

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

District: Barnegat Township School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: May 19, 20, 2003

Monitoring Team: Debbie Masarsky, Stephen Coplin, Kim Murray, Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson

Background Information:

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, the Barnegat Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Barnegat 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 Barnegat Township 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 group meeting for parents and community members at the Edwards School on May 15, 2003. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

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, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

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District Strengths:

The district is commended for a variety of **Social Skills Groups** at the middle school for both regular and special education students. The purpose of these groups is to develop appropriate decision-making skills. The students explore issues such as anger management, problem solving and peer relations.

The district also provides an after school **Step Program** which provides both regular and special education students with an opportunity to develop their talents in music and art.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, transfer students, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, hearing aids and goals/objectives for related services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, provision of notices, notices in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of content of notices and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding 20-day and 90-day timelines.

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Area(s) of Need:

20-Day/90-Day Timelines - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently meet the required 20-day timeline for convening identification meetings and 90-day timelines from parental consent for initial evaluation(s) to the implementation of the IEP.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district convenes identification meetings within twenty days of receipt of the written request for referral to the child study team and implements initial IEPs within 90 days from parental consent. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of pre-referral interventions and identification meetings with required participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral procedures, health summaries and hearing/vision screenings. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding child find.

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district only conducts child find activities once a year for students ages 3-5.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities are conducted in the community throughout the school year, including summer months, to locate, identify and refer potentially disabled children ages 3-15 including migrant and homeless children. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, signed/dated reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports and independent evaluations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of standardized assessments/functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Multi-disciplinary Evaluations - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the speech therapist does not obtain a written educational impact statement from the student's teacher.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that a written educational impact statement from the classroom teacher is included in the written report to fulfill the requirement for a multi-disciplinary evaluation for students determined eligible for speech/language services. The improvement plan must include and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meeting/participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of nature/scope of reevaluation plan and reevaluations within three years or sooner if warranted. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings/participants, criteria and documentation of statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the provision of copies of evaluation reports to parents within timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP considerations/required statements, participants at IEP meetings, annual review timelines, IEPs in effect and implemented at the beginning of the school year, IEP teacher access and responsibility and annual goals and objectives related to core curriculum content standards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of provision of IEPs to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, manifestation determinations and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of written notification to case managers, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and provision of services when a series of short-term removals are not a change in placement. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XIII: Graduation requirements are completed by the receiving high school.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Barnegat Township School District on May 19, 20, 2003. 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 exceptionally 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 will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended 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.

Four parents attended a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit. Some parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and success that their children are experiencing. One parent, whose child has been in the program for a considerable amount of time, expressed his great satisfaction with the advancements that the special service department had made over the years. Three of the parents were pleased with the communication between staff and parents. Although some parents requested further training regarding special education issues, it was determined during the on-site visit that child study team members provide individual training for parents.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent/staff development, policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, transfer students, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, provision of notices, notices in native language, interpreters, pre-referral interventions, identification meetings with required participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations/standardized assessments/functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, signed/dated reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, independent evaluations, reevaluation planning meeting/participants, reevaluation by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, eligibility meetings/participants, eligibility criteria, eligibility statement, IEP considerations/required statements, participants IEP meetings, annual review timelines, IEPs in effect/implemented at the beginning of the school year, IEP teacher access/responsibility, annual goals/objectives related to core curriculum content standards, individualized decision-making process, supplementary aids/services, regular education access, continuum, participation of in-district students in non-academic/extra-curricular activities, preschool transition planning conferences, IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three, student/agency invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, statement of "Transition Service Needs," procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodations/modifications in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, age range, class/group size, consultation time between regular/special education teachers, descriptions for each special education program, staff knowledge of student records policies/procedures, access to student records and documentation of other locations of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, hearing aids, goals/objectives for related services, content of

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notices, independent evaluations, referral procedures, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings, standardized assessments/functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services, nature/scope of reevaluation plan, reevaluation timelines, copies of evaluation reports to parents within timelines, provision of IEPs to parents, written notification to case managers regarding suspension, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and provision of services when a series of short-term removals are not a change in placement.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding child find, 20/90-day timelines and multi-disciplinary evaluations for student eligible for speech and language services.

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