

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

District: East Newark School District

County: Hudson

Monitoring Date: December 17, 2001

Monitoring Team: Janet Wright, Damen Cooper, and Gary Molenaar

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the East Newark School District conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the East Newark 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 East Newark 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 at East Newark Elementary School on December 10, 2001. 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 principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district should be commended for its commitment to ensure quality student learning practices, as evidenced by before and after school tutoring programs, peer tutoring, and lunchtime study groups. The district should also be commended for its commitment to

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provide parent education programs regarding the rights and needs of their special needs children. The district should further be commended for its commitment to and provision of inclusive education for all children.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation and Graduation 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, procedures, and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of professional development. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an oversight component to determine the effectiveness of its in-service training. The district will revise its improvement plan to include this component.

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

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of physical therapy, counseling and transportation services, length of school day/year and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of speech therapy, use of support personnel for field trips, ESY and transfer procedures. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. Additionally, the district identified concerns in the area of the provision of occupation therapy (OT). The district's improvement plan identified the need to enter into a contract for these services prior to September 2001. During the on-site visit, it was determined the district has not provided these services. The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that OT and compensatory OT services are provided to those students requiring the services.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding facilities. The county office has been notified of these issues

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

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 issues. The district further identified a concern in the area of consent for initial evaluation. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these procedures. Additionally, the district identified concerns in the areas of written notice and independent evaluations. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals, health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find and identification timelines for students eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. The district further identified concerns in the areas of referral process, summer referrals and identification meeting participants for preschool. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks procedures, in-service and an oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plans to include these elements.

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

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS), written reports for ESERS, and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluation for students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS),

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written reports for ESLs, standardized assessments and functional assessments. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these elements. The district further identified concerns regarding the acceptance and rejection of reports. The district did not submit an improvement plan to address this issue. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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 eligibility meetings and providing copies of evaluation reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants at eligibility meetings for ESLs students, criteria for determining eligibility, and documentation of eligibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the criteria issue but is insufficient to address the meeting and documentation of eligibility issues 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 VIII: Individualized Education Program

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of implementation dates, ninety-day timelines and teacher knowledge of and access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of participants at IEP meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue. The district further identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements, alignment of goals and objectives with the core curriculum content standards (CCCS) and annual review timelines for delivery of related services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service 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 visit.

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Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of regular education access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, considerations and documentation, supplemental aids and services, nonacademic and extra-curricular participation for out of district students and continuum. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section X: Transition

Transition from School to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district indicated that this area was not applicable to the school district since it is a Kindergarten to 8th grade district. However, the district did identify a concern in the area of student and agency invitation. The district is also responsible for age fourteen transition service needs, courses and preferences and interests. The district did not submit an improvement plan to address these issues. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to address these areas of need and to bring about the required changes.

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

Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and early intervention program to preschool disabled by age three. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking and manifestation determinations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of discipline procedures, documentation of removals to the case manager and interim alternative educational setting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. The district further identified an area of need regarding behavior intervention plans and functional behavioral assessment. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of approved accommodations and modifications and IEP documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation of out-of-district students in statewide assessment and alternate assessments. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues 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 XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

Although this district serves grades K-8 only, students exiting grade 8 are afforded the opportunity to participate in eighth grade promotion exercises.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of staffing for related services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of time allotment for case management, class sizes for resource replacement and common planning time for

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regular education and special education teachers. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure procedures are fully implemented. The district will revise its improvement plan to include this component.

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 accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of student record access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of parent/adult student access to records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of maintenance and destruction of records and staff knowledge of student record policies and procedures. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these components. Additionally, the district identified a concern in the area of documentation of locations of other records maintained by the district. They did not submit an improvement plan to address this area of concern. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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 East Newark School District on December 17, 2001. 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 nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is also 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. The district is further commended for its level of commitment to the support of inclusive programs for students with disabilities and for the level of documentation maintained by child study team members in student files.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the four parents who attended expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures for special education, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of physical therapy and counseling services, length of school day and year, certification, notices of meeting, meetings, direct referral, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification timelines for ESERS, identification participants for school-aged students, multi-disciplinary assessment for ESERS, written reports for ESERS, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation timelines and participants, reevaluation planning meetings, and turning age 5, eligibility meetings, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP implementation dates, teacher knowledge and access to IEPs, regular education access, suspension tracking, manifestation determinations, accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessment, age ranges, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, and access sheets for student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, extended school year for preschool, provision of occupational therapy and speech therapy, transfer procedures, surrogate parents, consent, written notice, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process, summer referrals, identification meeting participants for preschool, identification timelines for ESLS, multi-disciplinary assessment for ESLS, standardized assessment, functional assessment, written reports for ESLS, documentation of acceptance or rejection of reports, eligibility meeting participants for ESLS, criteria for eligibility, documentation of eligibility, participants at IEP meetings, considerations and required statements, alignment of goals and objectives with CCCS, annual review timelines for related services, individual decision making, Oberti factors, supplemental aids and services, considerations and documentation, nonacademic and extracurricular participation for out-of-district students, continuum of options, preschool transition, student/agency invitation, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, behavioral intervention plan, functional behavioral assessment, interim alternate educational setting, participation in statewide assessment for out of district students, alternate assessments, class size, case management time, common planning time, parent and adult student access to records,

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maintenance and destruction of records, documentation of locations and staff knowledge of student records policy and procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding facilities, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, and provision of occupational therapy services.

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.