

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

District: Alloway Township School District **County:** Salem

Monitoring Dates: April 9, 10,11, 2001

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Ken Richards

Background Information

During the 1999 – 2000 school year, the Alloway Township School District conducted a self-assessment of polices, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Alloway Township School District with an opportunity to evaluate its 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 positive student outcome.

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 Alloway Township School District developed an improvement plan to address the identified areas.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring visit to verify the district's report of findings and address the appropriateness of the improvement plan and the progress made in implementing that plan.

Alloway Township School District held a focus group meeting for parents and community members on April 2, 2000. From this initial focus group meeting, areas were identified that would later be reviewed during the on-site visit. In addition to these areas, information from previous monitoring activities was available to the team and helped to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the New Jersey Department of Education monitoring team reviewed district documentation, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's child study team members, including the speech-language specialist, and the building principal. Input was also received from parents of students with disabilities. In addition, the district's school building was visited and both general and special education teachers were interviewed.

District compliance with the requirements of the individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the New Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) was assessed. Areas identified by the district as compliant were reviewed. Systemic areas of need are identified in the findings below.

District Strengths

The district provides several programs that include students with disabilities. The homework center is provided after school in a supervised setting for students needing assistance.

Project Assist is a reading program the district provides to students to improve and enhance student reading skills.

Canine therapy is a pilot program that allows students to interact with dogs in a therapeutic setting.

The district's LDT-C provides tutoring for students after school.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance In All Standards

Programs and Services, Reevaluation, and Graduation Requirements were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Summary of Findings:

I. General Provision

The Alloway Township School District adopted the Policies/Statement of Assurances required by the New Jersey Department of Education. The district has developed and updated procedures to implement policies as required by the Office of Special Education Programs. The district accurately identified compliance with submission of annual reports to the Office of Special Education Programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a need for additional staff development and training on a variety of special education issues.

Additional areas of need were identified during on-site monitoring regarding access to public information.

Areas of Need:

Access to Public Information – During the on-site monitoring process, interviews with staff indicate the district does not consistently make available to parents information regarding the district's eligibility under Part B of IDEA.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that upon receipt of a parental request, parents are provided with access to documents related to the district's eligibility under Part B of the IDEA.

Staff Development – Through the self-assessment process the district determined a need for additional staff development initiatives regarding modifications and adaptations of instructional strategies for students with disabilities in mainstream settings, Core Curriculum Content Standards, and behavioral interventions. On-site monitoring further identified the need for training on inclusion for all staff, including administrative staff.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include more specific activities for training staff and interim timelines for completion and follow-up activities to evaluate effectiveness of training.

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in length of school day, facilities, and extended school year programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the development of goals and objectives by related service staff and monitoring of the IEP.

Areas of Need:

IEP Monitoring – Through the self-assessment process, the district determined a need to develop procedures to ensure that IEPs are appropriately monitored throughout the school year, particularly in the area of modifications and accommodations specified in student IEPs. At the current time, report cards are the only method used to monitor the implementation of IEPs.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure effective monitoring of IEPs during the school year.

Related Services – Through the self-assessment process the district determined that related service staff and the adaptive physical education teacher do not consistently develop goals and short-term objectives to address needs identified in the IEP.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEP goals and objectives are developed for related services and Adaptive Physical Education.

Frequency and Duration – During on-site monitoring and record review, it was indicated that IEPs do not clearly identify the specific frequency and duration of related services.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that IEPs specify the duration and frequency of related services.

III. Procedural Safeguards

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of participants, independent evaluations and surrogate parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notice of a meeting. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding timelines, native language and notice of a meeting for students determined eligible for speech/language services.

Areas of Need:

Timelines – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews with staff indicate that identification meetings are not consistently held within 20 calendar days of receiving a written request for an evaluation. It was further indicated there is a delay in receiving referrals from PAC after PAC determines a referral to the team is warranted.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the child study team receives referrals in a timely manner from PAC and identification meetings are held within 20 calendar days of receiving the referral.

Native Language – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews with staff indicate that although some notices have been translated, prior written notice has not been translated into any other language.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure prior written notice is provided in the parent's native language, when feasible.

IV. Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of direct referral, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the PAC process, Child Find, initial referrals, and identification of students with disabilities.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the referral process and timelines. This area of concern is addressed in Section III.

Areas of Need:

PAC Process – Through the self-assessment process, the district determined that they lack consistent procedures for referrals to PAC. Staff members indicated they do not follow the same referral process because they do not understand the role of PAC. Written documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of interventions is not maintained in student files. The district further determined referral dates are not consistently documented, effective interventions are not developed, and timelines are not established to determine the effectiveness of the general education interventions.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to refer a student to PAC. Those procedures must include a component to ensure staff members are trained in the PAC referral process and that the process is implemented consistently throughout the district.

Child Find - Through the self-assessment process, the district determined that Child Find Activities do not include migrant and homeless children.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure Child Find Activities include migrant and homeless children residing in the district.

Rights of Identified Students – Through the self-assessment process, the district determined that administrators are not aware that identified students have the same procedural safeguard rights as classified students when disciplinary actions are being considered.

The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure identified students are afforded the same procedural safeguard rights afforded to classified students when disciplinary actions are being considered or imposed.

V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of consent, the appropriate use of standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, documenting the acceptance/rejection of reports and multidisciplinary assessments.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with conducting evaluations in the students native language. The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses this area of need.

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings;

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria and documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notice (addressed in Section III) and provision of evaluation reports to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of annual review timelines and required statements in the IEP.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with notice, transition (addressed in Section X), related service goals and objectives, components and considerations, providing a copy of the IEP to parents prior to implementation, meeting participants (addressed in Section X), and staff understanding their responsibility in implementing the IEP.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP used as notice, speech therapy implementation, and related services goals and objectives.

Areas of Need:

IEP and the IEP as Notice – Through the self-assessment process the district determined that they do not consistently provide written notice or provide a copy of the IEP (on-site monitoring determined that the IEP is used as notice) within required timelines. They indicated that if the parent does not sign the district's *IEP Review – Record of Parental Consent* form at the meeting, no other efforts are made to provide notice and the IEP to the parent.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents are provide with written notice within 15 days of the IEP meeting. The plan must also ensure the parent is provided with a copy of the IEP prior to its implementation.

Related Services/ Components and Considerations – Through the self-assessment process, the district determined that annual goals and short-term objectives are not developed for related services.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure goals and short term objectives are developed for related services and included in IEPs.

Staff Roles – Through the self-assessment process, the are not consistently informed of their roles.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure all staff are informed of their respective role in the development and implementation of IEPs.

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of consideration and documentation and Oberti.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with regular education access and non-academic and extracurricular participation.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding individual decision-making and supplementary aid and services.

Areas of Need:

Supplementary Aides and Services – On-site classroom visits and discussions with staff determined that specialized equipment identified in student IEPs, including auditory trainers and FM systems, were either never purchased or not operating.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure supplemental aides and services identified in individual IEPs are provided and maintained.

Nonacademic and Extracurricular Participation – The self-assessment process identified concerns regarding students placed in out-of-district placements who are not being invited to participate in in-district nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure students receiving services in out-of-district programs are invited to participate in all extracurricular and nonacademic school activities.

Regular Education Access and Continuum – During the self-assessment process, the district determined that In-Class Support programs are limited to social studies and science classes. The district indicated their intent to expand the array of in-class support programs. They further indicated this expansion may be hindered by a lack of funds and staff.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to address these barriers to ensure classified students have access to regular education programs with appropriate supports.

Individual Decision Making - On-site monitoring, record review and discussions with staff determined that individual decision-making regarding student programs is restricted by class options currently available in district. Student programs are sometimes based on existing program options and not individual need.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure program considerations are based on individual student need and not program availability.

X. Transition

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences.

During the self-assessment process, the district-identified areas of need regarding, age 14 transition service needs, meeting participants, agency involvement and transition to PSD by age 3.

Additional areas of need were identified regarding IEP considerations and documentation.

Areas of Need:

Transition – Through the self-assessment process, the district determined that IEPs developed for students 14 years of age or younger if appropriate, do not include a statement of transition service needs. They further determined that 7th grade students turning age 14 during the course of the year are not included in the IEP meeting to discuss transition. Additionally, it was determined that not all 7th and 8th graders go through career awareness activities documenting interest and preference.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to ensure IEPs for students fourteen years of age or younger, when appropriate, include a statement of transition service needs. The district is further directed to ensure that students are invited and included in IEP meetings to discuss their interests and preferences. It is recommended the district adopt the state model IEP developed by OSEP.

Meeting Participants – Through the self-assessment process the district determined that representatives from agencies likely to provide or pay for transition are not invited to attend IEP meetings.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure representatives from agencies likely to provide or pay for transition services are invited to attend IEP meetings.

EIP To PSD By Age Three – During the self-assessment process the district indicated they have no procedures to address EIP transition because they have not received children from early intervention programs in sometime.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure a smooth transition from early intervention programs to preschool program by age three when the need arises.

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the area of suspension tracking and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding notification to the case manager, policies and procedures for conducting an IEP meeting, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral plans, manifestation determination and identifying potentially disabled students. The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses these issues.

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of student participation in statewide assessments and IEP documentation of the decision-making process and required accommodation and modifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified an area of need regarding documentation of alternative assessments being used. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant in the areas of class size, age ranges, aides, schedules, home instruction and certification.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding common planning time.

Area of Need:

Common Planning Time – Interviews with staff conducted during on-site monitoring determined that common planning time is not scheduled for resource teachers and regular education teaching staff. Consultation between teachers is conducted as time permits.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure special education teachers have common planning/consultation time with regular education staff.

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately determined themselves to be compliant with access, maintenance and destruction of records, and maintaining access sheets in files.

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding procedures for inspection and amendments of records and release of records. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these identified areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the location of other records.

Areas of Need:

Documentation of Other Records – On-site record review indicated that central files do not document the location of other records.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure central files identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

SUMMARY

An on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Alloway Township School on April 9, 10, 11, 2001. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is commended for the thorough and comprehensive review it conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of the review, the district was able to self-identify the majority of areas that require improvement as well as develop a comprehensive improvement plan that with some revision should result in systemic change.

The on-site visit determined that the district provides special education and related services as required by IEPs; employs appropriately certified personnel; provides independent evaluations as required; conducts evaluations to determine eligibility; meets annual review timelines; conducts meetings with parents as required; includes appropriate considerations and documentations in IEPs; tracks suspensions; has an interim alternative educational setting; ensures that all students have opportunities to participate in statewide assessments; complies with class size, age ranges, aides, schedules, home instruction and certifications; provides access, maintenance and destruction of records and maintaining access sheets in files.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development; development of goals and objective by related service staff; notice of meetings; referral and PAC processes; identification of students with disabilities; provision of evaluation reports to parents; written notice; transition; providing the IEP to parents; meeting participants; staff understanding their responsibility in implementing the IEP; regular education access; nonacademic and extracurricular participation; discipline procedures; and procedures for inspection and amendments of records.

The on-site visit further identified areas of need within the various standards regarding public information; related services; timelines; native language; referral processes; individual decision-making; supplementary aids and services; considerations and documentation; common planning time; and location of other records.

Any improvement plan activity that requires the development of procedures must include a component to ensure administrative oversight of the implementation of these procedures on a district-wide basis.

Within forty-five days (45) days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district is required to revise and resubmit the improvement plan to address these additional areas of needs.