

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

District: Town of Clinton

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Date: October 26, 2005

Monitoring Team: Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Town of Clinton School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Town of Clinton School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 Town of Clinton 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.

During the on-site visit, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitor 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by telephone.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the Town of Clinton School District had a classification rate of 13%, lower than the state average of 14.6% for that year. Additionally, less than 2% of students with disabilities attended school in private or public schools outside of the district compared to the state average of 6%. Additional data regarding performance on the statewide assessments indicates a high percentage of students with disabilities scoring in the proficient range on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge-Grade 3 (NJ ASK3) mathematics section and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) language arts literacy sections and a large percentage of students with

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disabilities scoring in the advanced proficient range for both the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge-Grade 4 (NJ ASK4) and GEPA mathematics sections.

The district has placed all 3 and 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities in the district’s self-contained special education preschool program. The district has identified preschool continuum as an area of concern and has a sufficient plan to address this area of need. The district plans to establish contractual arrangements with community preschools and to open a building-based preschool program that will provide opportunities for preschoolers with disabilities to be educated with their typical peers.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

The self-assessment process required the district to review implementation of federal and state regulations categorized into 15 sections. Within each section, a number of areas were reviewed. The on-site monitoring visit involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the district in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. These sections were identified by the charter school during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant:

Free, Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Individualized Education Program, Transition and Statewide Assessments.

Graduation Requirements are not addressed as the school educates students through eighth grade.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant. The areas were reviewed for both students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech-language services (ELSL). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consent ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of notice of a meeting ▪ Content of notice of a meeting ▪ Meetings ▪ Provision of written notice ▪ Content of written notice ▪ Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 ▪ Referral process ▪ Direct referrals ▪ Health summary ▪ Vision and hearing screenings ▪ Identification meeting timelines ▪ Identification meeting participants

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations ▪ Standardized Assessments ▪ Functional assessments ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ Eligibility Criteria ▪ Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability) ▪ Signatures of agreement/disagreement
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Documentation of LRE decisions ▪ Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district ▪ Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Suspension tracking system ▪ Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students ▪ IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days ▪ Procedures for determination of change in placement ▪ Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavior intervention plan ▪ Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement ▪ Short-term removals that are not a change in placement—school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided ▪ Interim Alternative Educational Settings ▪ Manifestation determinations
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Class size ▪ Age range ▪ Group size

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Areas of Noncompliance – Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The district must revise the improvement plan for any area where there is an ‘X’ in the ‘Needs Revision’ column.

Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
General Provisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent training- The district identified a need to provide more opportunities for parent training and to better inform parents about training opportunities outside of the district. 	X		
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notices in native language – The district does not have an updated file of required written communication in other languages. ▪ Interpreters at meetings – The district does not have translation resources available. 	X		
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Pre-referral interventions – The district does not have procedures in place for staff to document the implementation and effectiveness of pre-referral interventions. The improvement plan must be revised to include an oversight mechanism to ensure continued compliance. 		X	
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational Impact Statement (ESLS) - The district does not include an impact statement in the body of the speech and language evaluation. The improvement plan must be revised to include an oversight mechanism to ensure continued compliance. 		X	
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents – copies not provided 10 days prior to eligibility meeting. The improvement plan must be revised to include an oversight mechanism to ensure continued compliance. 		X	
Least Restrictive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuum of programs (preschoolers) and opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (preschoolers) - The district does not provide program options for 	X		

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Section	Area	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
	preschoolers to be educated with typical peers. The district plans to open an integrated preschool class.			
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notification of removal forwarded to case manager-The district does not document consultation between administration and CST case manager in the event of disciplinary action. The improvement plan must be revised to include an oversight mechanism to ensure continued compliance. 		X	
Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common planning time-common planning time is not built into the schedules of resource program teachers. 	X		

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Town of Clinton School District on October 26, 2005. 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 comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. The district is further 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.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the Town of Clinton School District had a classification rate of 13%, lower than the state average of 14.6% for that year. Additionally, less than 2% of students with disabilities attended school in private or public schools outside of the district compared to the state average of 6%. Additional data regarding performance on the statewide assessments indicates a high percentage of students with disabilities scoring in the proficient range on the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge-Grade 3 (NJ ASK3) mathematics section and the Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment (GEPA) language arts literacy sections and a large percentage of students with disabilities scoring in the advanced proficient range for both the New Jersey Assessment of Skills and Knowledge-Grade 4 (NJ ASK4) and GEPA mathematics sections.

The district has placed all 3 and 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities in the district's self-contained special education preschool program. The district has identified preschool continuum as an area of concern and has a sufficient plan to address this area of need. The district plans to establish contractual arrangements with community preschools and to open a building-based preschool program that will provide opportunities for preschoolers with disabilities to be educated with their typical peers.

During interviews conducted with parents by telephone, the parents that could be reached expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs, delivery of services and staff.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Free, Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Individualized Education Program and Statewide Assessments.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included consent, implementation of IEP without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, content of notice of a meeting, meetings, provision of written notice, content of written notice, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments (ESERS only), bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility (severe learning disability), documentation of LRE decisions, notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district, placement decisions based on students' individual needs (6-21 only), suspension tracking system,

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discipline procedures employed equitably for all students, IEP team meeting for first removal beyond ten days, procedures for determination of change in placement, procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment and development of behavioral intervention plan, short-term removals resulting in change of placement, short-term removals that are not a change in placement, interim alternative educational settings, manifestation determination meetings, class size, age range and group sizes for speech.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, pre-referral interventions, educational impact statement (ESLS), copy of evaluation reports to parents, continuum of programs for preschoolers and notification of suspension forwarded to case manager.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Town of Clinton School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.