

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Dunellen Public School

**County:** Middlesex

**Monitoring Dates:** September 25-26, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Barbara J. Tucker, Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson, Stephen Coplin

### ***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Dunellen School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Dunellen 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 Dunellen 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 Dunellen 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.

### **Area(s) Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**General Provisions, Graduation, Discipline and Statewide Assessment** 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.

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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, goals and objectives for related services, related services frequency, location and duration, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certificated staff.

During self-assessment the district identified concerns regarding the provision of counseling as a related service. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding adaptive physical education.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Adaptive Physical Education** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that although adaptive physical education is provided, goals and objectives are not consistently developed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives for adaptive physical education are consistently developed. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedure.**

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding surrogate parents, interpreters at meetings and notices in native language.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Surrogate Parents** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not have procedures for the selection and training of surrogate parents in the event one is needed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it has the ability to select and train surrogate parents in the event one is needed.**

**Interpreters at Meetings** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although interpreters attend meeting their attendance is not documented.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the attendance of interpreters is documented in student files.**

**Notices in Native Language-** During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and record review that the district does not provide notices in native language, even when feasible.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notices are provided in the parent's native language, when feasible.**

### **Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the referral process, direct referrals from staff/parents, vision and hearing screenings, documentation of pre-referral interventions and identification meeting participants/ timelines.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding child find and health summaries.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Child Find** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district's child find activities address only students ages 3-5.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities include children ages 6-21 as well as migrant and homeless children.**

**Health Summaries** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that although the district has a form on which to record health information, this information is inconsistently summarized by the nurse.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the student's health information is consistently summarized by the school nurse and maintained in the files. The plan must an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

### **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 for students eligible for special education and

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related services, standardized assessments, written reports for students eligible for special education and related services and bilingual evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services and acceptance/rejection of reports.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Functional Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that reports do not contain all of the required components of a functional assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that evaluation reports contain all of the required components of a functional assessment in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d). The plan must include in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Multi-Disciplinary Evaluations for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services**- During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that a written educational impact statement from the student's teacher is not included in the written speech report.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech/language therapists' written reports include a written educational impact statement from the student's teacher to fulfill the requirement for a multidisciplinary evaluation. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Acceptance/Rejection of Reports** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district has a form on which to record their acceptance/rejection of outside reports or assessments, the form does not provide an opportunity for staff to record a rationale when reports are rejected.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to amend its form to ensure staff have the ability to identify those parts of the report that are being accepted or rejected as well as include the rationale when staff reject the whole report or part of the report. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section VI: Reevaluation**

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of reevaluation timelines for students eligible for special education and related

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services and speech/language services and reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> for students in their last year of preschool.

During self-assessment the district identified concerns regarding planning meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures 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 visit.

### **Section VII: Eligibility**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of criteria and documentation of the statement of eligibility for SLD students.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of the provision of reports to parents and rationale for disagreement.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Provision of Reports to Parents** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and record review that the district does not consistently provide parents with a copy of evaluation reports 10-days prior to the eligibility meeting.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parents are provided with a copy of evaluation reports 10-days prior to the eligibility meeting and that the provision is documented in student files. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Rationale for Disagreement** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district has an eligibility form on which to document agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations by all participants, the form does not contain a section for the rationale when participants disagree.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to amend the form to ensure that the eligibility form contains a section to record a rationale for the disagreement with the eligibility determination(s).**

### **Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP), goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines and teacher access/ responsibility.

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During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns regarding signatures of meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these procedures.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding considerations/required statements and 90-day timelines.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Considerations/Required Statements-** During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the Short Procedural Safeguards Statement in the IEP does not contain information regarding the State Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN).

- **The district will amend the Short Procedural Safeguards Statement in the IEP to include information regarding SPAN.**

### ***Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision-making, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access and continuum of programs.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding non-academic and extracurricular activities for out-of-district students.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Non-Academic/Extracurricular Activities for Out-of-District Students** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not inform out-of-district students of non-academic/extracurricular activities.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that out-of-district students are informed of non-academic/extracurricular activities and that this is notification is documented in the files.**

### ***Section X: Transition to Post-School***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Transition Service Needs and Needed Transition Services Statements, preferences/ interests and surveys/assessments.

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Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding student and agency invitation to meetings.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Student/Agency Invitations** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not provide an invitation to IEP meetings to the student or to the agency responsible for providing for and/or paying for transition services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that both the student and the agency that is responsible for providing for and/or paying for transition services are invited to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed. The plan must include a mechanism to document this invitation. The plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section X: Transition to Preschool**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of early intervention to preschool disabled programs by age three.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the preschool transition planning conference.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Preschool Transition Planning Conference** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff that the district does not consistently participate in the transition planning conference to ensure a smooth transition planning conference from early intervention to preschool.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district consistently participates in the preschool transition planning conference to ensure a smooth transition from early intervention to preschool. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section XIV: Programs and Services**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of employing staff in sufficient numbers to provide programs and services, class sizes and consultation time for staff. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address

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these areas of need because it lacks procedures 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 visit.

### ***Section XV: Student Records***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets and parent access/requests.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Maintenance/Destruction of Records** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district does not have policies and procedures in place to ensure appropriate maintenance and destruction of records.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district appropriate maintains and destroys records.**

**Documentation of Other Locations** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that central files do not document the location of other files maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files document the location of other files maintained by the district.**

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## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Dunellen Public School District on September 25 and 26 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 comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revisions should bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statues and regulations.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their concerns regarding the provision of adaptive physical education, insufficient staff, communication between parents and team members, extended school year, decision-making process at meetings, student transfer process, least restrictive environments which exist at both middle and high school levels and acceptance/rejection of reports.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included General Provisions, Graduation, Discipline and Statewide Assessment.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included extended school year, provision of programs, goals and objectives for related services, related services frequency, location and duration, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, certificated staff, consent, notice of meetings, written notice, independent evaluations, referral process, direct referrals from staff/parents, vision and hearing screenings, documentation of pre-referral interventions and identification meeting participants/timelines, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated for students eligible for special education and related services, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation timelines for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services, reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> for students in their last year of preschool, criteria, documentation of the statement of eligibility for SLD students, Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP), goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines and teacher access/ responsibility, decision-making process, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access for out-of- district students, continuum of programs, Transition Service Needs and Needed Transition Services Statements, preferences/ interests, surveys/assessments, early intervention to preschool disabled program by age three, written notice to case managers, suspension tracking, procedural safeguards, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, graduation requirements, graduation requirements beginning at age 14, written notice of graduation, age range waivers, group sizes for speech, home instruction, access sheets and parent access/requests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the provision of related services as specified in IEPs, signatures of meeting participants, employing staff in sufficient numbers to provide programs and services, class sizes and consultation time for staff.

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding adaptive physical education, surrogate parents, interpreters at meetings, notices in native language, child find, health summaries, functional assessments, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, acceptance/rejection of reports, provision of reports to parents, rationale for disagreement, considerations/required statements, non-academic extracurricular activities for out-of-district students, student and agency invitation to meetings, preschool transition planning conference, interim alternative educational setting, maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

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