

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Garfield School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: April 2 and 3, 2002

Monitoring Team: Damen Cooper and Janet Wright

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Garfield School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Garfield 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 Garfield 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 Garfield High School on March 25, 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 is commended for their Teen Institute of the Garden State (TIGS) program. The TIGS program is a year round wellness and leadership training program for New Jersey teens where they learn prevention planning and leadership skills that enable them to effect positive change in their school and communities.

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The district is further commended for their Turning Resources and Energy in New Directions (TRENDS). TRENDS is a national organization created by youth who want to take a leadership role in advocating an alcohol, tobacco and other drug free life-style.

Garfield participates in a co-sponsored program with Bergen County called Even Start. This program teaches life skills and English to parents of preschoolers. Garfield is also involved in a partnership program with William Paterson University where they obtain assistance in teacher training and curriculum mapping workshops.

I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the entire area of general provisions. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 area of length of school day/year.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of facilities and certifications. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, related services and transfer students. The district has developed an improvement plan that 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 elements.

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

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent and independent evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of notices of meetings, written notice, meetings and native language. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to

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ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of vision/hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of Child Find. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of referral process, direct referrals, health summaries and identification meeting timelines and participants. 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 elements. Additionally, the district has participated in technical assistance sessions regarding the issue of an overrepresentation of minority students in special education. Staff from the Office for Civil Rights and the Office of Special Education Programs will determine the appropriateness of that plan and advise the district of any additional requirements.

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

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services and standardized assessments for students eligible for speech and language service.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments and bilingual evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of standardized assessments, written reports and acceptance/rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of eligibility in speech/language written reports.

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Areas of Need:

Written Reports – During the on-site, a review of records indicated that speech/language therapists are including eligibility statements in their written reports.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure eligibility statements are not included in written reports developed by speech/language specialists. The plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of timelines and planning meetings. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative 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 monitoring visit.

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meetings and participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of criteria, documentation of eligibility and a copy of evaluation reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the entire area of IEP. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas of annual review timelines and teacher knowledge/access. The district's improvement plan is insufficient

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to address the areas of participants, implementation dates and ninety-day timelines because it lacks an administrative oversight component. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the areas of consideration and required statements, alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS) and age of majority because it lacks procedures and an administrative component. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

IX. LRE

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, consideration/documentation, supplementary aids/services, regular education access and nonacademic/extracurricular participation. 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 elements.

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

X. Transition

Preschool Transition

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the entire area of preschool transition. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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 elements.

Transition to Post-School

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the entire area of post-school transition. 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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XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the entire area of discipline. 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.

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern with alternate assessments, IEP documentation, special review assessment (SRA), and teacher knowledge of accommodations/content. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

XIII. Graduation

Summary of findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of diploma and participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP requirements and written notice. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas 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 monitoring visit.

XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of group sizes for speech therapy.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class sizes, age range, home instruction, case management time, collaborative planning time, class description and staffing. The district's 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.

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified concerns in the entire area of student records. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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 Garfield School District on April 2 and 3, 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the five parents present expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included length of school day/year, vision/hearing screenings, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, participants at planning meetings, turning age five, continuum, participation in statewide assessment, accommodations/modifications for statewide assessment, diploma, participation, and group sizes for speech therapy,

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding general provisions, extended school year, provision of related services, transfer students, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, native language, independent evaluations, child find 3-21, referral processes, direct referrals (parent/staff), summer referrals, health summaries, participants and timelines for identification meeting, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP components, individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, supplementary aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, preschool transition and post school transition, discipline, alternate assessment, documentation of statewide assessment, SRA assessment, child study knowledge of accommodations/modifications and content, graduation IEP requirements, written notice, programs and services class size/waiver, age range/waiver, home instruction, class descriptions and approvals, staffing, collaborative planning time and student records.

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need regarding documentation of eligibility in speech language written reports.

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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