

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

**District:** Central Regional School District

**County:** Ocean

**Monitoring Dates:** December 5-6, 2001

**Monitoring Team:** Barbara J. Tucker, Georgianna Parlacowski, Carmen Fanucci, Stephen A. Coplin

**Background Information:**

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Central Regional School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Central Regional 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 Central Regional 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 26, 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, child study team members and guidance counselors.

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## I. General Provisions

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Policy and Procedures and public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the need to train staff on the needs of students with disabilities, revise and update required board policies regarding the provision of special education and related services and to continue to incorporate issues and representatives into the district's 100-hour professional development initiative. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

## **Section II: F.A.P.E.**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding extended school year, access to facilities, holding meetings prior to making changes in students' programs, the transfer process, start dates for related services, programs for students in district and those in out-of-district placements and sufficient related service personnel. 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 ensure that the procedures are consistently implemented. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding frequency, duration and location of related services and length of school day.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Documentation of Frequency, Duration and Location of Related Services** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district does not consistently document the frequency, duration and location of related services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that it consistently documents the frequency, duration and location of related services in IEPs. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the required changes.**

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**Length of the School Day** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the district does not indicate in IEPs the length of the school day for those students who have a shortened day.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the length of the school day is identified in the IEPs of those students who have a shortened day.**

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding written notice, notices of meetings, participants at meetings, efforts to secure parental participation, native language, 15/20-day timelines, sources for independent evaluations, and explanation of proposed or denied actions. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding surrogate parents, independent evaluations, consent for initial IEP implementation, goals and objectives for counseling and documentation of the provision of IEPs/evaluation reports to parents.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Surrogate Parents** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not have procedures in place to select and train individuals to act as surrogate parents.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that procedures are developed to select and train surrogate parents in the event one is needed.**

**Independent Evaluations** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the district does not provide parents with information regarding where an independent evaluation may be obtained.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents are provided with information regarding where an independent evaluation may be obtained.**

**Consent for Initial IEP Implementation** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that although the district

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obtains consent for those activities that require parental consent, it does not consistently document that consent is obtained for implementation of students' initial IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parental consent for implementation of a student's initial IEP is documented in the student record.**

**Goals and Objectives for Counseling** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that goals and objectives for counseling services are not developed and incorporated into student IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives for counseling services are developed and incorporated into IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the required changes.**

**Provision of IEPs/Evaluation Reports to Parents** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district does not provide copies of IEPs or evaluation reports to parents.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of IEPs and evaluation reports to parents. Additionally, the district must ensure that this provision is documented in student files. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the required changes.**

### **Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding child find activities, documentation of pre-referral interventions, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, documentation of eligibility, acceptance/rejection of reports, 90-day timelines and standardized speech/language assessments. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

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## **Section VI: Evaluation**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding re-evaluation timelines, assessment practices and instruments, components of functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services and those students who are eligible for speech/language 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

## **Section VII: Eligibility**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding eligibility determination, written notice, meeting participants, and criteria. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding attempts to obtain parent participation.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Parental Participation** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the district does not document attempts to obtain parental participation at meetings.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that efforts to obtain parental participation at meetings are documented in student records.**

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### **Section VIII: IEP**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of goals and objectives related to the Core Curriculum Content Standards and teacher access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding PLEP statements, IEP meetings, meeting participants, prior written notice, provision of IEPs to parents, role of teachers in implementing IEPs, IEP implementation dates, opportunities for parents to observe placements, informing staff about contents of IEP, annual reviews, teacher access to IEPs, documentation of in-class support teacher's instructional time, and required IEP considerations and statements. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding age of majority.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Age of Majority** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through staff interviews and record reviews that the district does not consistently inform parents and/or adult students of the rights that will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that at least three years before the student reaches age 18, the parent and/or the adult student are apprised of the transfer of rights. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

### **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the full continuum, supplemental aides and services, and the individual decision-making process. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

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Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding LRE statements and participation of out-of-district students.

### **Areas of Need:**

**LRE Statements** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that although many classified school-aged students are receiving educational services in general education settings, LRE statements are not individualized and do not document the individual considerations that lead to the removal of students from regular education.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that LRE statements include the necessary information to document the process and considerations that result in a student's removal from regular education. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component and in-service training to ensure the implementation of the required changes.**

**Notification to Out-of-District Students** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not notify students placed in out-of-district settings of non-academic/extra-curricular activities available within the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that out-of-district students are afforded the opportunity to participate in non-academic/extra-curricular activities available within the district. The plan must include a mechanism to inform these students of these activities.**

### **Section X: Transition to Post-School**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding student and agency invitation to IEP meetings, statement of needed transition services and transition service needs, community experience, employment, skills for daily living, functional vocational evaluations, assessments to obtain students' interests and preferences, post-school liaison, alternate strategies to meet students' transition objectives and identification of steps to be taken when the agency responsible for transition services does not attend IEP meeting. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

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### **Section XI: Discipline**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking and manifestation determination meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding notification to case manager, behavioral intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, identification of interim alternate educational settings and 10-day suspensions. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

### **Section XII: Statewide Assessment**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of approved accommodations and modifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding alternate assessments. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the Special Review Assessment and student participation.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Special Review Assessment (SRA)** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through staff interviews that the SRA process is not considered when a student with a disability fails one or more parts of the HSPT.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the SRA process is considered when a student with a disability must pass the HSPT11 in order to receive a diploma and fails one or more parts of this assessment.**

**Student Participation** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through staff interviews that guidance counselors make unilateral decisions regarding whether some



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students with disabilities should participate in statewide assessments even when the student's IEP specifically states the participation status.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that only the IEP team determines whether each student with a disability will participate in statewide assessments. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

### Section XIII: Graduation

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding graduation requirements and written notice of graduation. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding documentation to out-of-district students regarding participation in graduation activities.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Participation in Graduation Activities** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not inform students who are in out-of-district placements of graduation activities. Additionally, the district does not inform these students that they have a choice to receive the district of resident diploma or the diploma of the out-of-district school.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all out-of-district students are provided the opportunity to participate in graduation activities and to receive the residents district's diploma or the out-of district school diploma. The improvement plan must include a component to ensure documentation is maintained in the files of these students.**

### Section XIV: Programs and Services

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range waivers and group sizes for speech.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding collaborative time for staff, class sizes, home instruction, special class placements and

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classroom aides. 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 plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

### **Section XV: Student Records**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, district identified concerns regarding parents' rights to access records and in-service training on student records for professional staff. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and in-service to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

#### **Area of Need:**

**Access Sheets in Speech/Language Files** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district does not maintain access sheets in files of students determined eligible for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures 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 Central Regional School District on December 5-6, 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 a substantial number of areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the three parents who attended expressed positive comments regarding the district's programs and services. The issues of concern these parents raised had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding staff training, revising board policies, extended school year, access to facilities, meetings, transfer process, related services, programs for students in-district and those in out-of-district placements, related service personnel, notice issues, native language, timelines, independent evaluations, child find activities, documentation of pre-referral interventions, health, vision and hearing screenings, acceptance/rejection of reports, standardized assessments, evaluation practices, components of functional assessment, PLEP statements, role of teachers in implementing IEPs, IEP implementation dates and annual reviews, LRE issues, transition, discipline issues, class sizes, and graduation issues.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding frequency, duration and location of related services and length of school day, surrogate parents, independent evaluations, consent, goals and objectives for counseling, documentation of the provision of IEPs/evaluation reports to parents, age of majority, LRE statements, participation of out-of-district students, Special Review Assessment 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.