

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

**District:** Clayton School District

**County:** Gloucester

**Monitoring Dates:** April 6, 2004

**Monitoring Team:** Patricia Fair, Julia Harmelin

### **Background Information:**

During the 2002-2003 school year, the Clayton School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Clayton School District with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free and 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 Clayton School District developed an improvement plan to address the identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a comprehensive desk audit, held a public focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Herma S. Simmons Elementary School on February 25, 2004 and conducted parent interviews to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of identified need.

### **District Strengths:**

The district is commended for the many different programs they have implemented in their district that meet the criteria established by the National Reading Panel 2000. The district has developed a comprehensive, diversified reading program that is multi-sensory in nature and includes the following: FastForward, Project Read-3 Strands, LiPs, Reading Recovery, Wilson Language System, Orton-Gillingham-Scottish Rite, Rebecca Sitton –Spelling, Phonemic Awareness at Pre-School and Kindergarten, Trade books, and Basal Unit.

The district provides professional development activities in reading and written language to their staff as well as to other school districts in the area.

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

The district is further commended for holding their second annual Literacy Fair March 6, 2004. Nine other school districts were invited to attend. Participants included parents, teachers, administrators and community members. The fair was presented by the teachers of Clayton School District on topics such as Reader Writer Workshop, Phonemic Awareness, Wilson Reading, Written Expression, FastForward, Earobics, and Literacy for Parents. There was also a presentation by author Diane Belinfanti and illustrator Georganna Hall. Vendors were available on-site with educational supplies.

The district frequently provides workshops to parents and students on topics such as behavior, parenting skills and homework. They have recently provided a workshop on "Homework, Sore Spots and Solutions," which was well attended.

The district has implemented the Renaissance Program to enhance positive student behavior. Rewards are earned through a point value system.

### **Data Summary:**

Data submitted by the district indicated that placement in self-contained programs for preschool disabled students, has increased from 23.5 percent in 2001 to 58.3 percent. The district has identified this through self-assessment and has opened a second session in an effort to include students in general education. The district's improvement plan will be sufficient to address this concern.

Placement of school aged students in general education more than 80 percent of the day is 28.4 percent which is lower than the state average of 41.6 percent. The percentage of students placed in general education less than 40 percent of the day is 26 percent which is higher than the state average of 17.7 percent. These data indicate a tendency to place students in more restrictive settings. In response to these data, the district has indicated the need to provide more professional development in learning style/differentiation instruction, referral process and decision-making process. Additionally, the district has hired an inclusion facilitator through the capacity building grant. The district's improvement plan will be sufficient to address this concern.

### **Sections Demonstrating Compliance in All Standards**

**General Provisions, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Statewide Assessments and Graduation Requirements** 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. Free appropriate Public Education**

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

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, provision of programs, length of school day/year, and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of related services, transfer procedures and facilities. The district's

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

improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district has begun to implement changes in the areas of related services, transfer procedures and facilities to bring about correction.

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

### **Section III. Procedural Safeguards**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents and notice in native language. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district has begun to implement change in the area of notice in native language to bring about change.

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 and direct referrals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summary, vision and hearing screenings and identification meetings. The district also identified concerns regarding overrepresentation of minority students in special education. The district will continue to receive technical assistance from the Office of Special Education Programs and the Office of Civil Rights regarding improvement plan activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district has begun to implement activities in the area of pre-referral interventions to bring about correction.

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

### **Section VII. Eligibility**

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

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of criteria and statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants, signature of agreement/disagreement rationale and the provision of

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

a copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of needs. The district has corrected copy of evaluation reports to parents/ adult student 10 days prior to meetings.

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

### **Section: VIII. IEP**

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

During self-assessments the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consideration required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, annual reviews, 90-days timelines, teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP meeting participants at shared time vocational technical schools, present levels of educational performance, goals and objective aligned with core curricular content standards and IEPs to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district has corrected provision of IEP to parents prior to implementation.

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Oberti and regular education access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of decision-making process, consideration and documentation of supplemental aids and services, nonacademic and extracurricular participation and continuum of programs. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

### **Section X. Transition to Pre-School**

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

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three.

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

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

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

**Summary of Findings**

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests, age 16 needed transition services needs and student agency invitation. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Section: XI. Discipline**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to case manager, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plan and procedural safeguards. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Section: XIV. Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range, group size, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of sufficient staff. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

**Section: XV. Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

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

During the self-assessment process the district-identified concerns in the areas of documentation of other location of records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

## Summary

The Clayton School District is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of the review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that has already resulted in systemic change in most areas. The district is further commended for the many areas determined by the district as compliant with federal and state statute and regulations and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs through a desk audit, a focus group meeting and parent interviews.

A review of data indicated that although the district's placement of preschool disabled students has increased the district has implemented a plan to address this issue. The district's data for students placed in general education 40 percent of the day has increased over the past 2 years. To address this issue the district has hired an inclusion facilitator through the capacity building grant. In addition, the district identified the need to provide more professional development in learning styles and differentiated instruction.

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 expressed were issues that the district identified during the self-assessment process. Parents expressed concerns regarding transition services available to students ages 14 and older and related services provided from October to May.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment and Graduation.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included extended school year, length of day and school year, certification, consent, notices of meeting, written notice, meetings, independent evaluations, child find, direct referrals, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, criteria, documentation of eligibility, considerations and required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, 90 day timelines, Oberti, regular education access, preschool transition conferences, early intervention to preschool disabled by age 3, suspension tracking, interim alternative educational settings, class size, age range, group size, home instruction, access sheets and maintenance of records.

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE are the provision of evaluation reports to parents and the provision of a copy of the IEP to parents prior to implementation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding related services, transfer student, facilities, surrogate parents, notice, native language, referral process, pre-referral interventions, identification meeting timelines, vision and hearing screening, health summary, overrepresentation of minority students, meeting participants, signature of agreement disagreement rational, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives, observation of proposed educational placement,

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

individualized decision-making, supplemental aids and services, non-academic and extracurricular participation, continuum, student/agency invitation, post-secondary liaison, agency involvement, age 14 transition services needs, age 16 transition service needs, procedural safeguards, documentation to case manager, behavioral intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, description of special class programs, sufficient staff, documentation of other records, parent/adult student access to records and destruction of records.

No additional areas of need were identified during monitoring activities.