

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

District: Berkeley Township School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: November 15, 16, 2001

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky, Georgianna Parlacoski, Carmen Funucci

Background Information:

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Berkeley 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 Berkeley 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 Berkeley Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

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

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members on November 7, 2001. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, 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, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

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District Strengths:

The district offers a unique program of workshops that promote the development of parenting skills. Additionally, the district provides academic assistance to special education students and regular education students in the after-school "Helping Hands" program.

Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Reevaluation, Programs and Services, and Transition to Pre-School 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: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding extended school year, provision of related services, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding length of school day/year, transportation and transfer procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of the provision of speech/language services.

Areas of Need:

Documentation of the Provision of Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through staff/parent interviews and review of speech schedules that though the district provides speech/language services as required by IEPs, the district does not document this provision.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the documentation of the provision of speech/language services.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding meeting participants, consent and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding surrogate parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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The district has also identified concerns regarding provision of notices, scheduling of meetings, and notices in native language. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notice content.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Notices - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that district notices do not contain the required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all district notices contain the required components and statements. It is recommended that the district use the sample notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding direct referrals and vision/hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding interventions in general education. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component. The district will revise its improvement plan to include this component to ensure the consistent implementation of the PAC and pre-referral intervention procedures.

In addition, the district identified a concern with the 20-day timeline for identification meetings. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The district will revise the plan to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding Child Find activities and health summaries.

Areas of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined the district's Child Find activities are not sufficient to identify students who are potentially disabled because they are not conducted during the summer months.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Child Find activities continue throughout the year including summer months, to locate and refer potentially disabled students, including migrant and homeless students.**

Health Summaries - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not review available health and medical information when a student is referred for evaluation to the child study team.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that upon receipt of a referral to the child study team, the school nurse reviews and summarizes available health and medical information regarding the student.**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding bilingual evaluations and functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the acceptance/rejection of reports, multidisciplinary team evaluations, standardized assessments and issues with speech/language evaluation reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services and written reports for students eligible for special education and related services.

Areas of Need:

Functional Assessment for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services-

During the on-site monitoring it was determined that functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services do not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services contain the required components. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports for Students Eligible for Special Education and Related Services -

During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although written reports are developed and signed for students eligible for special education and related services, they are not dated.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports are dated. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding criteria, eligibility meetings and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the provision of evaluation reports to parents and documentation of eligibility. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding documentation of criteria for eligibility.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Criteria for Eligibility/Declassification – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not document the criteria for eligibility or declassification.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents the criteria for eligibility and declassification. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding participants, implementation dates on IEPs, annual review and the 90-day timeline.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, teacher access to IEPs, teacher IEP responsibilities, parent opportunities to observe proposed educational placements, IEP required considerations and statements, supplementary aides/services and alignment of goals and objectives with the Core Content Curriculum Standards. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to

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include these elements. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site regarding required component and statements of IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

IEPs for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services do not contain the required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services contain the required components and statements. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding the decision-making process, regular education access for non-academic/extracurricular activities and provision of a full continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding justifications for removal from regular education (LRE statement), and supplementary aids and services. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding procedural safeguards of students identified as potentially disabled. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding notification to the case manager.

Area(s) of Need:

Notification to Case Manager - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although case managers are verbally notified, the district does not provide written notification to the case manager when a classified student is removed from program.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides written notification to the case manager when a classified student is removed from program.**

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding documentation of approved accommodation/modifications and alternative assessments.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding criteria to determine participation in the statewide assessment process and alternative assessments. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and oversight components to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section XIII: Graduation requirements are not applicable to this K-6 school district.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding parent access, access sheets and maintenance/destruction.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of other locations of student files.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations of Student Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not identify the location of other records in central files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other records is identified in the central files.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Berkeley School District on November 15 and 16, 2001. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas that were determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. The three parents that attended this meeting were impressed with staff/parent communication and the progress that the students have made in the various programs. The district had already identified many of the concerns identified during the self-assessment process that were raised by the parents during the focus group meeting.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included all standards in General Provisions, Programs and Services and Transition to Pre-School. Additionally, other areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included extended school year, provision of related services, facilities, certifications, consent, meetings with required participants, independent evaluations, direct referrals, vision/hearing screenings, bilingual evaluations, functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, implementation dates on IEPs, 3-year reevaluation/annual review/ 90-day timelines, individualized decision-making, least restrictive environment requires considerations/statements, regular education access for non-academic/extracurricular activities, provision of a full continuum of programs, statewide assessment, class/group size, age range, home instruction, parent access to student records, access sheets, and maintenance/destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding length of school day/year, transfer students, transportation, surrogate parents, provision of notices, scheduling of meetings, notices/meetings in native languages, pre-referral interventions, multidisciplinary assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP required components/considerations for students eligible for special education/related services, goals/objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, IEPs to parents prior to implementation, teacher IEP access/responsibility, least restrictive environment required consideration/statements, supplementary aids/services, procedural safeguards of potentially disabled students and alternate assessments.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding documentation of the provision of speech/language services, content of notices, health summaries, Child Find activities, functional assessments, written reports for students eligible for special education and related services, documentation for

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eligibility/declassification, IEP required components/statements for students eligible for speech/language services, written notification to case managers and documentation of other locations of student files.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.

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