

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Monitoring**

District: Andover Regional School District

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: June 1, 2005

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Spear and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the **Andover Regional School District** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Andover Regional School District** with an opportunity to evaluate 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 **Andover Regional School District** developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

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

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus meeting for parents and community members at the Long Pond Elementary School on May 25, 2005. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit. Additionally, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) completed a modified desk audit, including review of a representative sample of student records, as well as reviews of district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews with child study team members and administrators were also conducted. Interviews were conducted with parents by telephone. Based on these sources, OSEP staff determined that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan which will appropriately address all areas of need.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for creating the H.E.R.O. (Helping Everyone Read Outstandingly) program. Originally aligned with Colin Powell's program, America's Promise, the H.E.R.O. initiative is aimed at eliminating illiteracy, one student at a time. Volunteer tutors are recruited from the community, local businesses, government officials, local authors in residence and students from Sussex County Community

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College. Following lesson plans devised by the reading specialist, each tutor is carefully paired with a student who needs extra help with reading and writing. Through this program, students who need support are given the opportunity to practice reading in a positive environment with the in-depth teaching they need to achieve.

The district is also commended for creating a Homework Club for grades 4-8. This program utilizes a combination of general education and special education teachers four days after school to provide assistance for students in need. Students can freely attend this program or can be recommended by the Student Resource Committee, teacher or parent.

Data Summary:

Based on a review of the data, the district is educating over 62% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day which is significantly higher than the state average of 41.6%. Additionally, another 34.6% of students with disabilities are educated with general education students more than 40% of the school day.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

Free, Appropriate Public Education, IEP, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition and Student Records 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.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of parent and staff training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parent policy and content of notice of meeting for students eligible for special education and related services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address

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these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of surrogate parents, and notice of meeting.

Additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding notices of meetings and written notice in the area of speech and language. Please refer to section V, Evaluation.

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification:

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of Child Find 3-21, referral process for students eligible for special education and related services, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary for special education and related services, hearing and vision screening for special education and related services and identification meetings, timelines and participants for special education and related services.

Additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding the referral process, health summary, hearing and vision screening, identification meetings, timelines and participants all in the area of speech and language. Please refer to Section V, Evaluation.

Section V: Evaluation:

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of functional assessments, written reports signed and dated and bilingual evaluations all for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the areas of standardized assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of standardized assessments.

An additional area of need was identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding the initial process for speech and language.

Area(s) of Need:

Initial Evaluation Process for Speech and Language Referrals– During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that speech-language specialists are not implementing the process for initial referrals according to regulations. This includes the referral process, notice of meeting for identification meeting, identification meetings timelines and participants, written notice of identification meeting, health summary, written reports, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, notice

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of eligibility and IEP meeting, eligibility meetings and participants, written notice of eligibility meeting, provision of report to parent ten days prior to meeting and signatures of agreement and disagreement at eligibility meeting.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that when students are referred due to speech and language concerns, the referral process and, the evaluation process, if determined appropriate, are conducted according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14. Implementation of these activities will ensure that students are identified appropriately and that parents and students receive their procedural safeguards during the process. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the activities.**

Section VI: Re-Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of re-evaluation timelines for special education and related services, planning meetings and participants for special education and related services and reevaluations completed by June 30 of a students' last year in preschool.

An additional area of need was identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit in the area of re-evaluations for students eligible for speech and language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Re-Evaluation Process for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services–

During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that speech-language specialists are not conducting re-evaluations according to regulations. This includes notice of meeting for re-evaluation planning meeting, re-evaluation planning meeting and participants, written notice of re-evaluation planning meeting, notice of eligibility and IEP meeting, eligibility meeting and participants, written notice of meeting, documentation of eligibility, signatures of agreement and disagreement at eligibility meeting and provision of report to parent ten days prior to meeting.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all components of the re-evaluation process are conducted according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14. Implementation of these activities will ensure that eligibility for continued services is determined appropriately and that the appropriate procedural safeguards are provided to parents and students during the reevaluation process. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the activities.**

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Section VII: Eligibility:

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of, meetings and participants for special education and related services, criteria, statement of eligibility for special education and related services, signatures of agreement and disagreement for special education and related services and copy of evaluation report to parent ten days prior to meeting for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of copy of documentation of eligibility for special education and related services to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of provision of copy of documentation of eligibility to parents.

Additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit regarding notice of eligibility meeting, meetings and participants, written notice of meeting, documentation of eligibility, signatures of agreement and disagreement and copy of evaluation report to parents ten days prior to meeting all in the area of speech and language services. Please refer to Section V, Evaluation and Section VI, Reevaluation.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of suspension tracking, manifestation determination, behavior improvement plans, functional behavior assessments, procedural safeguards and interim alternate educational setting.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to case manager. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of documentation to case manager.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XII: Statewide Assessments

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of participation, IEP documentation and alternate proficiency assessments.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of approved accommodations and modifications. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of approved accommodations and modifications.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of IEP requirements. Out-of-district participation and written notice of graduation are not applicable as Andover Regional School District is a K-8 district.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of out-of-district participation in 8th grade graduation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of out-of-district participation in 8th grade graduation.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of class sizes and waivers, age ranges and waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of common planning time, appropriate speech-language specialist staff and descriptions of classes. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in the areas of common planning time and descriptions of classes.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at the Long Pond Elementary Schools on May 25, 2005. 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. The district is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that has brought about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is acknowledged for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

The district is successfully educating a majority of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day and more than 40% of the school day.

Although very few parents attended the focus group meeting held prior to the on-site monitoring visit, additional interviews were conducted. Some parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, services and staff while others are dissatisfied with the lack of attention on the part of the case managers regarding their children's needs.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included, policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs and services, goals and objectives for related services, documentation of frequency, duration, and location of related services, length of day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, consent, written notice for special education and related services, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, Child Find 3-21, referral process for special education and related services, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summaries for special education and related services, hearing and vision screening for special education and related services, identification meetings, participants and timelines for special education and related services, functional assessments for special education and related services, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation planning meetings and participants for special education and related services, reevaluations completed by June 30 of students last year in preschool, eligibility meetings and participants for special education and related services, criteria, statement of eligibility for special education and related services, signatures of agreement and disagreement for special education and related services, copy of evaluation reports to parents for special education and related services, IEP meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, decision making process, least restrictive environment documentation, notification and participation in extracurricular activities, preschool transition planning conference, EIP to PSD by age 3, age 14 transition service needs, student and agency invitation, suspension tracking, manifestation determination, behavior intervention plan, functional behavior assessment, interim alternate educational settings, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, IEP

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documentation, alternate proficiency assessment, IEP requirements at age 14, class sizes and waivers, age ranges and waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, consultation time, access and requests, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent training, surrogate parents, content of notice of meeting for special education and related services, standardized assessments, provision to parents of eligibility documentation for special education and related services, documentation to case manager, approved accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, out-of-district participation in 8th grade graduation, common planning time for general education and special education collaboration, appropriate speech and language staff and class descriptions.

The on-site monitoring visit identified additional areas of need in the areas of initial and re-evaluations in the area of speech and language; specifically: referral process, notice of identification meeting, written notice of identification meeting, referral process, health summary, identification meeting, timelines and participants, written reports, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, re-evaluation planning meeting, written notice of re-evaluation planning meeting, notice of eligibility meeting, eligibility meeting and participants, written notice of eligibility meeting, documentation of eligibility, signatures of agreement and disagreement and copy of evaluation report to parents ten days prior to meeting.

During the on-site comprehensive desk audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the self-identified areas of surrogate parent policy, content of notice of meetings for special education and related services, standardized assessments, provision of documentation of eligibility to parents for special education and related services, documentation of disciplinary action to case manager, approved accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, out-of-district participation in 8th grade graduation, common planning time and class descriptions.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Andover Regional School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the area that requires revision.