

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

District: Dumont School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: May 12 & 14, 2003

Monitoring Team: Tracey Pettiford-Bugg, Jenifer Tucci and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Dumont School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Dumont 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 Dumont 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 Honiss Elementary School on May 5, 2003. 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, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for their comprehensive internet career guidance for transition to post-secondary opportunities.

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The Coin Career Community Program is available to students and parents twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The program assists students with career and curriculum connections.

The district is also commended for implementing differentiated instructional curricula funded by IDEA. The Dumont School District provides balanced literacy programs in each classroom where students are matched with tasks compatible to their individual learning styles. In addition, the district has a literacy coordinator who is assigned to four schools and provides support to teachers and students.

The district provides a transition-to-work summer program for students with disabilities. The Scope Program offers 7th through 10th grade students various job training opportunities and related classroom instruction.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant 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 professional and parent development. 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 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, length of day and year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of related services, transfer students and hearing aides. 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 III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents and native language. 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 the area of native language.

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 3-21, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process and pre-referral interventions and direct referrals. 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 V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and functional assessments.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, written reports, bilingual evaluations and acceptance and rejection of reports. 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 timelines, planning meeting, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of participants at planning meetings. 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 area of statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, signatures of agreement and disagreement rationale and copy of evaluation reports to parents. 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 VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age of majority, annual review timelines, ninety-day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, copy of IEP to parent and adult student prior to implementation and progress towards attainment of 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 the areas of participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, copy of IEP to parent and adult student prior to implementation.

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, Oberti factors and consideration of supplemental aids and services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation and continuum of programs. The district does not afford preschool disabled students the opportunity to be educated with their nondisabled peers because they have not yet established links with community based programs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section X: Transition

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of pre-school transition planning conference, transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three and student agency invite.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, age sixteen needed transition services and agency involvement. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 themselves compliant in the areas of documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures, functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of creation of early childhood programs and description of programs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 access and requests, access sheets, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of professional staff knowledge of policies and procedures regarding student records. 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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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Dumont School District on May 12 and 14, 2003. 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with some of the district's programs and services. Some parents expressed concerns regarding the need to expand program options both in-district and out-of-district. Additionally, many parents expressed their frustration with the district's eligibility criteria and that many students remain in the Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC) and the Basic Skills Program for several years before being referred. Many parents feel that decisions are made without their input and when they disagree with decisions, placements, and services made by the district, they are reminded by the district of their right to invoke due process.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA, extended school year, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, consent, notices of meeting, written notices, meetings, independent evaluations, Child Find, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, Identification meeting timelines and participants, standardized assessments, functional assessments, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool, statement of eligibility, age of majority, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, decision making process, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, student and agency invite, pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, IEP graduation requirements, choice of diploma, out of district participation, written notice of graduation, class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes, home instruction, access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional and parent development, related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, native language, referral process and pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, multi-disciplinary evaluations, written reports, bilingual evaluations, accept and rejection of reports, reevaluation planning meeting participants, eligibility meetings and participants, copy of evaluation reports to parents, signature of agreement and disagreement, IEP participants, consideration and required statements, goals and

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objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, progress towards goals and objectives, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, courses and preferences, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement, discipline procedures, functional behavior analysis, behavior intervention plan, description of programs and staff knowledge of procedures for student records.

The on-site visit did not identify any additional areas of need.