

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

District: Frankford Township School District

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: September 10 and 11, 2002

Monitoring Team: Damen Cooper and Zola Mills

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Frankford Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Frankford Township 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 Frankford Township 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 the Frankford Middle School, on Monday, September 9, 2002. 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, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for providing Lunch Counseling Groups that help students to improve social skills and communication skills as well as assisting them when family issues become problematic.

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The district provides School Based Mentoring with volunteers from Big Brother/Big Sisters where students who are at-risk academically or socially are matched with an adult volunteer during part of the school day to work on a specific academic area under the direction of the teacher.

The district opened a regular education preschool class in January 2002 to provide regular education access for preschool disabled students.

The district also provides counseling for students who had been referred but not found eligible for special education and related services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Transition and Statewide Assessment 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day/year, facilities, certifications and related services for occupational and physical therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of counseling services, transfer students and documentation of the consideration of extend school year. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has begun implementing specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of counseling services and transfer students.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of goals and objectives, frequency, duration and location of services for students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS).

Area(s) of Need:

Related Services for ESLS – During the on-site monitoring, a review of records indicated that although speech services are provided, goals and objectives, frequency, duration and location of services were inconsistently documented in the IEP.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it includes goals and objectives and the frequency, duration and location of services for students determined eligible for speech/language services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, notices of meetings for eligible for special education and related services, written notices for, meetings for and independent evaluations.

During the on-site visit areas of need were identified regarding students eligible for speech and language services in the areas of notices of meetings, written notices, meetings and surrogate parent policy.

Area(s) of Need:

Written notice – During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that all the required components of written notice are not included in the forms.

- **The district will revise the notice of meeting forms to ensure they include all required components required by N.J.A.C.6A:14 2.3 (d)(e)(f). It is recommended the district adopt the notice forms developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Surrogate parents – During the on-site monitoring, interviews indicated that the district does not have a procedure to select and train surrogate parents in the event one is needed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to select and train surrogate parents in the event one is needed.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referral, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines, participants at meetings for students eligible for special education and related services and vision and hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the referral process. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has begun to implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding Child Find, health summaries, identification meetings and participants for students eligible for speech and language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find – During the on-site monitoring interviews and a review of records indicated that although the board policy indicated child find activities should address children

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between the ages of three and twenty-one, the activities only address children between the ages of three and five.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure Child Find activities are amended to include children between the ages of three and twenty-one.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports and acceptance and rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has begun to implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments for students eligible for speech and language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Multidisciplinary/functional assessments – During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated the speech therapist is not obtaining educational impact statements from the teacher and is not conducting functional assessments.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech reports contain an educational impact statement from the student's teacher and that the therapist conducts functional assessments that include all required components. The district's plan must include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in all areas of reevaluations procedures for students eligible for special education and related services.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding timelines for students eligible for speech and language service.

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Area(s) of Need:

Timelines – During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that evaluation timelines were inconsistently met for students eligible for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that evaluation timelines are met for students eligible for speech and language service. The district’s plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section 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 for students eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the provision of copies of evaluation reports to parents. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has begun to implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding statements of eligibility for students eligible for speech and language service.

Area(s) of Need:

Statement of eligibility – During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that some files did not contain eligibility determination statements. Other files indicated eligibility statements were included in assessment reports.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that eligibility determination statements are formulated and documented for students eligible for speech and language services. The plan must further ensure these statements are not included in speech and language assessment reports. The plan must include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, 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 participants and meetings, considerations and required statements for students eligible for special education and related services, goals and objectives aligned to the

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core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines and ninety-day timelines for students eligible for special education and related service.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of implementation dates, teacher knowledge and access and present levels of educational performance. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding considerations and required statements for students eligible for speech and language services, goals and objectives, implementations dates, annual review and ninety-day timelines and teacher access and responsibility for students eligible for speech and language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Considerations and required statements – During the on-site monitoring, a record review of the speech IEP format indicated that all required considerations and required statements were not included.

- **The district needs to revise its speech IEP format to ensure it includes all required considerations and statements. It is recommended that the district adopt the state's model IEP.**

Implementation timelines for student's eligible for speech and language service – During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that the speech therapist is not implementing IEP's in accordance with dates identified on the IEP; not implementing initial IEP's within ninety days; and is not conducting annual reviews within twelve months of the previous IEP.

- **The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure implementation dates, annual review timelines and ninety-day timelines are met for students eligible for speech and language services. The district's 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 Oberti Factors, considerations and required statements and nonacademic and extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, supplementary aids and services, regular education access and continuum. 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 X: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

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

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

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of class size waivers. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has begun to implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent and adult student access to records and documentation of locations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has begun to implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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 Frankford Township School District on September 10 and 11, 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 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 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Several parents expressed concerns regarding transitioning declassified students back to general education classes. Furthermore there was a need expressed for earlier evaluations in the primary grades. Parents also felt additional inclusion training was necessary for general education teachers.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included general provisions, length of day/year, facilities and certifications, related services of occupational and physical therapy, consent, notice of meetings for eligibility for students eligible for special education and related services, written notice for students eligible for special education and related services, meeting for students eligible for special education and related services, independent evaluations, direct referrals, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants for students eligible for special education and related services, functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, all reevaluation procedures for students eligible for special education and related services, eligibility meetings and participants for students eligible for special education and related services, criteria and documentation for students eligible for special education and related services, IEP meetings and participants for students eligible for special education and related services, consideration and required statements for students eligible for special education and related services, goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards for students eligible for special education and related services, annual review and ninety-day timelines for students eligible for special education and related services, Oberti Factors, consideration and required statements, nonacademic and extra-curricular participation, all transition components, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plan/functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determination and interim alternative educational settings, statewide assessment, age range waivers, group size for speech therapy, home instruction, access sheets for students eligible for special education and related services, maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, related service of counseling, transfer students, referral process, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports, copy of evaluation reports to parents, implementation dates, teacher knowledge and access, present level of education performance, individualized decision making, supplementary aids/services, regular education access, continuum, documentation of discipline to case manager, class size waivers, parent and adult student access to records and documentation of other locations.

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding goals and objectives, frequency, duration and location, notices of meetings, written notice, surrogate parents, Child Find, health summaries, functional assessments, reevaluation timelines, statement of eligibility, and IEP components.

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