

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

**District:** Jefferson Township Public School District      **County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** September 23, 24, 25 and 26, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Zola Mills, Damen Cooper, Gladys Miller and Janet Wright

***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Jefferson Township 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 Jefferson Township 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 Jefferson Township Public 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 Jefferson High School on September 17, 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 the Each One Reach One program. This voluntary student run program provides elementary school special education students with high school student buddies twice a month. The buddies participate in a variety of academic tutoring and mentoring activities as well as extracurricular programs such as field trips to

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the circus, bowling and football games. Senior students also participate in a personal development program that helps freshmen deal with the transition into the more adult student environment.

The district has received a Best Practices Award for their Geography Awareness Program that emphasizes the five themes of geography. In addition, high school students are also able to participate in Garbology which is an urban archeology program that tries to explain our society by the study of castoffs. Economics and history students participate in the Hooverville Program that exposes students to hands on experiences of the depression such as sleeping in a cardboard box or eating at a soup kitchen.

The district also provides a Teens N' Tots program where children three to five years old come to the high school to learn everyday lessons and skills from high school students.

There is a VIP Program in the elementary school that provides parent volunteers who work with classroom teachers.

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

**Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs & 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 accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent development. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding parent training.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Parent Training-** During the on-site visit, parent interviews indicated a need for information regarding a variety of special education issues including the process of evaluation and classification.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parent training is provided in those areas identified during the on-site and at the focus group meeting. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training.**

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

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas related services of speech, occupational and physical therapy, length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities, and certifications.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year (ESY) and goals and objectives for counseling.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Extended School Year** - During the on-site visit, interviews with parents and staff indicated that although a statement regarding the consideration for extended school year services is included in the IEP, these considerations were only applied to preschoolers, multiply disabled students and out-of-district students.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure extended school year services are discussed for every student and provided when appropriate. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Counseling Goals and Objectives** - During the on-site visit, record review and staff interviews indicated that although there are generalized goals for social/emotional issues, there are no goals and objectives developed for those students who receive counseling as a related service.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the development of counseling goals and objectives for those students who receive counseling as a related service. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, and identification meeting participants.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding summer referrals, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Summer Referrals** - During the on-site monitoring, staff indicated that because summer staff members were not employed during the summer months, summer cases were not completed in a timely manner.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district employs sufficient staff to complete mandated activities during the summer months.**

**Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings** - During the on-site monitoring, record review and staff interviews indicated that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are not done unless the referral has come through the pupil assistance committee.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are completed by the school nurse and provided to the child study team whenever a student is referred for an initial evaluation. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Identification Timelines** - During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that referral dates were not consistently documented.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that referral dates are consistently documented in the files. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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

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

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern with the dating and signing of written reports for students eligible for speech and language services, only. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated inconsistency in the dating of written reports for students determined eligible for special education and related services. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to address all special education students, not just those students who are eligible for speech and language services.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding components of functional assessments and the acceptance or rejection of reports.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Functional Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that parent interviews and classroom observations were inconsistently completed as part of the functional assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parent interviews and observations are consistently completed as part of the functional assessment. The district's plan must include an**

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**administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Acceptance or Rejection of Reports** - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and record review indicated that there is no procedure for the acceptance or rejection of outside reports.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that outside reports are accepted or rejected by the team and that that acceptance/rejection is documented in the student file. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section VII: Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings and participants.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding criteria, documentation of eligibility in related services reports and provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Criteria** - During the on-site monitoring, record review and parent interviews indicated that criteria for classification did not consistently meet the code requirements. Some parent interviews indicated that a preschool disabled student was classified as SLD and only at the parent's insistence was the child reclassified as preschool disabled. Another child was originally classified OHI and without any new documentation was reclassified TBI. Additionally, students classified Communication Impaired did not demonstrate performance below 1.5 standard deviations nor did they score in the tenth percentile on two standardized language tests.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district applies appropriate criteria to determine students eligible for special education services. The plan must include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Statement of Eligibility** - During the on-site monitoring, record review indicated that eligibility statements were included in speech, occupational therapy, and physical therapy evaluation reports.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure assessment reports do not include eligibility statements. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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**Copy of Evaluation Reports to Parents** - During the on-site monitoring, staff and parent interviews as well as record review indicated that copies of reports are not being provided ten days prior to the eligibility meeting.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that evaluation reports are provided to parents at least ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### ***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 for students eligible for special education and related services, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, age of majority, annual review timelines and teacher access/responsibility for IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of provision of progress reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding ninety-day timelines.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Ninety-Day Timelines** - During the on-site monitoring, record review and staff interviews indicated that ninety-day timelines are not being met.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district completes the initial evaluation process within ninety days of obtaining parental consent to evaluate. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti considerations and required statements, consideration of supplementary aids and services, and regular education access.

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

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An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notification to and participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Notification to Out-of-District Students of Nonacademic and Extracurricular Activities** - During the on-site monitoring, parent interviews and a review of files indicated the district is not notifying parents or adult students of nonacademic and extracurricular activities available within the district. As a result there is little if any participation of these students in these activities.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notification of nonacademic/extracurricular activities is sent to all out-of-district students. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in all areas of preschool transition.

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of agency involvement, age fourteen courses and age sixteen needed transition services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preferences and interests and student/agency invitations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### **Section XIII: Graduation**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP requirements, diploma, participation and written notice of graduation for in-district students.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notice of graduation for out-of-district students.

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**Area(s) of Need:**

**Notice of Graduation** - During the on-site monitoring, staff interviews and record review indicated that although notices of graduation were sent to all students in-district, notice is not provided to those students placed in out-of-district programs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure that notice of graduation is provided to those students placed in out-of-district programs. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**



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## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Jefferson Township Public School District on September 23, 24, 25 and 26, 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 comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision 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 concerns regarding the need for greater communication with the child study teams, the need to notify parents of extracurricular, the need to provide more program options in the district, the need to more consistently implement accommodations and modifications and behavior plans, and the need to ensure the district provides personnel with the knowledge of district resources at IEP meetings. Although some parents did express satisfaction with district programs when telephone interviews were conducted, additional concerns were expressed regarding the district's low expectations for classified students and a lack of supported college preparatory classes for special education students.

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, related services of occupational, physical and speech therapies, length of day/year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, written notices, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process/pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meetings participants, multi-disciplinary for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, all reevaluation processes, eligibility meeting participants, participants at IEP meetings, considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education and related services, present levels of educational performance, alignment of goals and objectives with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, teacher access/responsibility for IEPs, individualized decision-making, Oberti considerations and required statements, supplementary aids/services, regular education access, preschool transition processes, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, age sixteen transition service needs, agency involvement, all discipline processes, all statewide assessment processes, IEP requirements for graduation, choice of diploma, out of district participation, written notice of graduation for in district students, all of programs and services and student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development, dating and signing of written reports for students eligible for speech and language services, progress reports to parents, speech IEPs, speech reports, continuum, student/agency invitation and preferences and interests.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding, parent training, extended school year, counseling goals and objectives, summer referrals, health summary, hearing and vision screenings, identification meetings timelines, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written

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reports for students eligible for special education and related services, acceptance or rejection of outside reports, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, ninety-day timelines, notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities and the provision of notice of graduation to out-of-district students.

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