

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

**District:** Greenbrook Township School District

**County:** Somerset

**Monitoring Dates:** April 5 & 25, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Nicole Buten and Kim Murray

***Background Information:***

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Greenbrook 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 Farmingdale School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 Greenbrook 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, parent interviews and other relevant information. Parent interviews were also conducted in order to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan and to determine 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 the district data indicated the Greenbrook Township School District has a classification rate of 11.4%, significantly lower than the state average of 14.6%. District staff indicated that the district is able to keep a low classification rate by providing a study skills and academic instructional class for both general and special education students in grades 5-8, by providing a social skills group for both general and special education students and by having a variety of effective interventions available to students in general education programs.

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The district identified a need to increase the length of time students with specific learning disabilities spend in general education settings. Review of the self-assessment document indicated that the district has put activities in place regarding a review of placement decisions for students with learning disabilities and consideration of supplementary aids and services to address this area of need.

### **District Strengths:**

The district is commended for their **Character Education Program**, a program that focuses on the recognition and reinforcement of behaviors that display positive character traits. Each month a character trait is targeted and as students display the targeted trait, they receive an award to decorate and display on the school's character bulletin board. The awards are individually designed to reflect diversity within the school.

Additionally, the district is commended for its **Community Service Committee**. This committee is a volunteer program comprised of students who perform hospitality services at special functions and fund raising activities for the school and special service organizations, such as the American Red Cross and the American Cancer Society. The students involved in this group also serve as mentors to the elementary school children in a variety of ways which include: providing support in the classroom, reading to students, and making holiday cards for nursing home residents. The students also provide a computer workshop for senior citizens in the community and share lunch with assisted living residents on a monthly basis.

Finally, the district is commended for their mentorship/tutoring program. Older students volunteer after school once each week to provide academic support to students in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. This process has proven to be especially helpful as a pre-referral intervention strategy for students with academic difficulties.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:***

Free, Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records 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 identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures, parent training and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff training. 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 III: Procedural Safeguards***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the area of notice of transition meetings. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

### ***Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of the referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals and identification meeting participants and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, health summaries and vision and hearing screenings. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

### ***Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the area of functional assessments. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

### ***Section VII: Eligibility***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students and copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale. 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 VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, present levels of educational performance statements for students eligible for special education and related services, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, teacher access/responsibility and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements and present levels of educational performance statements for speech only students. 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 IX: Least Restrictive Environment***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, regular education access in district, notification of nonacademic and extracurricular activities to out-of-district students and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of consideration of supplementary aids and services. 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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## **Summary**

Special education monitoring was completed in the Greenbrook Township School District on April 5 & 25, 2005. 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 Greenbrook Township School 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 prompt implementation of the improvement plan activities to address several areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas identified as compliant during the self-assessment and verified as such by the Office of Special Education Programs.

Free, Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records were areas demonstrating compliance with all standards.

Information obtained at a parent focus group and through phone interviews indicated that most parents are very happy with the high quality of special education services their children are receiving. Parents stated that the child study team members provide a thorough evaluation of the students' needs and develop programs to meet their needs within the general education classroom setting as much as possible. It was reported that the district welcomes parental input and parents feel that there is a team approach in the development of the IEP. Additionally, parents consistently expressed satisfaction with the district's newly opened, full day preschool disabled program. At the focus group meeting held on April 5, 2005, some concerns were voiced regarding the responsibility of general education teachers to fully implement the IEPs of students with disabilities.

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, parent training, surrogate parents, notices in native language, notices of meetings, written notices, independent evaluations, consent, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting participants and timelines, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations, participants for eligibility meetings, criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disabled students, copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings, IEP meeting participants, present levels of education performance statements for students eligible for special education and related services, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90-day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, regular education access in district, notification of nonacademic and extracurricular activities to out-of-district students and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff training, signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale, considerations and required statements in the IEP, present levels of educational performance statements for speech only students and the consideration of supplementary aids and services.

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The district was able to demonstrate that it has fully implemented the improvement plan activities for the following areas, and as a result, are no longer areas of need: notice of transition meetings, Child Find, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings and functional assessments.

No revisions to the district's improvement plan are required. The improvement plan submitted in June, 2004 will be reviewed for final approval. Verification of the implementation of the plan will be conducted by the County Supervisor of Child Study.