

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Carlstadt/East Rutherford Regional High School District **County:** Bergen

Monitoring Dates: February 24, 25 and 26, 2003

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller, Damen Cooper and Tracey Pettiford-Bugg

Background Information:

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, the Carlstadt East Rutherford Regional High 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 East Rutherford High 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 East Rutherford Regional High 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 Henry P. Becton High School on February 19, 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, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for offering numerous college preparatory and career oriented curriculum area courses as well as numerous co-curricular clubs and activities that are open to all students, including students with disabilities.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

The district has received awards for its art and literary magazine *Images*. This magazine has been cited by the National Council of Teachers of English, is a recipient of the Governor's Award and was also cited by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association for excellence in design and creativity.

The district provides a study skills course through the resource center program that includes note taking, time management, organizational skills, problem solving, memorization skills, test taking techniques and listening skills. The application of these study skills is emphasized in mainstream classes.

The district also shares a transition coordinator with other high schools in their region that aids students in establishing preferences and interests through surveys and assessments.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Evaluation, Reevaluation, Discipline and Statewide Assessment 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 and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of parent/professional development. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need as it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.**

No additional areas of need were identified 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 extended school year, provision of programs, related services, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of adaptive physical education. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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 written notice, native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent for re-evaluation and notice of meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, direct referrals, summer referrals, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting participants and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the referral process and pre-referral interventions. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.** The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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 meetings, criteria and statement of eligibility.

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

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding signatures of agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations.

Area(s) of Need:

Signatures of Agreement/Disagreement Rationale - During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the child study team members do not document their agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure members of the eligibility team document their agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of considerations/required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEP's to parents, ninety-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation of general education teachers in meetings and the monitoring of the implementation of IEP's. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction of this area.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, least restrictive environment documentation, considerations and required statements, supplementary aids and services, regular education access in district and the continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of nonacademic/extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, staff interview and a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, courses of study, preference/interests, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement and student agency invitations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit,

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP requirements, choice of diploma and out of district participation.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Written Notice of Graduation - During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district is not providing written notice of graduation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it provides written notice of graduation. It is recommended that the district adopt the notice forms developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of home instruction and insufficient staff. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient as it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.** The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access/request and maintenance and destruction of records.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of amending records and access sheets. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations - During the on-site visit, interviews and a review of records indicated that the central office files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files identify the locations of other student records maintained by the district.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Carlstadt East Rutherford Regional High School District on February 24, 25, and 26, 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 with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the implementation of activities to bring about correction in some of the areas identified during the self-assessment [process. The district is also 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Several parents expressed concerns regarding the training of general education staff on inclusion. Parents also felt a need to have the transition coordinator available on a more consistent basis.

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, provision of programs, related services, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, written notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, Child Find, direct referrals, summer referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines and participants, evaluation, reevaluation, eligibility meeting participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, IEP meetings, considerations/required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives related to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, annual review timelines, implementation dates, IEPs to parents, ninety-day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, least restrictive environment decision making process, documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access, continuum of programs, discipline, statewide assessment, graduation requirements, out of district participation in graduation, choice of diploma, class size, age ranges, group sizes, consultation time, access and requests, maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent training, adaptive physical education, surrogate parents, consent for reevaluation, notices of meetings, participation of general education teachers, referral process, pre-referral interventions, copy of eligibility reports to parents and adult students, monitoring implementation of IEPs, participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, transition services, home instruction, insufficient staff, access sheets, and amending records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding signatures of agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations, written notice of graduation and documentation of other locations.

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

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