

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

District: Franklin Township School District

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: April 1, 2004

Monitoring Team: Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Franklin 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 Franklin 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 Franklin Township 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, and other relevant information, as well as holding a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Franklin Township Elementary School on April 1, 2004. 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 review of three years of data as well as information provided by district staff indicated the Franklin Township School District has been able to steadily decrease their classification rate, from 11.5% in 2000-2001 school year, to 9.6% in 2002-2003 school year, by revising its referral procedures, by providing staff training and by implementing a variety of effective pre-referral interventions. Additionally, during the 2002-2003 school year, more than 93% of the district's special needs students (41.6% is the state average) were educated in a general education setting for at least 80% of the school day. Furthermore, data indicated that 33% of the district's preschool disabled population is

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

educated in a general education, early childhood setting, in contrast to the state average of 23.2%.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for their after-school tutoring program for classified middle school students who require additional help with assignments, homework, and organization. Additionally, the district was a recipient of a discretionary grant entitled "Supporting Students with Disabilities in General Education Classrooms." The grant money was used to purchase assistive technology educational tools which allowed the district to more effectively support classified students in selected general education classes in math, language arts, social studies and science.

Finally, the district is commended for developing a program which allows classified students in upper grades to work along with the kindergarten teacher in the classroom in providing assistance to the younger children. This student helping student interaction is beneficial to both the older, classified children and the kindergarten, nondisabled children.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Transition, 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 accurately identified themselves compliant 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 in-service training for paraprofessional staff. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

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, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the documentation of the provision of related services, transfer students and maintenance of hearing aids. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summaries and identification meetings.

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

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meeting participants, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines and teacher access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision-making process, regular education access in the district and a continuum of placement options.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplementary aids and services and notification/participation of nonacademic and extracurricular activities to students attending out-of-district placements. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards.

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

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

Section XIII: Graduation

As Franklin Township is a K-8 district, there are no findings in this area.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of access to requests for pupil records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

Special education monitoring was completed in the Franklin Township School District on April 1, 2004. 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 district is commended for its 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 many areas identified as compliant during the self-assessment and verified as such by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Procedural safeguards, reevaluation, eligibility, transition, statewide assessment and programs and services were areas demonstrating compliance with all standards.

At a focus group meeting several parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. In general, the district was praised for its efforts to meet the individualized needs of special education students, for staff professionalism and availability to address parental concerns and also for the district's ability to provide "excellent services" to students.

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, extended school year, length of day/year, facilities, certifications, Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summaries, identification meetings, meeting participants, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, teacher access, decision-making process, regular education access in the district, continuum of placement options, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards, 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 in-service training for paraprofessional staff, documentation of the provision of related services, transfer students, maintenance of hearing aides, vision and hearing screenings, acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations, considerations and required statements, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplementary aide and services and notification/participation of nonacademic and extracurricular activities to students attending out-of-district placements, documentation of suspension to the case manager and access to requests for pupil records.

No additional areas of need were identified during the desk audit, focus group and/or parent interviews.