

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

District: Barrington Borough School District

Monitoring Dates: September 20, 21, 2004

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2003 - 2004 school years, the Barrington Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Barrington Borough School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 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 Barrington Borough School District developed an improvement plan to address the 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 Woodland School on September 20, 2004. Information obtained from the meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed district documentation, 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 administrator, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The Barrington Borough School District is commended for providing the TAM (Team Approach to Mastery) program. One special education teacher and one teacher certified in either elementary or secondary education work as a team instructing both

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nondisabled students and students with disabilities. The program is offered at multiple grade levels. In addition teachers arrive early to work and or stay later in the afternoon to tutor students in need of additional assistance with class work or to meet with parents. There are a variety of clubs offered after school in which students can participate, such as checkers, mentoring, ecology, library, computer and bowling clubs. These clubs are run by district staff on their own time.

Part One Data Summary:

The data submitted by the Barrington Borough School District as a result of the self-assessment process indicates 66.9% of students are placed in general education more than 80% of the day which is higher than the state average of 41.3%, while a three year trend reflects a decrease in the percent of students included in general education 40%-80% and less than 40% of the day. The districts classification rate is 18.7% which exceeds the state average of 13.9%. The district has identified pre-referral interventions as an area of need and has addressed these issues in the improvement plan.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with all Standards:

Evaluation, Statewide Assessments, Graduation, 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 I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional development. 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 II. Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of extended school year, related services (other than occupational therapy), length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures for maintaining hearing aides and adaptive physical education. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding occupational therapy.

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Area of Need:

Occupational Therapy – During the on-sight monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interview that the district is unable to provide occupational therapy services required by the IEP as they have yet to secure a therapist for the 2004-2005 school year.

- **The district will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure that occupational therapy services required by the IEP are provided. In addition the district is directed to provide compensatory service to students who have yet to receive occupational therapy as required by their IEP. The implementation of these activities will result in students receiving occupational therapy services necessary to receive educational benefit from their programs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.**

Section III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, provision of notice of meeting, interpreters at meetings, and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of content of notice of meeting, content of written notice and notice in native language. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding parental participation at meetings, provision of written notice and notice for meeting for students eligible for speech and language services.

Area of Need:

Parent Participation at Meetings – During the on-sight monitoring visit it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the district does not consistently make multiple attempts to secure parental participation at meetings when they are unable to make the first scheduled appointment.

- **The district will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that multiple attempts are made to ensure parent have the opportunity to participate in meetings. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.**

Provision of Written Notice – During the on-sight monitoring visit it was determined through record review and staff interview that written notice does not contain all of the required components.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice contains all the required components. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents are fully informed of decisions made**

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regarding students' special education needs. The district is encouraged to use the sample written notice available on the New Jersey Department of Education web site at www.state.nj.us/education. The plan must include in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent compliant implementation of the plan.

Notice of a Meeting – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review that notice of a meeting for students eligible for speech and language services does not include a statement informing parents of their right to invite others to the meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notice of a meeting informs parents of their right to invite other individuals who have knowledge and expertise to the meeting. Implementation of these activities will result in parents being fully informed as to their rights regarding meeting participants. The plan must include an oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the plan.**

Section IV. Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of child find and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of vision and hearing screenings, referral process, and pre-referral interventions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address vision and hearing screenings. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient because although the district identified the lack of support in general education for "at risk" students and that there would be discussion to provide adequate support for at-risk students, the plan does not identify how this will be accomplished or what administrative oversight activity will be consistently implemented to ensure support. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.**

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

Section VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of planning meetings/participants and reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of three-year timelines, and reviewing existing data to determine if additional data is needed to determine continued eligibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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Section VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of meeting participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, and signature of agreement disagreement rationale.

During the self assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of copy of evaluation reports to parents/adult students 10 days prior to meetings. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient because although the district will hire additional secretarial support it does not identify what administrative oversight activities will be consistently implemented to ensure that reports are sent out 10 days prior to meetings. The district will revise the plan to include these elements.**

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

Section VIII. Individual Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of meeting participants, consideration and required statements, present levels of educational performance, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines and teacher responsibility and access.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of goals and objectives aligned with core curricular content standards and IEPs to parents prior to implementation. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient because although the district will investigate the possibility of using computerized IEP's it does not address the issue of parents receiving IEPs prior to implementation of programs in the interim and in the event the district does not receive computerized IEPs. In addition the plan does not identify what administrative oversight activities will be implemented to ensure that parents are receiving IEPs prior to implementation. The district will revise there improvement plan to include these elements.**

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

Section IX. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of decision making process, consideration of supplemental aides and services and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. 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.

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Section X. Transition to Post School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of age 14 transition service needs and student/agency invitation. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient because although the district will maintain a log of students turning 14 and revise notices to invite students to meetings it does not identify administrative oversight activities to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district will revise their plan to include these activities.**

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

Section X. Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of preschool transition plan conference and early intervention to preschool by age 3.

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

Section XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of documentation to case managers, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment and behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination and interim alternative education setting.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding procedural safeguards.

Area of Need:

Procedural Safeguards – During the on-sight monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interview that the district does not evaluate a student involved in disciplinary action in an expedited manner .

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when a request is made for an evaluation of a child during the time period in which the child is subjected to disciplinary measures, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner. Implementation of these activities will ensure that students are protected under procedures safeguards until the evaluation is completed and eligibility is determined. The plan must include in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent compliant implementation of the plan.**

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SUMMARY

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Barrington School District on September 20 and 21, 2004. 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 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 with some revision 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.

A review of district data indicated that the district is above the state average in including students in general education and has a classification rate which exceeds the state average.

A focus group meeting was held prior to the monitoring visit. Parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. They were generally pleased with the accessibility of the child study team and students' access to general education programs. Parents expressed concerns regarding high caseloads for child study team members, general education teachers' knowledge of the IEP and the provision of related services. The provision of occupational therapy will be addressed in the improvement plan revisions. One parent had concerns regarding commencement of related services in accordance with IEPs. This was not identified as a systemic issue by the monitors.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included evaluation, statewide assessments, graduation, programs and services and student records.

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, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, provision of notice of meeting, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find, identification meetings, planning meetings, reevaluation completed by June 30th of students last year in preschool, eligibility, criteria, signature of agreement /disagreement rationale, consideration required statements, present level of educational performance, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90 day timelines, teacher responsibility/access, decision making, continuum of programs, supplemental aides and services, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, preschool transition planning conferences, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and manifestation determination meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development, related service, notice of a meeting content, written notice content, notice in native language, pre-referral interventions, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, three year timelines, copy of evaluation reports to parents, goals and objectives aligned with Core Content Curricular Standards, IEPs to parents,

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notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, age 14 transition service needs, procedural safeguards and student agency invitation.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding related services, participants, provision of written notice, content of notice of a meeting and procedural safeguards.

Within forty-five days (45) days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Barrington Borough School District will revise the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.