

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

District: Deal School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: February 7, 2002

Monitoring Team: Stephen Coplin, Debbie Masarsky, Roberta Friedman

Background Information:

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Deal School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Deal 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. Deal 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 January 28, 2002. 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 administrator/building principal, general education and special education teachers, speech therapist and child study team members.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards: Discipline, Transition Services, Statewide Assessments, Programs and Services and Student Records 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 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 with staff development. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks ongoing training and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the required procedures. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include these components to bring about required changes.

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

Section II: FAPE

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications and goals/objectives for related services.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding extended school year, procedures for transfer students, evaluation procedures, and speech services for tuition students.

Areas of Need:

Extended School Year - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that extended school year is not considered or discussed at IEP meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year is considered, discussed and documented for each student. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Transfer Students - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's child study team does not conduct an immediate review of the evaluation information/IEP and that following that review, if the parent(s) and the district agree, the

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IEP is implemented as written and the student is immediately placed into the appropriate program.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students with disabilities who transfer into the district are immediately placed according to an agreed upon IEP. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Evaluation Procedures/Speech Service for Tuition Students - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews that the district includes in its contracts with families of tuition students that in the event child study team services, speech evaluations and/or speech therapy are warranted, parents will assume costs associated with these services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all evaluations and/or related services are provided to students at no cost to the parent(s). The plan must include a mechanism to immediately revise current contracts and contract entered into subsequent to the receipt of this monitoring report.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, meetings, translators for notices/meetings and independent evaluations.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding content of notices, provision of written notice, surrogate parents and participants at meetings.

Areas of Need:

Content of Notices - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that notices do not contain required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure notices contain required components and statements. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Provision of Written Notice - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that written notices are not provided to parents following meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice is provided to parents following each meeting. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an**

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administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.

Surrogate Parents - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district has not developed procedures to select and train individuals to act as surrogate parents, in the event one is needed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that surrogate parents are selected and trained, in the event one is needed.**

Participants at Meetings - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that regular education teachers do not consistently attend meetings when required.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that required participants attend meetings. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Location, Referral & Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of the referral process, pre-referral interventions, vision/hearing screenings and identification meetings within timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern with health summaries. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visits regarding Child Find activities.

Areas of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's Child Find activities are not sufficient.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Child Find activities continue throughout the year, including summer months, and that they are sufficient to locate and refer potentially disabled students including migrant and homeless students.**

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Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments and written reports for students 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, training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding functional assessments, evaluation reports for students eligible for special education and related services and acceptance/rejection of outside reports.

Areas of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that functional assessments do not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure functional assessments contain the required components. The improvement plan must also include training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that written reports are not consistently signed and dated.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports are signed and dated. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Acceptance/Rejection of Outside Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not accept or reject outside reports and/or assessments because it lacks specific procedures to do so.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it documents the acceptance or rejection of an entire report or assessment, or any part of the report or assessment, which may be provided for consideration by outside specialists, agencies or other districts. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

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Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of re-evaluation timelines, planning meetings, and conducting reevaluations by June 30th for students turning 5 years of age.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding required participants at meetings. This area of need has been addressed in Section III of this report.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of eligibility meetings.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding provision of written reports to parents within timelines, eligibility criteria and statement of eligibility.

Area (s) of Need:

Documentation of Reports to Parents – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although copies of evaluation reports are provided to parents, that provision is not documented in student files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents the provision of copies of evaluation reports in student files. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Eligibility Criteria/Statement - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the IEP team discusses the category under which the student would become eligible for special education and relates services, the district does not document that statement. Additionally, the district has not adopted a discrepancy formula.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to document their eligibility statement as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5. The plan must further ensure the adoption of a statistical formula for determining severe discrepancy. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

Section VIII: Individual Education Program

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Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of goals and objectives aligned to the CCCS, 90-day timelines, implementation dates, annual review timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding considerations/required statements and present levels of educational performance.

Areas of Need:

Considerations/Required Statements of IEPs - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that IEPs do not contain the required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEPs contain the required components and statements. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the district adopt the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Present Level of Educational Performance Statements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district develops these statement, they do not consistently contain required information.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all PLEP statements contain required information as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of continuum and nonacademic and extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns regarding least restrictive environment considerations with supplementary aids and services (SAS). The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

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Section X: Transition from Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of preschool transition procedures.

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

Section XIII: Graduation is not applicable in this kindergarten-8th grade district.

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SUMMARY

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Deal School District on February 7, 2002. 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 areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revisions, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, five out of fifteen parents attended and all expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services. These parents further expressed their satisfaction with the communication among case managers, teachers and parents.

Areas identified as compliant with all standards by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Discipline, Transition Services, Statewide Assessments, Programs and Services and Student Records. Other areas identified as compliant by the district during the self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include policies/procedures, public information, provision of related services, length of school day/year, facilities/certifications, consent, meetings, translators, independent evaluations, referral process, timelines, goals/objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, teacher access/responsibility, statewide assessment, programs/services and student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, health summaries, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, evaluation reports for students eligible for speech/language services and least restrict environment considerations with SAS such as in-class support programs.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, transfer students, content of notices, provision of written notices, surrogate parents, participants at meetings, functional assessments, documentation of written reports to parents, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, Child Find activities, eligibility criteria/statements, IEPs considerations/required statements and PLEPS.

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.

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