

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

District: Califon School District **County:** Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: April 29, 2004

Monitoring Team: Vanessa Leonard, Kimberly Murray

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the **Califon Public School District** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Califon Public 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 **Califon Public 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 monitoring process, parent interviews were conducted by the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). A public focus group meeting was not conducted because the district would not allow it to occur on the scheduled date. The parent interviews ensured parents had the opportunity to provide information to the monitors. The parents of 16 students contributed to the monitoring process by offering their comments. Information obtained from the interviews 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 administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Data Summary:

The Califon School District has 28 classified students. Of those 28 students, 48% are receiving services in general education for more than 80% of the school day. This is very close to the state's average. During the 2000-2001 school year, the district reported that its statewide assessment results indicated that 84.6% of these students with disabilities scored proficient at the elementary level, while 89.5% of these students scored proficient on the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, 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 accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies/procedures, staff training and dissemination of IDEA information.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding parent training.

Area of Need:

Parent training- During the on-site visit, it was determined through document review that the district does not provide parent training. During the parent phone interviews, it was reported that though parents had requested training on a number of topics, the district had failed to provide any.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure the provision of parent training. These activities must include a needs assessment to assist the district in identifying the topics that parents would like addressed.**

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs, frequency/duration/location of related services, goals and objectives, length of school day/year, transfer students and certifications.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding facilities since the building is not handicapped accessible. **The Hunterdon County Office has been advised of this concern.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding selection and training of surrogate parents. **The district did not submit an improvement plan to address this area. The district will develop a plan that includes procedures to ensure a surrogate parent is provided when necessary.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of notices of meetings and the provision of written notices.

Area(s) of Need:

Provision of Notices - During the on-site visit, it was determined through record review that parents are not consistently provided with notice of meetings nor are they provided with written notice within required timelines. When notice is provided, parents are not afforded the 15 days to consider the actions the district is proposing or denying.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure notices of meetings and written notices are provided to parents. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents are afforded the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the provision of programs and services as well as have the opportunity to dispute any proposed or denied action. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

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, direct referrals, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings and identification meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding documentation of the date of referral to the child study team. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities. Implementation of these activities will ensure students are evaluated, when necessary, and that the evaluations are conducted in a timely manner.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding child find activities and summer activities.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Areas of Need:

Child Find - During the onsite monitoring visit, document review indicated that the district's current child find activities only address children ages 3-5.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that child find activities include students ages 6-21. The implementation of these activities will ensure potentially disabled students who reside within the district are located, referred and identified in a timely manner. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Summer Activities - During the on-site monitoring visit, interviews with the child study team indicated that the district does not employ child study team members and teachers during the summer. As a result, evaluations and mandated meetings are not conducted to ensure compliance with all evaluation and meeting timelines.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that, when warranted, child study team members/teachers are made available during the summer months to conduct evaluations and IEP meetings. The implementation of these activities will ensure that students are provided with programs and services in a timely manner. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports signed/dated, acceptance/rejection of reports with a rationale and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of need because it lacks activities and an administrative oversight to bring about the required change. These activities must ensure the speech language therapist includes documentation of the educational impact statement provided by the student's teacher.**

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

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meeting/participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD) and signature of agreement/disagreement with rationale.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings.

Area of Need:

Evaluation Reports to Parents 10 Days Prior to IEP Meetings - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records indicated that the child study team evaluation reports are not consistently provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility/IEP meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure evaluation reports are provided to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents have the opportunity to review the information contained in each report to more appropriately participate in the decision-making process. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meeting/participants, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs), goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process the district identified an area of need regarding considerations and required statements. The improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of regular education access for in-district students and continuum of program options.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding notification/participation of out-of-district students in non-academic/extra-curricular activities and the decision-making process.

Areas of Need:

Notification and participation of out-of district students in non-academic and extra-curricular activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through an interview with the director of special education that out-of-district students do not receive notification of non-academic/extracurricular activities. As a result they are not afforded the opportunity to participate in any in-district activities.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure out-of-district students are notified of non-academic/extra-curricular activities available within the district. Implementation of these activities will ensure students have the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular and non-academic activities with their non-disabled peers. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Decision-making process - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through parent interviews that in an effort to bring students back from out-of-district programs, the district is placing students into programs where seats are available. Though team members indicated they follow an appropriate procedure to place students, that could not be verified through record review since the teams do not document the decision-making process, including responding to the four questions relating to placement in the least restrictive environment.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the IEP team consistently follows a procedure that will allow all members of the team the opportunity to consider placement in the least restrictive environment. The implementation of these activities will ensure that students are afforded the opportunity to be educated with their non-disabled peers through most or all of the school day, when appropriate. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

The district did not identify areas of need during the self-assessment process.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding transition planning for students aged 14.

Area(s) of Need:

Transition Planning - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the child study team does not address transition services for 14 year old students.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the child study team addresses transition services including the development of a Statement of Transition Service Needs, invitations to the student and agencies to participate in transition planning meetings, and assessments of the students' interests and preferences. The implementation of these activities will ensure that parents, students and the receiving school district have the opportunity to identify courses of study that will be aligned to the interests and preferences identified by the student in an effort to achieve post-secondary outcomes. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention program to a preschool disabilities program by age 3.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

The district did not identify any areas of need during the self-assessment process.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding graduation requirements.

Area(s) of Need:

Graduation Requirements - During the on-site monitoring and record review, it was determined that the child study team does not include graduation requirements in the IEPs of 14 year old students transitioning from grade eight to high school.

- The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the child study team includes graduation requirements when it develops IEPs for students transitioning from grade eight to high school. Implementation of these activities will ensure parents and students are fully informed of the requirements the student must fulfill to receive a diploma. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access/requests, maintenance/destruction and documentation of other locations of records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the area of access sheets.

Area of Need:

Access Sheets - During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that files do not consistently include access sheets.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that student files have access sheets. Implementation of these activities will ensure the district has the opportunity to effectively monitor access to student records and to address any issues that may arise as a result of unauthorized access.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the **Califon Public School District** on April 29, 2004. 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.

Reevaluation, 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.

Phone interviews were held prior to the monitoring visit because the district would not hold the focus group meeting on the day it had been scheduled. Parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. The majority of the parents interviewed felt that they were a part of the IEP team and that their opinions were valued when planning for their child's education. Many parents expressed concern regarding the lack of a case management services over the summer months. Parents were also concerned about the lack of communication between the child study team and themselves. All parents of in-district students felt that their children had access to the general education curriculum and activities.

Results of the 2000-2001 statewide assessments indicated that 84.6% of students scored proficient at the elementary level, while 89.5% of students participated in the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment scored proficient.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies/procedures, staff training, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs, frequency/duration/location of related services, goals and objectives, length of day/year, transfer students, certifications, consent, content of notices of meetings and written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision/hearing screenings, identification meeting participants, multidisciplinary assessments for special education standardized assessments, functional assessments, signed written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports, bilingual evaluations, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports signed/dated, acceptance/rejection of reports with rationale, bilingual evaluations, eligibility meeting/ participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability(SLD), signature of agreement/disagreement with rationale, IEP meeting/participants, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs), goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, decision making process, regular education access for in-district students, continuum of program options, preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention program to a preschool disabilities program by age 3, access/requests, maintenance/destruction, documentation of other locations of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding selection and training of surrogate parents, documentation of date of referral, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services and IEP considerations/required statements

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding parent training, facilities, provision of notice of meetings, provision of written notice, child find activities, identification meeting timelines, evaluation reports to parents/adult students 10 days prior to IEP meeting, notification/participation of out-of-district students in non-academic extra-curricular activities, documentation of Least Restrictive Environment, statement of Transition Service Needs, student/agency invitation, preferences/interests survey/assessments, age 14 transition service needs, graduation requirements and access sheets.

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