

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

The district provides a year long program for 9th and 10th grade students in self-contained classes called "Career Education" that allows students to investigate careers matched to their interests, abilities, strengths and passions. The district also provides a Career Scope program on lap tops for all classified students so that they can investigate careers.

The district also provides a variety of clubs, peer mediation and a "Fab Friday" enrichment program to their elementary school students including students with and without disabilities.

Data Summary:

For the past three years, the Cresskill School District's classification rate for students requiring special education (excluding eligible for speech and language services) has been below the state average. In order to ensure that students are being identified and referred, the district has developed an improvement plan that includes in-service training and procedures for professionals with educational responsibilities regarding the referral process. Further, for students ages 6 to 21, the district's trend over the past 3 years has been to place approximately 55% of the special education students in the general educational setting for more than 80% of the day. The district has consistently included students with disabilities in general education classrooms at a rate significantly higher than the state average of 41.6%. These opportunities provide students with instruction in the general education curriculum with their nondisabled peers. In contrast to the state average (17.3%), the district educates significantly fewer students in separate settings (12.6%); that is, excluded from the general education classroom more than sixty percent of the day. Additionally, review of data indicates that the district has consistently increased placement of preschool students with disabilities in general education early childhood settings. In 2001, only 5.6% were provided with special education programs in general education. However, in 2002, 19.4% were placed in general education and in 2003, 20% were placed in general education.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Preschool Transition and Statewide Assessment were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during the self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site comprehensive audit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance 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 in-service training for professional staff, parent training and communication. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of provision of programs and related services of speech, counseling, occupational and physical therapy including goals and objectives, length of school day and year, transfer students, certifications and facilities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of extended school year. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and the comprehensive desk audit.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of providing notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, meetings, notices of meetings and written notice. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, meetings, notices of meetings and written notice.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and the comprehensive desk audit.

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of direct referrals and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding Child Find, the referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries and vision and hearing screenings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has initiated activities to bring about correction in these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance and/or rejection of outside reports

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech language services and written reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the identified areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of conducting reevaluations by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of three year timelines and planning meetings and participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the identified areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to a meeting and signatures of agreement or disagreement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants and statement of eligibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the identified areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of IEP meetings and participants, age of majority, annual review timelines and ninety day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, providing copies of IEPs to parents and teacher access and responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the areas of considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, IEPs to parents and teacher access and responsibility.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of decision making process and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services and general education access. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the identified areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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, identifying students' preferences and interests, student/agency invitation to IEP meetings, and age sixteen needed transition services. The district improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, preferences and interests and student/agency invite. The district has also initiated activities to bring about correction in the area of age 16 needed transition services.

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No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of discipline procedures and documentation to case managers. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the areas of procedures and suspension tracking.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XII: Graduation Requirements

During the self- assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of IEP requirements of attendance, credit hours, HSPA, local regulations and participation.

During the self-assessment the district identified concerns in the area of written notice of graduation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of concern.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding class size waivers, description of programs, case management time and providing space for testing and conferences. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of parent and adult-student access to records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of locations of additional records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of and documentation of locations of additional records and procedures for maintenance of student records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district has successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the area of documentation of locations of additional records.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Summary

Special education monitoring was completed in the **Cresskill School District** on October 7, 2004. The purpose of this phase of the monitoring process 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 an exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that will 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 identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. The district is further commended for the many areas identified as compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs.

A review of data indicated the district has maintained a classification rate of students requiring special education (excluding eligible for speech and language services) well below the state average. Furthermore, for students ages six to twenty-one, the district's trend over the past three years has been to place 55% of the special education students in the general educational setting for more than 80% of the day. The district has consistently placed special education students in general education settings, providing them with an opportunity to learn the general education curriculum with their nondisabled peers, at a significant percent above the state average. Additionally, review of data indicates that the district has significantly increased placement of preschool disabled students in general education early childhood settings.

At a public focus group meeting attended by approximately twenty parents, participants expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents noted that the students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum in the least restrictive environment including the involvement of special education students in extra-curricular activities and that they are involved with the education of their children. However, specific concerns were raised regarding the education of students who did not participate in general education. Parents also expressed concerns regarding the continuum of program options as students' progress through the district. Program options such as collaborative teaching and scheduling issues were of concern. These issues were identified during the initial parent surveys and the district has developed an improvement plan to increase parental satisfaction with the district's special education programs and services. Parents of current and past students who attended the regionally supported PIE preschool program also positively commented on their children's progress while in the program.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the focus meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of related services for speech, counseling, occupational and physical therapy including goals and objectives and frequency, location and duration, transfer students, length of school day, facilities, certifications, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referral, identification meeting timelines and participants, multidisciplinary evaluations for special education eligibility, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and/or rejection of outside reports, reevaluations completed by June 30th of student's last year in preschool, meetings, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents/adult students ten days prior to meeting, signatures of

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agreement or disagreement, IEP meetings and participants, age of majority, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, least restrictive environment decision making process, continuum of programs, preschool transition, procedural safeguards, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, interim alternative educational setting, manifestation determination, graduation requirements of attendance, credit hours, HSPA, local regulation and participation, age range waivers, group sizes for speech-language services, home instruction, statewide assessment, parent and adult-student access to record, access sheets and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training for professional staff and parent training, extended school year, surrogate parents, consent, meetings, notices of meetings, written notice, Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, functional assessments, multi-disciplinary evaluations for eligibility for speech-language services, written reports, three-year timelines, planning meetings and participants, eligibility meeting participants, statement of eligibility, IEP considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, providing copies of IEPs to parents, teacher access and responsibility, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, general education access, age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests, student/agency invitation, age 16 needed transition services, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, written notice of graduation, class size waivers, description of programs, case management time, space for testing and conferences, maintenance of records and documentation of locations of additional records.

During the on-site comprehensive audit, it was determined that the district successfully implemented activities to bring about correction in the self-identified areas of extended school year, surrogate parents, consent, meetings, notices of meetings, written notice, functional assessments, multi-disciplinary evaluations for ESLS, written reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings and participants, eligibility meeting participants, statement of eligibility, IEP considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standard, IEPs to parents and teacher access and responsibility, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, general education access, age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests, student/agency invitation, discipline procedures and suspension tracking and documentation of locations of additional records.