

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

District: Delaware Valley Regional High School District

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: October 21, 22, 2002

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky, Stephen Coplin

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Delaware Valley Regional High School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Delaware Valley Regional High 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. The Delaware Valley School Regional High 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 Delaware Valley Regional High School on September 12, 2002. 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, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for the many unique programs that it provides for its special education students.

The district provides special education students with two work related programs. The **Job Sampling Program** exposes students to at least three different work sites. The

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Individualized Supported Job Mentoring Program provides special education students with a job coach at various sites. These programs expose students to various employment situations and encourages the development of work/social skills.

The district has created a **Wheel Chair Track Team** for students to compete at varsity track meets by allowing them to race against their own times.

Additionally, the district provides an after school **Problem Solving Group** for both boys and girls. Each group meets independently throughout the school year to foster socialization among peers and to encourage the development of good decision making.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, 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 (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision/documentation of related services as required by IEPs, goals/objectives for related services, hearing aids, transfer students and extended school year. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit the monitors verified that the district has revised its transfer procedures and has provided staff training regarding these procedures.

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, provision of Notices of a Meeting, content of notices, notices in native language, provision of interpreters at meetings, meetings/participants and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, provision of Written Notice to parents/adult students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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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 and identification meeting (20-day) timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of hearing/vision screenings and health summaries. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit the monitors verified that during spring 2002, the school nurse was trained regarding procedures to document the results of hearing/vision screenings and health summaries for students referred for evaluation.

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

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, and signed reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of acceptance/rejection of all or parts of reports. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component. During the on-site visit the monitors verified that in May 2002, child study team members were trained regarding procedures to document the acceptance/rejection of outside reports.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessment and the dating of written reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the district does not include the required components of a functional assessment.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district includes all required components of the functional assessment in accordance with NJAC 6A:14-3.4(d). The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district's evaluation reports are signed, reports are not consistently dated.

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- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all evaluators date their evaluation reports when developed. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility criteria, eligibility agreement/disagreement and copies of evaluation reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of determination of eligibility for students with lack of instruction in reading, math or with limited English proficiency. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the Statement of Eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD).

Area(s) of Need:

Statement of Eligibility for SLD - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that for students determined eligible for special education/related services under the category specific learning disability (SLD), the district does not document in the eligibility statement, the area(s) of severe discrepancy between the student's current achievement and intellectual ability and does not state that the student's disability is not primarily a result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when documenting the eligibility statement for SLD, the district includes the components required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(c)11. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

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

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of required statements in the district's IEP. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit the monitors verified that beginning in September 2002, the district has revised its IEP to include the statements in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(d)1-14 and that all child study team members were trained regarding the completion of the new IEP format.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making process, regular education access, provision of a continuum of programs and participation of out-of-district (OOD) students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding supplementary aides and services (SAS).

Area(s) of Need:

Supplementary Aids and Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the district does not consistently consider specific supplementary aids and services for lower functioning students to maintain them in the general education settings even though these aids and services are available.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district discusses/considers specific supplemental aids and services during the IEP meeting. The district must document and explain within the LRE section of the IEP, the specific supplemental aids and services considered/rejected and why the supplemental aids and services are not appropriate to meet the student's needs in the general education class. Additionally the district must document the specific general education subject(s) in which the student will not participate. The improvement plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the Transition Service Needs Statement, student interests/preferences and the provision of written invitations to student/agency.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding the Statement of Needed Transition Services. The district's has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool is not applicable in this high school district.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of interim alternative educational settings and provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of suspension tracking. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. The district further identified concerns in the areas of written notification to case managers, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and transmission of disciplinary records to the appropriate authorities. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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/group size and age range.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding home instruction due to a temporary illness/injury. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 themselves compliant in the areas of maintenance/destruction of student records and the documentation of the location of other student records on the cumulative file.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of access to student records and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit the monitors verified that the 2002 Teacher's Handbook and the school calendar (sent to all parents/adult students in August 2002) contained the school policy regarding student records.

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 Delaware Valley Regional High School District on October 21, 22, 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 highly commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision 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, some of those identified areas had been addressed prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services, communication between parents and staff and the provision of transition services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, consent, content of Notices, provision of Notices of a Meeting, meetings/participants, referral process, identification meetings within timelines, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation timelines, eligibility criteria, eligibility agreement/disagreement, copies of evaluation reports to parents, implementation dates on IEPs, annual review/90-day timelines, provision of IEPs to parents, teacher access/responsibilities, present levels of educational performance statements (PLEPs), annual goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, individualized decision-making process, regular education access, continuum of programs, participation of OOD students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities, Transition Service Needs Statement, student interests/preferences, provision of written invitations to student/agency, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguard rights of potentially disabled students, participation in statewide assessments (SWA), accommodations/modifications for SWA, IEP documentation of SWA, Graduation requirements in IEPs, notification to OOD students of graduation exercises/activities, class/group size, age range, maintenance/destruction of student records and documentation of the location of other student records on the cumulative file.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding provision/documentation of related services, goals/objectives for related services, hearing aids, transfer students, extended school year, surrogate parents, provision of written notices to parents/adult students, hearing vision screenings, health summaries, acceptance/rejection of reports, the determination of eligibility, IEP required statements, Statement of Needed Transition Services, written notification to case managers, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, transmission of disciplinary records to

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appropriate authorities, home instruction due to illness/injury, access to student records and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding functional assessments, written reports, Statement of Eligibility for SLD and supplementary aides and services.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Delaware Valley Regional High School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.