

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Carlstadt Public Schools

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: March 4 and 5, 2002

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller, Zola Mills

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Carlstadt School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Carlstadt 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 Carlstadt 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 at the school on February 13, 2002. 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.

District Strengths:

The district should be commended for its commitment to include all students in general education programs. The district offers a Pre-K program that is open to all four year olds, a full day kindergarten program, a literacy/language development program for all pre-K students, kindergarten students, first graders and self-contained special education

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students. This program is provided by the speech/language specialist and a certified Orton Gillingham teacher in small class settings. The district also provides a career exploration program, a life skills program and social skills group for all students.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, 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.

I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures and professional development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Area of Need:

Parent training - During the on-site parents identified a concern regarding parent training/development activities to assist them in understanding the needs of their children.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides training for parents to assist them in understanding how their children's' disabilities impact educational performance.**

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of related services, length of school day/year, transfer students, and facilities. 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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III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings, and native language. 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.

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the referral process, summer referrals, health summaries and hearing and vision screenings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site regarding Child Find procedures for students ages three through twenty-one and identification meeting participants for pre-school students. The district has already addressed the child find issue by revising its brochure.

Area of Need:

Identification meeting participants - During the on-site visit, record review indicated that general education teachers were not participating in identification meetings for pre-school students.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure general education teachers participate in identification meetings for preschool students. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures.**

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary and bilingual evaluations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports and acceptance or rejection of reports. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with participants, severe discrepancy formula, documentation of eligibility and the provision of speech reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site regarding the provision of evaluation reports to parents.

Area of Need:

Copy of evaluation reports to parents - During the on-site visit, it was determined that though staff indicated they were providing evaluation reports to parents ten days before the eligibility meeting, this provision is not documented in the student record.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it maintains documentation of the provision of evaluation reports to parents. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures.**

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants at IEP meetings, ninety-day timelines and teacher knowledge/access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations/required statements, implementation dates, annual review timelines and alignment of goals and objectives to core curriculum content standards (CCCS). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

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IX. LRE

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individual decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, use of supplemental aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation and continuum. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

X. Transition - Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of pre-school transition planning conferences.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of transition to Pre-school Disabled from Early Intervention Program by age three. The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

X. Transition – Post-School

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitations to transition meeting, agency involvement, age fourteen transition service needs and courses of study and preferences/interests. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of documentation to case manager and suspension tracking.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern regarding discipline procedures, behavioral intervention plans/functional behavior assessments, manifestation determinations and interim alternative educational settings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

XIII. Graduation

Summary of findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP requirements, diploma, and written notice.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns regarding participation of out-of-district students in graduation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns regarding parent amendment to records and staff development regarding policies and procedures of student records as to location, access and confidentiality. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding access sheets in speech language files.

Area of Need:

Access sheets – During the on-site visit, it was determined that files for students determined eligible for speech language services did not contain an access sheet.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure files for an administrative oversight component to ensure that files for students determined eligible for speech language services contain access sheets.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Carlstadt School District on March 4 and 5, 2002. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify nearly all 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 prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of these identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is 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. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process. Some parents expressed an interest in forming a special education parent group.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, certifications, independent evaluations, direct referrals (parent/staff), timelines for identification meeting, multi-disciplinary reports, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation, eligibility meetings, IEP participants, ninety day timelines, teacher knowledge/access, preschool transition planning conference, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, statewide assessment, graduation IEP requirements, diploma, written notice, programs and services, parent/adult student access, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of student records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, professional development, provision of related services, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, surrogate parents, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, native language, referral processes, summer referrals, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports, eligibility participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, copies of evaluation reports to parents, considerations/required statements, goals and objective aligned with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, supplementary aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, early intervention to preschool by age three, student/agency invite, agency involvement in transition, age fourteen service needs, courses, preferences and interests, discipline procedures, BIP/FBA, manifestation determination, IAES, graduation participation, parent/adult student amendment to records and staff development in policies and procedures of student location, access, and confidentiality.

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding parent training, Child Find, participants at pre-school identification meetings, documentation of evaluation reports to parents and access sheets.

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.