

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Green Township School District

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: November 12 and 13, 2002

Monitoring Team: Zola Mills and Janet Wright

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Green 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 Green 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 Green 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 Green Township School on October 29, 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 opening a preschool disabled program to enhance their continuum of programs and services and to keep more students within district. This program is beginning the second year of operation.

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The district also provides a sixth grade Outdoor Education Program that takes all of the students at that grade level to a three day overnight outing that focuses on team building, character education and ecology. There is also character education imbedded throughout the building curriculum using “Character Counts.”

In this same vane, twenty-six middle school students attended “Taking Flight to Change” and were given the charge to develop an action plan for the school to decrease bullying. The students are developing skits to be presented to other students at all grade levels.

The district also provides a special education teacher fully trained in the Wilson reading program.

Additionally the district has an in-school tutoring program, Peer to Peer tutoring and an after school homework assistance program.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Location Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Statewide Assessment and Graduation 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 extended school year, related services of occupational, physical and speech therapy, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the development of goals and objectives for counseling. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, considerations/required statements, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates and annual and ninety-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district again identified a concern in the area of goals and objectives for counseling. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area as indicated in Section II FAPE.

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

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Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, and suspension tracking. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section 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, group sizes, home instruction.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the delivery of in-class support and in-class replacement services.

Area(s) of Need:

In-class resource programs – During the on-site monitoring, a review of records, classroom observation and staff interviews indicated that in-class support and in-class replacement were being provided within the same instructional period by the same special education teacher in the departmentalized sixth through eighth grades. According to staff interviews, scheduling issues interfere with the provision of in-class support and in-class replacement during separate periods.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that in-class support and in-class replacement are not provided by the same teacher during the same instructional period. The plan must further ensure that group sizes for both types of instruction are in accordance with those identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.6(h). The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

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

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of maintenance and destruction of records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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 Green Township School District on November 12 and 13, 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 that review the district was able to identify all but one area of need and develop an improvement plan that 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 as well as the significant cooperation and communication with the child study team. Parents also expressed a desire to form a parent support group. A concern was expressed regarding the implementation of accommodations and modifications by general education teachers.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, professional/parent development, dissemination of IDEA, extended school year, related services of occupational, physical and speech therapy, length of day/year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process/pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, ID meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, accept/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP meeting participants, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, individualized decision making, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preference/interests, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement, student/agency invitation, pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three, functional behavior analysis, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational setting, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes, home instruction, access to student records, access sheets and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding goals and objectives for counseling, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking and maintenance and destruction of student records.

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need regarding resource programs.

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Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Green Township School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the one area that requires a revision.