

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

**District:** Keansburg Borough School District                      **County:** Monmouth

**Monitoring Dates:** January 30, 2004 and April 7, 2004

**Monitoring Team:** Michelle Davis Young and Vanessa Leonard

***Background Information:***

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Keansburg Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Keansburg Borough 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 Keansburg Borough 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 Keansburg Borough High School on February 10, 2004. 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, and child study team members.

**District Strengths:**

The district is commended for its **Family Fun Nights** program. The goal of this program is to provide students and their family members with hands-on experiences in various academic areas such as Math and Science and then to generalize those skills in the home environment.

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The district is commended for its **School Bank** program which provides students with the opportunity to develop banking and money skills. Students can deposit the "school money" they earned in class in the "School Bank" and withdraw that money to make purchases at the school store.

The **Caught-Being-Kind** program acknowledges students who have shown kindness or have been helpful to others. These students get their names placed on a bulletin board in the school's main hallway and receive a school reward at the end of each month.

The district is further commended for the **Career Day** program in which students prepare resumes based on career research projects. District administrators devote a school day to conducting mock interviews with each student who is participating in this activity. Students complete the interview process by developing and sending a follow-up letter to the administrator who interviewed them.

The district is also commended for the **COIN** program. This computerized program allows high school students to take career inventory tests and search colleges. Students can also obtain detailed descriptions of their desired occupations and are assisted in developing a resume or completing job applications. This program also has a component that assists students with disabilities in finding colleges that offer comprehensive support services to meet their unique needs.

### **Data Summary:**

Data regarding the Keansburg Borough School District's classification rate indicated a decrease from 28.4% for the 2001-2002 school year to 22% for the 2002-2003 school year. Staff reported that a significant increase in the number of classified students who have transferred into the district has contributed to the high classification rate. The district provided information showing that from September 2003 to February 2004, 64 classified students transferred into the district representing approximately 12% of the district's classified population. As this rate continues to be a concern in the district, an improvement plan was developed regarding pre-referral interventions and transfer student procedures to address this area of need.

The district's average of 39.6% indicated that it lags slightly behind the state average of 41.6% in the area of special needs student being educated in the general education setting for at least 80% of the school day. The district is to be commended for the appropriate measures it took to increase this percentage by 18% between the 2001 and 2003 school years. Review of the self-assessment document indicated that the district has put activities in place regarding a review of student placement, consideration of supplementary aids and services and the continuum of programs to ensure continued progress in this area.

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

**General Provisions, Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment 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.

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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 of extended school year, provision of programs and related services, frequency, duration and location of related services, IEP documentation of goals/objectives for speech/language and counseling services, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP documentation of goals/objectives for occupational therapy and physical therapy services and transfer student procedures. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent for initial evaluations, implementation of the initial IEP and to obtain or release student records, content and provision of notices of meetings and written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of consent for occupational/physical therapy evaluations and reevaluations. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in 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 themselves compliant in the areas of child find activities, referral process, direct referrals from parents/staff and identification meeting timelines/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-referral interventions, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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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 accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluation, standardized assessments, written reports signed/dated and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services and acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

### **Section VII: Eligibility**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings and participant for student eligible for special education and related services, criteria for specific learning disability (SLD) and signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of eligibility meeting participants for student eligible for speech/language services, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability and copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings for student eligible for speech/language services and for evaluation reports from outside consultants. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in 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 themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs), implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP meeting participants and IEPs to parents. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the decision-making process, documentation of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), regular education access for in-district students and notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of consideration of supplementary aides and services. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of continuum of programs 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.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of statements of Transition Services Needs and Needed Transition Services and preferences/interests surveys/assessments.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of student/agency invitation. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention program to preschool disabilities program by age three.

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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 themselves compliant in the areas of documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessment, behavior intervention plans, interim alternative educational settings and 45-day return.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of manifestation determination meetings and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in 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 and written notice of graduation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of documentation of out-of-district student participation in graduation activities. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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 themselves compliant in the areas of class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of home instruction. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in 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 Keansburg Borough School District on January 30, 2004 and April 7, 2004. 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 Keansburg Borough School District is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of their review, the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that is sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of the improvement plan activities to address almost all of the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. Additionally, the district is 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.

The Keansburg Borough School District has decreased its classification rate over the last three years and provided evidence that a main cause of this high rate is the significant number of classified students who have transferred into the district. The district is commended for developing an improvement plan regarding pre-referral interventions and transfer student procedures to address this area of need. The district is further commended for the appropriate measures it has taken to increase the percentage of special needs students being educated in the general education setting for at least 80% of the school day.

General Provisions, Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment and Student Records were areas determined to be compliant with all of the standards.

Approximately 40 parents, child study team members and administrators attended a focus group meeting held on February 5, 2003. Phone interviews were also conducted on April 7, 2004, with approximately 20 additional parents. Throughout this process, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the special education programs and services in the Keansburg Borough School District. The district involves parents in the decision-making process by providing notices of meetings in a timely manner, holding meetings at a mutually convenient time and rescheduling meetings to meet parent needs when requested. Parents praised the child study team members for accepting and including parental input and in developing IEPs that address student needs. Additionally, parents complemented the child study team for their ability to train and educate parents regarding their children's disabilities. It was also reported that parents and students are actively involved in the development of transition services. One parent expressed a concern regarding the program the district provided her child. Finally, parents reported that preschool students have programs in place by age three and have shown tremendous progress in these programs.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included of extended school year, provision of programs and related services, frequency, duration and location of related services, IEP documentation of goals/objectives for speech/language and counseling services, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent for initial evaluations, implementation of the initial IEP and to obtain or release student records, content and provision of notices of meetings and written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find activities, referral process, direct referrals from parents/staff, identification meeting timelines/participants,

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multi-disciplinary evaluation, standardized assessments, written reports signed/dated, bilingual evaluations, eligibility meetings and participant for student eligible for special education and related services, criteria for specific learning disability (SLD), signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale, IEP meetings, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs), implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, decision-making process, documentation of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), regular education access for in-district students, notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, statements of Transition Services Needs and Needed Transition Services, preferences/interests surveys/assessments, preschool transition planning conferences, early intervention program to preschool disabilities program by age three, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessment, behavior intervention plans, interim alternative educational settings, 45-day return, IEP requirements, written notice of graduation, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding documentation of goals/objectives for occupational therapy and physical therapy service, transfer student procedures, consent for occupational/physical therapy evaluations and reevaluations, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services, acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports, eligibility meeting participants for student eligible for speech/language services, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings for student eligible for speech/language services and for evaluation reports from outside consultants, IEP meeting participants, IEPs to parents, consideration of supplementary aides and services, continuum of programs and services, student/agency invitation, documentation of manifestation determination meetings, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, documentation of out-of-district student participation in graduation activities and home instruction.

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