

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Eagleswood Township Elementary School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Date: November 12, 2002

Monitoring Team: Stephen A. Coplin, Deborah Masarsky, Michelle Davis

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Eagleswood Township Elementary School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Eagleswood Township Elementary 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 Eagleswood Township Elementary 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 Eagleswood Township Elementary School on October 30, 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, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The Jason Project: The district is commended for providing this unique science program for its fourth, fifth and sixth grade students. In addition to their regular science program, special education teachers and their classified students work with regular education students once a week to explore the scientific process through hands-on

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projects. The purpose of this program is to expose special education students to advanced technology in an integrated, socialized environment.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Eligibility, Transition to Preschool, 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.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of staff/parent development, policies/procedures and dissemination of public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of parent training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, availability of service providers/provision of services, provision of related services throughout the year, extended school year and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding goals/objective for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Goals/Objectives for Speech/Language Services – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not develop goals/objectives for speech and language services.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals/objectives for speech and language services are developed and included in IEPs.**

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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, content/provision of notices of meetings, provision of written notices, notices in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the content of written notice following identification and IEP meetings.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Written Notice - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the districts' written notices following identification and IEP meetings do not contain the required components.

- **The district needs to revise their written notices to ensure they include all required components. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

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, pre-referral interventions and identification meetings within required timelines and required participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings and documentation of referral dates. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding child find.

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district's child find activities address children ages 3-5 including migrant and homeless, these activities do not continue throughout the year including summer months, nor do they address youngsters between the ages of 6-21.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district's child find activities include children between the**

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ages of 6 and 21 and are conducted throughout the school year, including summer months.

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, bilingual evaluations, independent evaluations and signed evaluation reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of acceptance/rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need 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.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, functional assessments and dated evaluation reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Multidisciplinary Evaluations – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that speech therapists do not include the written educational impact statement from the classroom teacher in their evaluation reports.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech therapists include the educational impact statement from the classroom teacher in their evaluation reports. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that functional assessments do not include interventions attempted by the classroom teacher.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments include required components as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14 3.4(d). The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Dated Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that reports are not dated. As a result, one cannot determine when each report was developed.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of considerations/required statements in IEPs of students eligible for special education and related services, IEP meeting participants, implementation dates of IEPs and annual review /90-day timelines, provision of IEPs to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of teacher access/responsibility, IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year, required statements in IEPs of students eligible for speech/language services, present levels of educational performance statements and development of annual goals/objectives based on individual needs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of the annual review process. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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 area of regular education access for special education students in district.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of least restrictive environment documentation. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area. The district further identified concerns in the areas of the individual decision-making process, consideration of supplementary aids/services, continuum of programs and participation of out-of-district students in extracurricular activities with non-disabled peers. The factors that have impacted the decision-making process and the consideration of supplementary aids and services include a lack of personnel, staff training, and limited availability of in-class support programs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas 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.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School is not applicable in this K through 6th grade district.

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Section X: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of written notification to case managers, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional behavioral assessments and behavioral intervention plans. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the 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 XIII: Graduation is not applicable in this K through 6th grade district.

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 concerns in the areas of employment of sufficient staff to provide required programs/services and the provision of in-class resource 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 the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of access to student records, documentation of location of other student records, amendment of records and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures. 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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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in Eagleswood Township Elementary School District on November 12, 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 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 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 the district's programs and services and the excellent communication between themselves and the staff.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, consent, content provision of Notices of a Meeting, provision of Written Notice, meetings/participants, interpreters, referral process, pre-referral interventions, identification meetings within timelines, multidisciplinary evaluations, for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, signed reports, independent evaluations, reevaluation timelines, reevaluation by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility, copies of evaluation reports to parents, considerations/required statements in IEPs for students eligible for special education/related services, implementation dates of IEPs, annual review/90-day timelines, provision of IEPs to parents, regular education access for special education students in district, preschool transition planning conferences, IEP implemented no later than age three, written notification to case managers, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, age range and class/group size.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, availability of service providers/provision of services, provision of related services throughout the year, extended school year, transfer students, surrogate parents, child find, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings, documentation of referral dates, acceptance/rejection of reports, required statements in IEPs of students eligible for speech/language services, development of annual goals/objectives based on individual needs, IEPs in effect/implemented at the beginning of the school year, IEP teacher access/responsibility, present levels of educational performance statements, least restrictive environment documentation, individual decision-making process, consideration of supplementary aids and services, continuum of programs, participation of out-of-district students in extracurricular activities with non-disabled peers, functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plans, employment of sufficient staff to provide required programs/services, resource programs to be provided in the regular class and/or a pull-out class, access to student records, documentation of location of

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other student records, amendment of records and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding goals/objectives for speech/language services, content of written notice, child find activities, multidisciplinary evaluations, functional assessments and dated reports.

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