

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

District: Franklin Township School District **County:** Warren

Monitoring Dates: November 27, 28, and 29, 2001

Monitoring Team: Thomas Walsh, Zola Mills and Jennifer De Saye

Background Information

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the 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 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 on November 5, 2001 at the Franklin Township School. 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.

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District Strengths:

The district should be commended for their inclusionary philosophy and practices. The district has been commended by the NJDOE for best practices regarding inclusion and their parenting program. They have also been commended by the Developmental Disabilities Council for their parent training program. This school year, the district has been asked to present their parenting program at the National Association of School Psychologists Conference. Additionally, the district's policy toward professional development has resulted in comprehensive training opportunities at every level.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, and Reevaluation 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: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year for preschool disabled students. The district's 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 & Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified itself compliant in the areas of Child Find, direct referrals, summer referrals and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of pre-referral interventions and their effectiveness, health summary and vision and hearing screenings for preschool referrals. 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 V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of functional assessments and written reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, documentation of acceptance/rejection of reports, and bilingual evaluations. 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 VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding eligibility documentation, criteria, and the provision of a copy of the evaluation report to parents. 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 VIII: Individual Education Program

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of considerations/required statements, ninety-day timelines and teacher knowledge and access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of participants, alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards, and documentation of implementation dates. 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 IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, considerations, supplemental aids and services, and regular education access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of nonacademic/extracurricular participation for out-of-district students and documentation of the continuum for preschool 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.

Section X: Transition

Transition from Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition by age three.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of documentation of attendance at preschool transition planning conferences. 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.

Transition to post-school is not applicable in this K-six district.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, suspension tracking, behavioral improvement plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determination and interim alternate educational setting.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of providing documentation 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 on-site visit.

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Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of alternative assessments. 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 XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range, group size and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of staff knowledge of supplemental instruction and replacement programs and provision of common planning time. 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 self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of adult/student access to records, access sheets, and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional staff lacking knowledge of student record policies and procedures, and the need to document parents' receipt of a copy of N.J.A.C. 6:3. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding maintenance and destruction of student records.

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Area of Need:

Maintenance and Destruction of Student Records – During the on-site, a review of records and interviews indicated the district's policy on the maintenance and destruction of student records does not comply with N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.1

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include a board approved policy and procedure to ensure proper maintenance and destruction of student records as required by N.J.A.C. 6:3-6.1.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Franklin School District. The purpose of this 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 thorough and 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.

At the public focus group meeting, the majority of parents indicated they were pleased with the programs and services their children are receiving and expressed positive comments about the district and its professional staff.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included: general provisions, related services, length of school day/year, procedural safeguards, transfer students, facilities and certifications, Child Find, direct referrals, identification meetings summer referrals, functional assessments, written reports, reevaluation procedures, eligibility meetings and documentation, considerations/ required statements, ninety-day timelines, teacher knowledge/access, individualized decision-making, considerations, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, grade kindergarten to grade six continuum, transition to preschool by age three, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral improvement plans, manifestation determination and interim alternative educational settings, statewide assessments and participation, accommodations/modifications, IEP documentation, class size, age range, group size for speech, home instruction, parent/adult student access to pupil records, access sheets and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, documentation of pre-intervention strategies, the development of a consistent referral process, health summary, vision and hearing screening, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, eligibility criteria, participants at eligibility meetings, provision of a copy of the evaluation reports to parents, documentation of IEP participants, alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards, IEP implementation dates, annual review timelines, documentation of attendance at preschool transition meetings, documentation of suspensions to case manager, staff knowledge of policy and procedures regarding student records, documentation of parental receipt of a copy of N.J.A.C. 6:3, nonacademic/extracurricular participation for out-of-district students, documentation of the continuum for preschool students, multi-disciplinary evaluations, alternative assessments, staff knowledge of supplemental instruction and replacement programs and provision of common planning time.

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards regarding the maintenance and destruction of student records.

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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.

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