

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

District: Atlantic Highlands School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: April 28, 2005

Monitoring Team: Kim Murray, Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2003-2004 school year, the **Atlantic Highlands School District** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Atlantic Highlands 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 **Atlantic Highlands 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.

During the on-site visit, 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for offering cross-grade mentoring programs for students in general and special education. Older students are paired with students in the lower grades and participate in activities such as reading aloud, craft projects and structured play. In addition, students participate in school-wide projects such as planting a garden and designing bulletin boards.

Data Summary:

Atlantic Highlands School District provides special education and related services to 60 students in grades pre-K through 6. The district has an overall classification rate of

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20.9%, which is above the state average of 16.56%. 41.8% of classified students are placed in general education for more than 80% of the day and 52.7% are placed in general education for 40%-80% of the day, resulting in nearly 95% of classified students placed in general education for more than 40% of the day. The district operates an integrated preschool program on site and, as a result, the percentage of preschool students with disabilities educated with their nondisabled peers has increased from 38.5% in 2003 to 62.5% in 2004.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Eligibility, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services 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 identified compliance in the area of dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of approved policies and procedures and staff training. The improvement plan developed by the district is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of provision of programs and related services, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, goals and objectives for counseling and transfer procedures. The improvement plan developed by the district is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of consent, provision of notice of a meeting, provision of written notice and interpreters at meetings.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, content of notice of a meeting, content of written notice, notices in native language and independent evaluations. The improvement plan developed by the district is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of direct referrals by parents, health summary, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find procedures, referral process, pre-referral interventions and direct referrals by staff members. The improvement plan developed by the district is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, signed and dated written reports, bilingual evaluations and acceptance and rejection of reports.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through document review that child study team members are not including prior interventions when conducting a functional assessment as part of a child study team evaluation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure child study team members include prior interventions when conducting a functional assessment. The plan must include staff training and an oversight mechanism to ensure continued compliance.**

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of IEP meeting participants, considerations and required statements, statements of present levels of educational performance, implementation dates, annual review timelines, copies of IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards. The improvement plan developed by the district is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

As this is a k-6 district there are no findings in this area.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of requests for access to student records, access sheets and documentation of other locations of records.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Maintenance of Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and document review that when a student is transitioning from the Atlantic Highlands School District to the receiving high school district that the entire student record is transferred. The Atlantic Highlands School District does not maintain copies of any portion of the student record. N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.4(d) requires districts to maintain mandated or permitted records required as part of programs established through state administered entitlement or discretionary funds from the U.S Department of Education for a period of five years after completion of the program activities.. The district must retain copies of the most current student IEPs and evaluations for a period of five years in order to demonstrate the provision of special education and related services

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures for the maintenance of student records. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the **Atlantic Highlands School District** on **April 28, 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.

No parents attended the focus group meeting held on February 10, 2005.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included Reevaluation, Eligibility, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included dissemination of IDEA information, provision of programs and related services, facilities, certifications, consent, provision of notice of a meeting, provision of written notice, interpreters at meetings, direct referrals by parents, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines and participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, signed and dated written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, IEP meeting participants, considerations and required statements, statements of present levels of educational performance, implementation dates, annual review timelines, copies of IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, requests for access to student records, access sheets and documentation of other locations of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding approved policies and procedures, staff training, extended school year, goals and objectives for counseling, transfer procedures, surrogate parents, content of notice of a meeting, content of written notice, notices in native language, independent evaluations, child find procedures, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals by staff members, functional assessments, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding functional assessments and maintenance of records.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the **Atlantic Highlands School District** will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.