

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

**District:** Farmingdale School District                      **County:** Monmouth

**Monitoring Dates:** February 22 & March 7

**Monitoring Team:** Nicole Buten

***Background Information:***

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Farmingdale School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Farmingdale School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 Farmingdale School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted a comprehensive desk audit, including a review of representative sample of student records, as well as reviews of district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related services personnel, parent interviews and other relevant information. Parent interviews were also conducted in order to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of identified need.

**Data Summary:**

A three year review of the district data indicated the Farmingdale School District has been able to steadily decrease the percentage of classified students, from 11.5% in 2002-2003 school year, to 9.6% in 2003-2004 school year. The district has implemented a number of interventions to assist students prior to referral including: the installation of FM systems in all classrooms, grades K-4. Bi-weekly staff meetings have included in-service on addressing diverse needs of students. Also, the district maintains a low teacher-student ratio.

Data review indicated that 67% of the district's special needs students were educated in a general education setting for at least 80% of the school day, well above the state average of 41.6%. Additionally, the district is commended for educating 100% of their

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preschool disabled students in either an early childhood general education setting or an integrated setting.

### **District Strengths:**

The district is commended for their before and after school enrichment programs which offers an increased number of inclusive opportunities to students with disabilities. The programs include peer tutoring, peer leadership, sign language, yoga, sports clubs and academic programs. Both students with disabilities and general education students participate in these activities.

The district is also commended for their partnership with a local book store to promote the importance of reading. Representatives from the store, dressed as story characters, come to classrooms monthly to read and meet with the children. Additionally, family reading nights occur at the store where the superintendent reads children's books to the younger children and engage in poetry reading for the older students and participants.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:***

Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services 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 identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures, parent training and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff training. 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)***

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

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of length of day/year, facilities and certifications.

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

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

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

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

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, notices in native language and consent.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notices of meetings, written notice, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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

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

During the self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of identification meeting participants and direct referrals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, intervention and referral services, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

### ***Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures***

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

During self-assessment the district identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of functional assessments for students eligible for speech-language services. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in 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 identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students and signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings. 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 VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)***

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

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, present levels of educational performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEPs to parents, observing proposed educational placements, teacher access/responsibility and considerations/required statements. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

### ***Section X: Transition- Preschool***

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

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and beginning a pupil's program by their third birthday.

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

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

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

During the self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of preferences and interests surveys and assessments and student and agency invite.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of age 14-transition service needs. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

### ***Section XI: Discipline***

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

During the self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the area of behavioral intervention plans.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notification to case manager of suspension, suspension tracking, interim alternative educational settings, procedural safeguards, manifestation determination. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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

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

During the self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of access sheets, maintenance/destruction and documentation of records in other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parental requests and confidentiality requirements. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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## Summary

Special education monitoring was completed in the Farmingdale School District on February 22, 2005 and March 7, 2005. The purpose of this phase of the monitoring process was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The Farmingdale School District is commended for an exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the implementation of the improvement plan activities, prior to the monitoring visit, that address the vast majority of needs identified during the self-assessment process. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas identified as compliant during the self-assessment and verified as such by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services were areas demonstrating compliance with all standards.

Many parents expressed their satisfaction with the special education programs and services in the Farmingdale School District. The district involves parents in the decision-making process by providing notices of meetings in a timely manner, holding meetings at a mutually convenient time and rescheduling meetings to meet parent needs when requested. Parents praised the child study team members for accepting and including parental input and developing IEPs that address students' individual needs. Additionally, parents complimented the child study team for their ability to train and educate parents regarding their children's disabilities. It was also reported that students and parents are actively involved in the transition process when a special education student graduates from 8th grade and moves on to the regional high school. Finally, parents report that preschool students have programs in place by age 3 and the district develops individualized programs to meet the unique needs of each preschooler.

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, parent training, length of day/year, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, notices in native language, consent, direct referrals, identification meeting participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations, participants for eligibility meetings, criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students, signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale, IEP meeting participants, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, preschool transition planning conference, placement by third birthday, consideration of a student's preferences and interests, student/agency invite for transition planning, functional behavioral assessments/behavioral intervention plans, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of records in other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff training, extended school year, transfer students, documentation of the provision of related services, copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to a meeting, notification to case manager of suspension, suspension tracking, interim alternative

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educational settings, procedural safeguards, manifestation determination, parental requests for records and confidentiality requirements of pupil records.

The district was able to demonstrate that it has fully implemented the improvement plan activities for the following areas, which as a result, are no longer areas of need: notices of meetings, written notice, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, Child Find, intervention and referral services, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines, functional assessments for speech only students, IEPs to parents, observing proposed educational placements, teacher access/responsibility, considerations and required statements and age 14-transition service needs

No revisions to the district's improvement plan are required. The improvement plan originally submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education in June 2004 will be reviewed for final approval. Verification of the implementation of the plan will be conducted by the County Supervisor of Child Study.