

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

District: Cranbury Township School District

County: Middlesex

Monitoring Dates: December 8, 2004

Monitoring Team: Vanessa Leonard

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Cranbury Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Cranbury 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 Cranbury Township 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 Cranbury School, on November 15, 2004. Sixteen parents were in attendance at the focus group. 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for the After School Homework Program. The After School Homework Program provides an opportunity for all students to be assisted with their assignments. Classroom teachers assist students with their work. Students are

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identified and placed in this program through teacher and/or parent referral. The program meets Monday through Friday.

Additionally, the district provides the Garage Band Music Class. Sixth and seventh grade students who have no prior musical experience are able to compose music with the help of the music teacher. This class offers students an opportunity to use cutting edge technology to create original music.

The district also provides the Inquiry Based Science Program. This science program is for all students in grades 3 through 5. Students are heterogeneously grouped in sets of six to investigate various concepts such as floating and sinking, Newton's law, the solar system and ecology. The units are designed to address the eight intelligences and various learning styles.

Data Summary:

The Cranbury Township School District reported a classification rate of 13.21% for 2003. This is slightly more than 1% below the state classification rate of 14.35% for the same year. Cranbury Township School District has placed 48.8% of students with disabilities, ages 6-21 in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This percentage is comparable with the state average of 41.6%. The majority of preschoolers with disabilities were educated in special education settings during the 2002-2003 school year; however this was identified as an area of need and the district has begun to implement activities to include more preschoolers in general education.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

Evaluation, Statewide Assessment 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures, parent training and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of effectiveness of staff training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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

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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/year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of hearing aids and counseling goals and objectives. 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 III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of health summaries and vision/hearing summaries. 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.

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Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of reevaluation meeting participants and reevaluations by June 30th.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of three year timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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 eligibility meetings/participants, criteria, statement of eligibility and evaluation reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of signatures of agreement disagreement with rationale. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings/participants, considerations, required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of placement observations and parental concerns stated in IEP. 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.

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Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplementary aids and services, notification/participation of out-of-district students and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of general education access for preschool students in district. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of age 14 transition service needs.

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the area of early intervention program to a preschool disabilities program by age 3.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of preschool transition plan conferences. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, and procedural safeguards.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of suspension tracking. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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 compliance in the areas of class size/age range waivers, speech group sizes, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of class descriptions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. 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 this area.

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 compliance in the areas of access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of other locations and staff knowledge of policies and procedures.

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 Cranbury School District on December 8, 2004. 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 this review the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that 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 those 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.

Sixteen parents attended 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 stated that their children were receiving excellent speech therapy services through the district. Parents felt that their children had access to the general education curriculum and that this was a priority within the district. Many parents expressed that they were a welcome members of the IEP team. Some parents felt that there was greater parental involvement in the elementary grades. These parents expressed that there was a change in services as students enter middle school. This group of parents felt less involved as students enter middle school and high school.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, parent training, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs, related services, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, consent, content/provision of written notice/notice of meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines/participants, reevaluation meeting participants, reevaluations by June 30th, eligibility meetings/participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, evaluation reports to parents, IEP meetings/participants, considerations, required statements, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, decision making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplementary aids and services, notification/participation of out-of-district students, continuum of programs, age 14 transition service needs, early intervention program to a preschool disabilities program by age 3, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguards, class size/age range waivers, speech group sizes, home instruction, consultation time, access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the effectiveness of staff training, hearing aids, goals and objectives for counseling, surrogate parents, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, three year timelines, signatures of agreement/disagreement, parental concerns stated in IEP, placement observations, general education access for preschool students, preschool transition plan

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conferences, suspension tracking, class descriptions, documentation of other locations, staff knowledge of policies and procedures.

The improvement plan submitted by the district to the New Jersey Department of Education in June, 2004 will be submitted for approval to the Director, Office of Special Education Programs. No revisions are required. The implementation of the activities in the improvement plan will be verified by the County Office of Education.