

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

**District:** Guttenberg School District

**County:** Hudson

**Monitoring Dates:** February 23, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Vanessa Leonard

***Background Information:***

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Guttenberg School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Guttenberg 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 Guttenberg 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 Anna Klein School, on February 23, 2005. 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators and child study team members.

**District Strengths:**

The district is commended for the Homework Haven after school program. All students are welcome to attend the program to complete homework under the supervision of a teacher.

The district also provides Lunchtime Pals. This program was designed to offer elementary students the opportunity to pair together with students who may not enjoy

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free play. During Lunchtime Pals, students play games and converse, while developing social skills.

### **Data Summary:**

**Guttenberg School District** had an overall classification rate of 10.38% for 2003. This is below the state average of 14.3%. The district has written an improvement plan to address child find activities in the community to ensure that the low rate is not due to a lack of information within the community. Guttenberg school district's data indicate that only 16.3% of classified students ages 6-21 were educated in the general education setting for 80% of the day. This is 25.3% lower than the state average. The district has begun to reconcile this discrepancy by providing staff training for general education teachers in the area of special education and improving the consideration of supplementary aids and services for special needs students. During self-assessment, the district indicated a greater need for general education access for classified students. The district will develop an improvement plan that includes activities that will ensure steps are taken to provide greater access to general education.

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

**Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Statewide Assessment, Graduation 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 accurately 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.

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

### ***Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of provision of programs, related services, length of school day and year, facilities, transfer students and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of extended school year. 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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### ***Section III: Procedural Safeguards***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, content and provision of notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the area of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find and health summaries. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 compliance in the areas of IEP meetings/participants, IEP required statements, present levels of educational performance, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines and teacher access/ responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards and implementation of IEP by age 3. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### ***Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of decision-making process, LRE documentation, notification and participation of out-of-district students in non-academic/extracurricular activities and continuum of programs.

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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. An additional area of need was identified by the district regarding general education access for classified students ages 6-21. **The district failed to write an improvement plan for this area of need.**

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include specific activities to increase opportunities for educating students in the general education setting. The plan must include administrative oversight to ensure the consistent implementation of procedures. As a result of these activities the district will be able to increase the number of students who have the opportunity to benefit from instruction in the general education setting.**

### ***Section X: Transition to Post-School***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of Transition Service Needs, Needed Transition Services and student invitation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of preferences and interests survey and assessment. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

### ***Section X: Transition to Preschool***

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preschool transition plan conference and transition from early intervention programs to preschool programs by age 3. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### ***Section XI: Discipline***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plan, manifestation determination meetings and interim alternative education settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of procedural safeguards. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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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 compliance in the areas of class size, age range, group sizes for speech and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of consultation time. 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 Guttenberg School District on February 23, 2005. 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 a thorough review conducted as part of the self-assessment and an improvement plan that addresses the vast majority of identified needs.

Seven parents attended a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit. Parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents of children at both the preschool and elementary levels felt that their children receive a high quality education. Several parents stated that there is excellent communication between themselves and district personnel. Many parents expressed that they always feel included in the education of their children. Parents stated that the child study team works in conjunction with parents to find ways to help their children. One parent commented that though parent training is provided for both general and special education topics, general education training should be modified to include the needs of students with special needs.

**Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Statewide Assessment, Graduation 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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, parent training, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of programs, related services, length of school day/year, facilities, transfer students, certifications, consent, content/provision of notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines/participants, IEP meetings/participants, IEP required statements, present levels of educational performance, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines, teacher access/ responsibility, decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, notification/participation of out-of-district student for non-academic/extracurricular activities, continuum of programs, Transition Service Needs, Needed Transition Services, student invitation, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plan, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative education settings, class size, age range, group sizes for speech and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff training, extended school year, surrogate parents, child find, health summaries, goal/objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, implementation of IEP by age three, consideration of supplementary aids and services, general education access, preferences/interests survey/assessment, preschool transition plan conference, Early Intervention Program to preschool disabled by age 3, procedural safeguards and consultation time.

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Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Guttenberg School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.