

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

District: Jamesburg Public School

County: Middlesex

Monitoring Dates: February 13 – 14, 2002

Monitoring Team: Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson, Stephen Coplin, Debbie Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2000 - 2001 school year, the Jamesburg Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Jamesburg Public 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 Jamesburg Public 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 January 28, 2002 at the John F. Kennedy Elementary School. Information obtained from the focus group 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, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district includes special education students in the following unique programs:

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The "Reading Buddies" program pairs regular education and special education students for the purpose of sharing information regarding books they have read. Students in resource center and self-contained classes participate in this program.

The "RAVE Readers" program provides an opportunity for retired volunteers from the community to read books to students with disabilities on a weekly basis.

General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policy/procedures and dissemination of IDEA information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding professional/paraprofessional in-service training. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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 areas of extended school year, related services, length of school day/year and certification of staff.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding transfer students and oversight of services at separate facilities. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding goals and objectives for counseling and approved facilities. The county office has been advised of facilities issues.

Area of Need:

Goals/Objectives for Counseling – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that goals and objectives for counseling are not consistently developed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives for counseling are developed and**

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included in IEPs. The improvement plan must also include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, meeting participants and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding surrogate parents, the provision of notices in native language and the 15-day written notice. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns regarding the content of all district notices. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure procedures are fully implemented. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component. Additionally, the district identified a concern regarding the provision of written notice within required timelines. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding parental requests and IEP revisions.

Area(s) of Need:

Responding to a Parental Request - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district does not respond within 20 calendar days of receipt of any written parental request requiring a response in the form of written notice.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice is provided within 20 calendar days of receipt of a written parental request that requires a response in the form of notice. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Meetings – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with the child study team that the district implements program and placement changes without convening IEP meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district convenes an IEP meeting and provides the parent with written notice of the proposed changes prior to implementing those changes. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Section IV: Location, Referral, and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of health summary, vision/hearing screenings and identification meeting/timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the referral process and pre-referral interventions. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding child find activities.

Area of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's child find activities are insufficient to locate, identify and refer potentially disabled students because these activities are not conducted during the summer months and do not include migrant and homeless students ages 3 to 21.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities are conducted throughout the year and include activities to locate, identify and refer potentially disabled students migrant and homeless students. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments, written reports, multidisciplinary evaluations for speech/language reports, and acceptance/rejection of outside reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services are missing parent and teacher interviews, developmental/educational history, interventions attempted and informal measures. Functional assessments for students eligible for speech and language services are missing the educational impact statement from the teacher.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments contain the required components identified in NJAC 6A:14-3.4(d)2. The improvement plan must also include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that assessment reports are not dated.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure written reports are dated. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Multidisciplinary Evaluations - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through review of records that speech/language therapist do not include an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher in evaluation reports.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech reports include an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Acceptance/Rejection - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through file review and interviews that the acceptance/rejection of outside reports is not documented in student records.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents the acceptance/rejection of an entire report or assessment, or any part of the report or assessment. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings and completing reevaluations by June 30th of the students' last year in the preschool program.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding three-year reevaluation timelines.

Area of Need:

Reevaluation Timelines – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not complete reevaluations within the three-year timeline.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure reevaluations are completed in a timely manner. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of the provision of evaluation reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding eligibility criteria/formula for Specific Learning Disability and documentation of the eligibility statement. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified a concern regarding referral of ESLS students to the child study team. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the eligibility conference.

Area of Need:

Eligibility Conference - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that placement decisions are made during the eligibility conference. As a result, placement decisions are documented in the eligibility statement.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that discussions regarding placement occur subsequent to the determination of eligibility to ensure appropriate considerations are given to factors that will be discussed during the development of the IEP. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates and teacher access/responsibility.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation and the need to consult with secondary level staff regarding students entering high school. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding individualized decision-making process, annual reviews and considerations/required statements.

Area(s) of Need:

Individualized Decision-Making Process - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the IEP team does not document in the LRE section of the IEP, the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected, nor explain why they are not appropriate to meet the student's needs in the general education class.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the IEP team documents the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected and why they were not appropriate to meet the student's needs within the general education setting. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Annual Reviews – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district does not complete annual reviews within required timelines.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure annual reviews are completed within required timelines. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Considerations/Required Statements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that the IEP does not contain information regarding whether the team has considered strategies/supports for students whose behavior impedes learning, appropriate consultation with agencies for transition services, communication/visual or hearing needs and supplementary aides and services, if needed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs contain all of the required considerations and statements. It is recommended that the district adopt the IEP form developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding out-of-district student participation in nonacademic/extracurricular activities. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding transition to post-school. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section X: Transition to Pre-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of preschool transition planning conferences.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding implementation of IEPs for preschoolers by age three. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding appropriate discipline procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service

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training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding student criteria for determining participation, alternate assessment (APA) and staff knowledge of assessment content. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section XIII: Graduation is not applicable in this k-8 district.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of age range/class size/group size.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding insufficient staff and collaborative planning time for regular/special education teachers. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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 area of student record access/requests.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding lack of knowledge about student record policies and procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding access sheets and documentation of other records maintained by the district.

Area(s) of Need:

Access Sheets - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that files for students determined eligible for speech and language services do not contain access sheets.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure access sheets are maintained in student files.**

Documentation of Other Locations – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not identify the location of other records in the central file.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other records is identified in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Jamesburg School District on February 13, 14, 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify 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 a focus group meeting held prior to the on-site monitoring visit, parents spoke quite favorable of district administrators, child study team members, speech/language therapist and teachers. Parents indicated staff are always willing to convene and dialogue with parents regarding student needs and progress. Parents particularly praised the district for educating disabled preschoolers with their non-disabled peers in the newly developed pre-school program. Parents expressed some concern regarding training/development of professional and paraprofessional staff, particularly in the area of autism.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit include policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, extended school year, related services, length of school day/year, certifications, consent, meeting participants, independent evaluations, health summary, vision/hearing screenings, identification meeting/timelines, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, planning meetings, reevaluation of preschool students by June 30th, provision of evaluation reports to parents, goals/objectives/CCCS, implementation dates, IEP access/ teacher responsibility, continuum of programs, preschool transition planning conferences, statewide assessment, age range/class size/group size and parent requests/student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training, transfer students, oversight of services at separate facilities, surrogate parents, the provision of notices in native language, 15 day notice, referral process/pre-referral interventions, eligibility criteria/formula for SLD, documentation of the eligibility statement, provision of IEPs to parents, consultation with secondary staff regarding students entering high school, participation in extra curricular activities for out-of-district students, transition to post-school, implementation of IEPs for preschoolers, discipline procedures, student participation in statewide assessments, alternate assessments, staff knowledge of assessment content, insufficient staff, collaborative time for regular/special education teachers, and student record policies/procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding goals/objectives for counseling, facilities, parental requests, child find activities, functional assessments, written reports, multidisciplinary evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, reevaluation timelines, eligibility conferences, individualized decision-making process, annual reviews, consideration/required statements in IEPs, access sheets in speech/language files and documentation of student records in other locations.

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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. In areas requiring the development of procedures, the improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation. In addition, any improvement plan activity that requires staff development must include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service.

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