

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

District: East Windsor Regional School District

County: Mercer

Monitoring Dates: January 27, 28, 29, 2003

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Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the East Windsor Regional School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the East Windsor Regional 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 Windsor Regional 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 Hightstown High School on January 22, 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, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for its unique programs that include special education students.

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The Heroes Program provides mentoring by volunteers from the local community for regular/special education minority students who are at risk. The mentor meets with the students on an individual basis and is available to meet with teachers and other school personnel as needed. The mentor also meets with the parents at home and in parenting groups. Appropriate social activities for the students are planned outside of school as rewards and to foster social development.

The Partners in Learning Program was designed to meet the needs of students at the Perry L. Drew School. High school students tutor special education students after school one day each week. They work in the ESL class and tutor individual students after school. This program provides the high school students with an opportunity to volunteer within the community.

The Emotional Social Development Program is a support program offered by a full time general education teacher, who works with 30 students (classified and non-classified). The teacher meets with the students on an individual basis and helps them with organizational and academic skills, and encourages appropriate social skills and behaviors in the school environment.

The Opportunities for All Program provides job coaching and training to many students with disabilities to help prepare them for employment. The district works with APL & Associates to establish community and business networks to find appropriate job placement based upon individual student's needs as well as their preferences and interests. Job coaches are certified and experienced professionals trained to provide the best support services toward transitioning students into the workplace and community so that students will derive positive employment opportunities.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Statewide Assessment was determined to be an area 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 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 staff development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding parent training.

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Area(s) of Need:

Parent Training - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with child study team members and teachers that the district does not provide parent training.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts a needs assessment to determine topics for training and to provide that training.**

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 related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding goals and objectives for adaptive physical education.

Area(s) of Need:

Goals/Objectives for Adaptive Physical Education - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not develop goals/objectives for adaptive physical education.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals/objectives for adaptive physical education are developed and included in IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding content of notices.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Notices - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that with the exception of the IEP when provided as written notice following an IEP meeting, all other notices do not contain the required components.

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- **The district will revise its notices to ensure they contain all required components. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the 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 referral process, vision/hearing screenings and identification meetings within timelines with required participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of pre-referral interventions and health summaries. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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, these activities do not extend to ages 6-21. Furthermore, these activities do not extend to the migrant and homeless or continue throughout the year, including summer months.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district's child find activities address children between the ages of 3 and 21 including migrant and homeless children. Furthermore, the plan must ensure these child find activities are conducted throughout the 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 multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, acceptance/rejection of all or parts of reports, bilingual evaluations, dated evaluation reports for students eligible for speech/language services and signed reports.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services and functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services and students eligible for special education/related services and dated evaluation reports for students eligible for special education/related services.

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Area(s) of Need:

Multidisciplinary Evaluations for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services–

During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although speech therapists obtain the written educational impact statement from the classroom teacher, they do not consistently include the statement within their evaluation reports.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that 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 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 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.**

Written Reports for Students Eligible for Special Education/Related Services-

During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district's evaluation reports are signed, evaluators do not consistently date their reports. As a result it cannot be determined when these reports were developed.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all evaluators date their written reports when developed. The improvement 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 planning meeting/participants and reevaluations completed by June 30th.

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

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

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Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meeting participants and criteria.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of provision of copies of evaluation reports to parent(s)/adult student. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD) and agreement/disagreement with eligibility.

Area(s) of Need:

Statement of Eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD) - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not include in the eligibility statement for SLD the fact 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 their eligibility statement for SLD to include all required information.**

Agreement/Disagreement with Eligibility - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not document meeting participant agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include a procedure to ensure that following the eligibility meeting each participant documents agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the 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 consideration/required statements, present levels of educational performance statements, goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates in IEPs, provision of IEPs to parent(s)/adult student (except when IEPs are revised), annual review timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of 90-day timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding changes to students' programs/placements without convening an IEP team meeting, age of majority and IEP participants.

Area(s) of Need:

IEP Changes - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with child study team members and the director that the district does not consistently convene an appropriately configured IEP team meeting when considering changes to students' programs/placements. In addition, the district does not consistently develop a revised IEP with those changes nor does it provide the IEP to parent(s)/adult student.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when considering changes to a student's program/placement, the district convenes an IEP team meeting with all the required participants. Furthermore, if the IEP is revised, the parent(s)/adult student must be provided with written notice and a copy of the IEP prior to implementation. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Age of Majority - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not include age of majority in IEPs for students who will turn 15 during the life of the IEP.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that for students who will turn 15 years of age while the IEP is in effect, the district includes the Age of Majority section within the IEPs. Furthermore, during the development of the IEP, the district must discuss with parent(s)/adult student the rights which will transfer when the student turns 18. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

IEP Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with child study team members that regular and special education teachers do not consistently attend meetings held during the summer months.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure staff members are available during the summer months to attend IEP meetings. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of regular education access, continuum of programs (except for grades 10-12) and

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notification to out-of-district students (OOD) of participation in nonacademic/extracurricular activities within district.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the individual decision-making process.

Area(s) of Need:

Individual Decision-Making Process - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with the director, high school principal, child study team members and regular/special education teachers that although in-class support is currently being offered as a program option for students in grades k-9, this program is not offered in grades 10-12. As a result, all students at that level have their programs revised, even when in-class support remains appropriate, to reflect no services or a pull-out resource program.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district offers a full continuum of program options at the high school level to address the needs of those students at the tenth through twelfth grade levels. The plan must include a mechanism to determine staffing needs as well as a mechanism to employ staff as needed. The improvement plan must also include in-service training to instructional staff at those grade levels to ensure the appropriate use of supplemental aids and services, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the district's procedures.**

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of transition services, student invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed and documentation of students' preferences/interests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the vocational shared-time personnel at IEP meetings and agency participation in transition planning conferences. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of related services and implementation dates in the Needed Transition Service Statement.

Area(s) of Need:

Transition Statements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not include related services and implementation dates in the Needed Transition Service Statement.

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- **The district will revise the IEP format to ensure it includes related services, when appropriate, and implementation dates in the transition section.**

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of preschool transition planning conferences. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area.

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 notification to the case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and interim alternative educational settings.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding manifestation determination meetings and procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students.

Area(s) of Need:

Manifestation Determination Meetings - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with child study team members and the director that although the district convenes a manifestation determination meeting within the required timelines, when the team determines that the behavior was related to the disability, the student is still removed from program. Furthermore, if the student's program is changed during this meeting, the IEP is not revised to reflect these changes.

- **The improvement plan needs to be revised to include procedures to ensure that when the IEP team determines that the behavior is a manifestation of the disability, the student is not removed from program as part of the disciplinary action and that if the student's program requires changes, these changes are reflected in a revised IEP.**

Procedural Safeguard Rights for Potentially Disabled Students - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with the director, assistant principals and child study team members that potentially disabled students are not identified and therefore, are not provided with educational services when removed from a program as a result of a disciplinary action.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that potentially disabled students are provided with educational**

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services when they are removed from their program for more than ten school days. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of documentation of all graduation requirements in IEPs of students ages 15-21 and notification to out-of-district students of graduation exercises/activities.

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

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding consideration/documentation of graduation requirements for students transitioning into high school.

Area(s) of Need:

Graduation Requirements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not complete the graduation requirement section (including HSPA) for students who will turn 14 and will be transitioning into high school during the period of time that IEP is in effect.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district completes the graduation requirement section of the IEP for students who will turn 14 years of age and will be transitioning into the high school district during the time the IEP is in effect. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the 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 class/group size, age range, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of descriptions of special class programs and programs/services for students eligible for special education/related services under the categories of Specific Learning Disability and Multiply Disabled. 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 XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures, access to student records and maintenance/destruction of student records.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of other locations of student records.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations of Student Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not document the location of other student record(s) in the central file.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents the location of other student record(s) in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the East Windsor Regional School District on January 27, 28, 29, 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 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 revision will be able to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas verified as being 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. Many parents felt that there was excellent communication between themselves and team members as well as teachers.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, goals/objectives for related services except adaptive physical education, extended school year, provision of related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, surrogate parents, consent, notices in native language, interpreters, independent evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, referral process, identification meetings within timelines, vision/hearing screenings, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, signed reports, reevaluation planning meeting participants, reevaluation by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, eligibility conferences participants, eligibility criteria, considerations/required statements, present levels of educational performance statements, goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines, provision of IEPs to parent(s) adult students except when revised, regular education access, continuum, participation of in-district students in non-academic/extra-curricular activities, teacher access/responsibility, IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three, provision of transition services, student preferences/interests, student invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, notification to case managers when a student is suspended, suspension tracking, behavior intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, interim alternative educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, out-of-district notification for graduation exercises/activities, age range, class/group size, consultation time between special/regular education teachers, maintenance/destruction of student records and staff knowledge of student records policies/procedures.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff training, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, reevaluation timelines, provision of copies of evaluation report to parents/adult students, 90-day timelines, pre-school transition planning conferences, vocational shared-time personnel at IEP meetings when transition is being discussed, agency participation in post-school transition meetings, written notice of graduation, description of special education programs and programs/services for students eligible for special education/related services under the categories of Specific Learning Disability and Multiply Disabled.

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding parent training, content of notices, child find, multidisciplinary evaluations for and functional assessments, dated evaluation reports, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD), agreement/disagreement with eligibility, changes to a student's program/placement without convening an IEP team meeting, age of majority, summer IEP meeting participants/IEP revision meetings, individual decision-making process, documentation of related services, implementation dates in the Needed Transition Service Statement, manifestation determination meetings, procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, consideration/documentation of graduation requirements for students transitioning into high school and documentation of other locations of student records in the central file.

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