

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

District: Kearny Public Schools

County: Hudson

Monitoring Dates: April 22, 23 and 24, 2002

Monitoring Team: Damen Cooper, Janet Wright and Michael Lee

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Kearny 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 Kearny 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 Kearny 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 at the Kearny Board of Education on April 16, 2002. Information obtained from that 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, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for its participation at Creativefest. This program affords students the opportunity to explore the world of artists and possibly discover hidden talents. It is a two-day festival held at the Hackensack Development Commission.

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Kearny students also participate in the Read Across America program, which allows Kearny High School students and community members to read to children in elementary schools.

Furthermore, the district is commended for its Lincoln Leaders Program. This program brings eighth graders at Lincoln School together to enhance peer leaderships skills. The first group of Peer Leaders was trained by the Y.E.S. Organization. Kearny High School students are a part of this program through their involvement in the REACH program.

Kearny High School, in conjunction with another local school district, has been awarded a Best Practice Award and a NJDOE grant for its Aerospace Science distance learning course. This new course of study will challenge the students to meet many of the CCCS and provide a model for infusing television technology through the Tiger T.V. program.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

General Provisions, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Graduation 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.

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year and transfer students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of related services. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, independent evaluations and copy of PRISE to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of written notice. The district has

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developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. Furthermore, the district identified a concern in the areas of consent and native language. The district has not submitted an improvement plan to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to address these areas. The plan must include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings and timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, referral process and summer referrals. 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 identification meeting participants.

Area of Need:

Identification Meeting Participants – During the on-site visit a review of records indicated that a speech therapist is not present at identification meetings for preschool students. Additionally, learning consultants are not consistently present at identification meetings. Interviews indicated that staff shortages have created this areas of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure required staff members attend identification meetings. The plan must include a mechanism to address the staff shortages the district is currently experiencing. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports and bilingual

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evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of acceptance/rejection of reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech and language services and documentation of eligibility within speech and language evaluation reports.

Areas of Need:

Documentation of Eligibility – During the on-site visit a review of records indicated that speech language specialists are including eligibility determinations in their evaluation reports.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure eligibility determinations are made by an appropriately configured IEP time and are not included in evaluation reports. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Multi-Disciplinary Evaluations - During the on-site visit a review of records indicated that a statement from the student's teacher regarding the educational impact of the speech problem is not included in speech reports.

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

VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meeting, participants at planning meetings and turning age five.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding reevaluation timelines.

Areas of Need:

Reevaluation Timelines – During the on-site visit a review of records indicated that reevaluations are not conducted within the three-year timeline.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts reevaluations within three years of the**

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previous classification. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of criteria. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need as it lacks an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised to include this component. The district further identified a concern in the area of provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents. The plan needs to be revised to comply with the revisions identified in N.J.A.C.6A-14-3.5(a).

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

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consideration/required statements, goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS), implementation dates, annual review timelines and ninety-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age of majority and teacher knowledge/access. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of participants. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of nonacademic/extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, supplementary

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aides/services, regular education access and continuum. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

X. Transition

Pre-School Transition

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of pre-school transition planning conference and early intervention program (EIP) to pre-school by age three.

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

Post-School Transition

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the entire area of post-school transition. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

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, group sizes for speech therapy and home instruction approvals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class description and common planning time. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

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XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent/adult student access and maintenance and destruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of access sheets. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of lack of knowledge of student records. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of other locations.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations – During the on-site visit it was determined that central files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files identify the location of other records maintained by the district.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Kearny Public School District on April 22, 23 and 24, 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 exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify nearly all 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 monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Many of the concerns raised by the six parents in attendance had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process. During the on-site visit, the two adult students interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the programs and services offered to them by the Kearny School District.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included general provisions, length of school year/day, facilities, certifications, notices of meetings, holding of meetings, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, timelines for identification meeting, multi-disciplinary evaluations, reevaluation planning meeting and participants, turning age five, eligibility meetings and participants, documentation of eligibility, considerations/required statements, goals and objectives aligned with CCCS, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, nonacademic/extracurricular participation, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, discipline, statewide assessment, graduation, class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, parent/adult student access, maintenance and destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, provision of related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, obtaining consent, copy of PRISE to parents, written notice, native language and independent evaluations, Child Find, referral processes, summer referrals, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, criteria, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, age of majority, teacher knowledge/access, individualized decision making, Oberti Factors, considerations and documentation, supplementary aids and services, regular education access, continuum, post school transition process, class description, common planning time, access sheets and staff knowledge of student record policy.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding identification meeting participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, documentation of eligibility, reevaluation timelines and documentation of 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.

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