does not include the statement that the parent has the right to invite other individuals with knowledge or expertise regarding the student.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notice of an IEP meeting contains all the required components. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Written Notice of Eighth Grade Transition IEPs – During the on-site monitoring, a review of student records and interviews with district personnel indicate that two IEPs are developed for eighth grade students. One IEP is considered the annual review IEP and utilizes Galloway's IEP format. The other IEP is an IEP for services that will be provided by the receiving school district as of July 1st. This IEP is developed with a representative from the receiving district and utilizes the receiving school district's IEP format. Galloway provides written notice of both IEPs. Because Galloway may only provide notice of an IEP for which it has the responsibility to implement, the practice of providing notice for the receiving district's IEP is inappropriate.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides written notice of only those IEPs for which it has the responsibility to implement. The plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. It is recommended the district develop one IEP, with input from the receiving school district, that spans a 12-month period of time and includes programs and services that will be provided to the student through June by the sending district and into the next school year by the receiving school district. This IEP must include all required components including graduation and transition requirements. In the event the receiving district is in disagreement with that IEP, after July 1st, they have the ability to reconvene the IEP meeting, develop another IEP, and provide the parent with appropriate written notice.**

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find for preschool, direct referrals from parents and staff, summer referrals, health summary, and vision/hearing screenings for school-aged students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the referral process. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address this issue because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component. The district further

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identified concerns regarding the overrepresentation of minority students in special education. The district will continue to receive technical assistance from the Office of Special Education Programs and the Office for Civil Rights regarding improvement plan activities.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding Child Find for school-aged and nonpublic students and procedures for preschool referrals.

Areas of Need:

Child Find for School-Aged Students – During the on-site, it was determined through interviews and document review that the district does not provide information to parents of school-aged students in the public and nonpublic sectors about procedures for making referrals to the child study team.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides child find information to parents of students in the public and nonpublic sectors. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Preschool Referrals – During the on-site visit, a review of student records and interviews with school personnel indicate that when children are referred for a preschool evaluation, procedures differ for students who are already enrolled in the district's preschool program and for students who are referred from outside sources. Though the district enrolled student referrals are addressed appropriately, the other students are not. For these students, the district does not convene an identification meeting within 20 days of the referral, nor is there a regular education teacher in attendance when these meetings are conducted. Furthermore, at the time of the identification meeting, the team asks the parents about the student's vision and hearing instead of obtaining that information through a screening.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts an identification meeting with the required participants within 20 days of receipt of a preschool referral. The plan must also ensure the district conducts a vision and hearing screening for all students referred for an evaluation. The plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments, use of standardized assessments, and bilingual evaluations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of acceptance and rejection of reports. Although the district's improvement plan did not address this issue, an on-site review verified that this issue has been corrected.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding written reports and components of functional assessments for speech

Areas of Need:

Written Reports – During the on-site monitoring, a review of student records and interviews with district personnel indicate that child study team members and speech and language specialists are not dating their assessment reports.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure evaluation reports are dated. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Functional Assessment for Speech – During the on-site monitoring, a review of student records indicates that speech and language evaluations do not consistently include the following required components of a functional assessment: parent interviews, teacher interviews, student observations, and documentation of the educational impact of the speech problem from the classroom teacher.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech and language evaluations include all the required components of a functional assessment. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of procedures.**

VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of reevaluation timelines, parental consent, and reevaluation for students turning age five.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding reevaluation planning meetings for students eligible for speech and language services.

Area of Need:

Reevaluation Planning Meetings – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews with school personnel indicate that reevaluation planning meetings are not consistently conducted for students eligible for speech and language services. Instead, parents receive notice of the proposed reevaluation and consent is requested.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts reevaluation planning meetings with the**

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required participants for students eligible for speech and language services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings and eligibility criteria.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of concern regarding provision of written notice of eligibility within required timelines. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address this issue because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the statement of determination of eligibility and provision of speech evaluation reports to parents.

Areas of Need:

Determination of Eligibility – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews with district personnel indicate the district does not provide parents with a statement of eligibility.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents are provided with a copy of the statement of the determination of eligibility.**

Provision of Speech Evaluation Reports to Parents – During the on-site visit, a review of district procedures and interviews with speech and language specialists indicate that although written notice indicates the inclusion of a copy of the evaluation report, these reports are not consistently provided.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech evaluation reports are consistently provided to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

VIII. Individual Education Program

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP goals and objectives, IEP implementation dates, and teacher knowledge/access to IEPs.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of 90-day evaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue. The district further identified concerns regarding IEP meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address this issue because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding participation of the special education teacher at IEP meetings at the middle school level and provision of the IEP to parents prior to implementation.

Areas of Need:

Special Education Teachers at IEP Meetings – During the on-site visit, interviews with district personnel at the middle school level indicate that special education teachers are not consistently in attendance at IEP meetings. Staff members report that teachers may be asked to sign as participants even if they are not in attendance. Staff members indicate that difficulties obtaining substitute coverage contribute to this problem.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure special education teachers at the middle school level consistently attend IEP meetings. This plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Provision of the IEP to Parents – During the on-site monitoring, a review of district procedures, student records, and interviews with staff members indicate the district does not provide parents with a copy of the IEP prior to its implementation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs are provided to parents prior to program implementation. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of documentation of the Oberti considerations, provision of supplemental aids and services, and access to regular education programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding individualized decision-making, continuum of services, and participation in non-academic and extra-curricular activities. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

X. Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified themselves compliant in this area. This was verified by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site monitoring visit.

X. Transition from School to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of student interests and preferences.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding courses of study.

Areas of Need:

Courses of Study – During the on-site visit, a review of student IEPs indicates that the statement of transition service needs does not include the specific courses of study.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs identify specific courses of study as a part of the transition plan. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of discipline procedures, behavior intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, and manifestation determinations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of interim alternative educational settings. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address this issue because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of removals to case managers and suspension tracking.

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Areas of Need:

Documentation of Removals to Case Managers – During the on-site monitoring, a review of pupil discipline records and interviews with personnel indicate that although there is a procedure for notifying case managers each time a disciplinary removal occurs, this procedure is not implemented consistently.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include an administrative oversight component to ensure these notification procedures are implemented on a consistent basis.**

Suspension Tracking – During the on-site monitoring, interviews with school personnel indicate that the current system of collecting suspension data includes a computer database and maintenance of a discipline file with hard copies of discipline notices. Because information is not consistently entered into the database system, there is a discrepancy between the database and the hard copies of suspension notices. As a result, the tracking system currently in place cannot provide accurate information on a consistent basis.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district has a tracking system that provides current and accurate information regarding the removal of students with disabilities. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these procedures.**

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, and alternate assessments.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student participation in assessments and CST knowledge of content of statewide assessments. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

XIII. Graduation

Summary of Findings:

Although this district serves grades K-8 only, in-district students exiting grade 8 are provided with the opportunity to participate in graduation exercises. During the self-

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assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the lack of participation of students placed in out-of-district settings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

An additional area was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of graduation requirements in student IEPs.

Area of Need:

Graduation Requirements – During the on-site monitoring, a review of student records indicates that the IEPs for students who turn 14 do not consistently include a statement of graduation requirements.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs for students who turn 14 document the statement of graduation requirements. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range, and group size for speech therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of development of a description of the team teaching program. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue. The district further identified concerns regarding provision of CST time for case management, teacher consultation time, and provision of team teaching programs. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding homebound instruction.

Area of Need:

Homebound Instruction – During the on-site monitoring, a review of student records and interviews with district personnel indicate that county office approval is only requested if the district anticipates a program of home instruction will be implemented for more than 30 days.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district requests approval from the county office prior to implementing a program of home instruction. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent/adult student access to records, and procedures for maintenance and destruction of pupil records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of locations of other pupil records.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Locations – During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with district personnel indicate the district does not identify the location of other records maintained by the district in the central file.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district identifies the location of other records maintained by the district in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Galloway Township School District on April 22, 23, and 24, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. As a result of this review during self-assessment, the district was able to identify a number of areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is commended for the 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed satisfaction with many of the district's programs. They also expressed some concerns regarding the need for more parent education opportunities, the continuum of placement options, and the rate of staff turnover and the negative impact that has on the continuity of services. A number of the issues raised by parents in this forum had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included special education policies and procedures, length of school day and year, certification, consent, conducting independent evaluations, Child Find activities for preschool, direct referrals, summer referrals, conducting multi-disciplinary and bilingual assessments, reevaluation timelines, eligibility criteria, IEP goals and objectives, teacher access to IEPs, provision of supplemental aids and services, access to regular education programs, transition to preschool, determination of student interests and preferences, discipline procedures, development of behavior intervention plans, procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determinations, provision of accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, class size, age range, and pupil records procedures.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent development, extended school year, transfer procedures, adaptive PE, surrogate parents, notice of a meeting, native language, referral process, acceptance and/or rejection of outside assessments, timelines for written notice, initial evaluation timelines, attendance of regular education teachers at meetings, individualized decision-making, continuum of services, participation in non-academic and extra-curricular activities, procedures for interim alternative educational settings, participation in statewide assessments, need for team-teaching programs, and time for teacher consultation and CST case management duties.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding facilities, transition IEPs, Child Find activities for school-aged students, preschool referrals, functional assessments and reevaluation planning meetings for speech, eligibility determination statements, provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, courses of study, suspension tracking and notification to case manager of disciplinary referrals, county office approval, and documentation of locations of other pupil records.

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Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.