

**THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION MONITORING**

District: Edgewater Park School District

Monitoring Dates: April 27, 2005

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2003 - 2004 school years, the Edgewater Park School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Edgewater Park School District with an opportunity to evaluate strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free and 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 Edgewater Park School District developed an improvement plan to address the 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 part of the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Ridgeway School on April 13, 2005. Information obtained from the meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed district documentation, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrator and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The Edgewater Park School District is commended for providing a wide variety of programs for students such as; the Scissors Club for students 5th through 8th grade. The Scissors Club is an incentive program, stressing positive behavior. Students earn points

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

through demonstration of service within the school setting, positive behavior and involvement in school activities. The top point earners are rewarded at the end of the year with a trip to the circus or a day at Great Adventure.

The district has a program called SHIP (Supervised Homework Improvement Program) which provides teacher-supervised homework sessions four days a week for students in general and special education programs. SHIP assists students with keeping an accurate assignment notebook, and in using the time in a productive manner.

The district has developed a new program this year called CREW (Companions Respecting Everyone Willingly). Students in 8th grade spend time with students in educational settings out of district to increase opportunities for social skill development.

Part One Data Summary:

The data submitted by the Edgewater Park School District as a result of the self-assessment process indicated that 58.8% of students receiving special education are educated in general education settings more than 80% of the day which is higher than the state average of 41.9%. The district's classification rate is 15.32% which is lower than the state average of 16.57%.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with all Standards:

Free Appropriate Public Education, Evaluation, Eligibility, Discipline, Statewide Assessments, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during the self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

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

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

Section III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notice of a meeting, written notice, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notices in native language. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section IV. Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of child find. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district corrected child find procedures prior to the on-site visit.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding vision and hearing screenings.

Areas of Need:

Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and staff interviews that health summary and vision and hearing screenings are not consistently completed prior to the identification meeting for students referred for special education and related services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that health summary and vision and hearing screenings for students referred for special education and related services are conducted prior to the identification meeting. The implementation of these activities will ensure that information is available to determine the need for an evaluation and if needed the assessment that will be conducted. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Section VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of three year timelines, planning meetings, participants and reevaluations completed by June 30th of students last year in preschool.

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

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

Section VIII. Individual Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of meeting participants, considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curricular Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of teacher access and responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need and was implemented, demonstrating compliance in this area, prior to the on-site visit.

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

Section IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aides and services and general education access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of out-of-district participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need and was implemented, demonstrating compliance in this area, prior to the on-site visit.

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

Section X. Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the areas of preschool transition plan conference and early intervention to preschool disabled by age three.

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

Section X. Transition to Post School

Summary of Findings:

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding age 14 transition service needs.

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

Area on Need:

Age 14 Transition Service Needs – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district does not document courses of study and student interest and preferences for those students who will turn 14 years of age prior to the development of their next scheduled annual review.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include to activities to ensure that IEPs for students who will turn 14 prior to their next scheduled annual review include transition services needs. The district may refer to the sample IEP form available from the New Jersey Department of Education at www.state.nj.us/education for the required components. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.**

Section XIII. Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the district indicated compliance in the area of IEP requirements.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of out-of-district participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district demonstrated compliance in this area prior to the on-site visit.

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

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

SUMMARY

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Edgewater Park School District on April 27, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from 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.

The data submitted by the Edgewater Park School District as a result of the self-assessment process indicated that 58.8% of students receiving special education are educated in general education settings more than 80% of the day which is higher than the state average of 41.9%. The district's classification rate is 15.32% which is lower than the state average of 16.57%.

At focus group meeting held was prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. They were generally pleased with the accessibility of the child study team and students' access to general education programs. Parents felt their students were receiving a high quality of education.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Free Appropriate Public Education, Evaluation, Eligibility, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Program and Services and Student Records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, surrogate parents, consent, notice of a meeting, written notice, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines, participants, three year timelines, planning meetings, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students last year in preschool, consideration and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objective aligned with Core Curricular Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines, decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aides and services, general education access, preschool transition plan conference and early intervention to preschool disabled by age three,

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development and native language. In addition the district identified child find, teacher access/responsibility and out-of-district participation of nonacademic and extracurricular activities. Although these areas were initially identified as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has brought about correction.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding health summary and vision and hearing screenings and age 14 transition service needs.

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

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