

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Florham Park Public Schools

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: March 18, 19 and 20, 2002

Monitoring Team: Janet Wright and Theresa Schiffenhaus

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Florham Park Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Florham Park Public 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 Florham Park Public 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 the Brooklake School on March 11, 2002. 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 administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district should be commended for their special assembly programs that include the cultural arts program, which is co-sponsored by the PTA, the ABLE Program and the Character Education Program. The ABLE Program is a disability awareness program

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offered to middle school students by the Cheshire House. This program assists students in developing an understanding of the lifelong disabilities certain individuals experience. The students rotate through experiences in which they are disabled through adaptive equipment and asked to perform tasks. Discussion groups with the Cheshire residents follow these activities.

The Character Education Program in the middle school teaches tolerance, awareness and acceptance of others to staff and students. The emphasis is on team building and learning to work together.

The district should also be commended for its technology program that is offered at both the elementary and middle school levels. This program provides technology support to classroom teachers with the assistance of a technology teacher and a mobile cart of 20 wireless computer laptops that allow mobile access to the Internet.

The district also offers a district wide homework club in addition to the many extracurricular clubs and sports.

Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Graduation was determined to be an area of compliance by the district during self-assessment and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of professional/parent development. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks procedures 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.

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school year/day, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of transfer students and related services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure

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implementation of the procedures. The district will revise its improvement plan to include this component. The district further identified concerns in the area of extended school year. No improvement plan was submitted. 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 monitoring visit.

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, written notice, and native language. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of parental participation at meetings. No improvement plan was submitted. 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 monitoring visit.

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of referral process and identification meeting timelines. 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 district will revise its improvement plan to include these components. The district further identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, direct referrals and identification meeting participants. No improvement plan was submitted. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

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V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluation for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, functional assessment and written reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding bilingual evaluations and acceptance or rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan for bilingual evaluation is sufficient to address this area of need. The district's improvement plan for acceptance/rejection of reports is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations and written reports for students eligible for speech and language services.

Areas of Need:

Multidisciplinary Evaluation and Written Reports – During the on-site, a review of records indicated that speech assessment reports did not include teacher input and the educational impact statement.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech assessments include all necessary components. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures..**

VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings, participants at reevaluation planning meeting, and turning age five.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise it improvement plan to include these components.

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

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VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with the provision of copies of reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations/required statements and alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern. The district further identified areas of need regarding annual review timelines and teacher knowledge/access to IEPs. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these components. The district also identified concerns with IEP implementation dates and ninety-day timelines. No improvement plan was submitted. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative component to bring about the required changes.

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

IX. LRE

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Oberti factors, considerations/documentation, use of supplemental aids and services, regular education access and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making and supplemental aids and services for preschool. The district did not submit an improvement plan. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative component to bring about the required changes. The district further identified an area of need regarding nonacademic/extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight

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component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise its improvement plan to include these components.

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

X. Transition

Transition to Post School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition services, courses of study and preferences/interests. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district also identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitation and agency involvement. No improvement plan was submitted. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative component to bring about the required changes.

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

Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention program to preschool disabled by age three. 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 components.

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

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plans, functional behavior assessments and manifestation determinations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to the case manager and interim alternative educational setting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation, approved accommodations/modifications, and alternate assessment.

During the on-site visit an area of need was identified regarding IEP documentation of participation in/exemption from participating in statewide assessments.

Areas of Need:

IEP Documentation – During the on-site monitoring, interviews with staff indicated that all students participate in statewide and district assessments. However, record review indicated IEPs do not document this participation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs document student participation in statewide and district assessments. It is recommended that the district adopt the IEP format developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size/waivers, age range/waivers and group sizes for speech.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of collaboration time for teachers and class descriptions. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. The district will revise its improvement plan to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding home instruction/approvals.

Area of Need:

Home Instruction/Approvals – During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the district is developing IEPs and providing programs of home instruction without requesting or obtaining approval from the county office. These IEPs identify these programs as "Home Based" programs. The county office has been notified.

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- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it requests and obtains approval from the county office prior to implementing a program of home instruction. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of parent/adult student access to records. No improvement plan was submitted. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site concerning maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of location.

Areas of Need:

Maintenance/destruction of records – During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that in this Kindergarten to 8th grade district, when a student graduates all records are sent to the regional high school district and does not maintain those records required by N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.4 and N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.8.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it maintains records as required by N.J.A.C. 6:3. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Documentation of Locations – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews indicated that the central files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure central files identify the locations of other student records maintained by the district.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Florham Park Public School District on March 18, 19 and 20, 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 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 further 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.

About twenty-five parents attended a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit. Though many of these parents expressed their dissatisfaction with some of the district's programs and services, these concerns had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process. Some parents expressed concerns that their input was not consistently considered at the IEP meetings and that timelines were not being met possibly due to staff shortages. A few parents did express their satisfaction with the district's pull-out resource center program and in-class support program.

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, length of school year/day, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, independent evaluations, health summary, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, multi-disciplinary evaluations and standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, turning age five, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, continuum, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, BIP/FBA, manifestation determinations, participation in statewide assessment, approved accommodations and modifications, alternate assessment, graduation requirements, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional/parent development, extended school year, provision of related services, transfer students, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, native language, Child Find 3-21, referral processes, direct referrals (parent/staff), participants and timelines for identification meetings, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, considerations/required statements, alignment of goals and objectives with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, teacher knowledge/access, individualized decision-making, supplementary aids and services for preschool, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, student agency invite, agency involvement in transition, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, documentation of

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discipline to case manager, IAES, collaboration time, class description and parent/adult student access to records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding multi-disciplinary evaluation and written reports, IEP documentation of statewide assessment and district testing, home instruction programming and approvals, maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of locations.

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.