

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

District: Kenilworth School District

County: Union

Monitoring Dates: June 2 & 14, 2004

Monitoring Team: Nicole Buten & Kim Murray

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Kenilworth School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Kenilworth 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 Kenilworth 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 Harding Elementary School on June 2, 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 fostering positive relationships between school and home by developing a family science and math program. These unique outreach programs provide an opportunity for all children and their families to engage in hands-on science experiments, problem-solving activities and the exploration of the relationship of the geometric and numeric components of mathematics.

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The district also is commended for creating a peer mediation program for all levels, including elementary, which aids in resolving student conflicts and working with students to develop and implement proactive interventions and solutions to everyday problems.

Furthermore, the district is commended for the development of a peer tutoring program to assist any student experiencing academic difficulty and who require additional help with assignments, homework, and organization.

Finally, the district is commended for its STAY (Strengthening the Talents of All Youth) program. This program was designed to address the special talents of all students. The program is offered after school as an enrichment activity. The purpose of the STAY program is to recognize and nurture the gifts and talents of all youth by offering educational opportunities in the areas of art, dance, music, theater, cooking, science, math, and multicultural crafts and customs.

Data Summary:

All preschool disabled students in the district are placed in a self-contained setting. The district has identified this as an area of need and subsequently developed an improvement plan to address this issue. Data revealed that students who participate in general education for more than 80% of the day is significantly less than that of the state average. Information obtained during the monitoring process indicated that this discrepancy is due to the fact that the district does not always consider the full continuum of placement options, specifically less restrictive environments such as in-class support, for all of their students.

Data submitted by the district also indicated that of all the students with disabilities who graduated during the past three years, over 80% have gone on to either post-secondary education or have secured full-time employment. Additionally, the district is commended for successfully achieving a 100% graduation rate during the last three years.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Transition, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services, Student Records and Graduation Requirements 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.

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

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

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Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of programs, frequency, location and duration of related services, goals and objectives of related services, length of day and year, facilities, and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of transfer students, adaptive physical education, social skills groups, and hearing aides. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews, parent interviews and document review that the district does not consider extended school year services for all students with disabilities

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure the IEP team makes an individual determination regarding the need for an extended school year for all students and documents the decision-making process. Implementation of these activities will ensure any issues related to regression/recoupment or other factors that contribute to the needed for extended school year services are appropriately addressed. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of notices in native language and interpreters at meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of surrogate parents. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks activities and an administrative oversight component to ensure that the district establishes a method for selecting and training surrogate parents. The improvement plan must be revised to include these components.**

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Additionally, the district identified a concern in the area of written notice. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks the development of a plan to assure that written notice is provided in a timely manner during the summer months. The improvement plan must be revised to assure that this area of need is fully addressed during the summer months.**

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 identification meetings and Child Find.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, and summer referrals. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding staff referrals.

Area(s) of Need:

Direct Referral (Staff) - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews, parent interviews and document review that direct referrals from district personnel are not allowed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that teachers have the ability to bypass the I & RS process and directly refer a student to the child study team for an initial evaluation when it can be documented that the nature of the student's educational problem(s) is such that an evaluation to determine eligibility for special education services is warranted without delay. Implementation of these activities will ensure students who require special education services are evaluated in a timely manner. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations and the acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations.

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

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meeting participants, criteria, documentation of the eligibility statement for students with a specific learning disability (SLD), and signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents/adult students 10 days prior to a meeting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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 meeting participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of teacher access/responsibility. 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 IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, regular education access in district and notification to out-of-district students for participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consideration of supplementary aids and services and continuum of programs for preschoolers with disabilities. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of consideration of aids and services because it lacks activities such as child study team training, teacher in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure appropriate supplementary aids and services are**

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available to students in the district. The improvement plan must be revised to include these components.

The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of preschool continuum because it only includes activities to address four-year-old students. The plan must be revised to include three-year-old students as well.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding program options at the middle school.

Area of Need:

In-class support: It was determined through staff interviews and record review that at the upper elementary level (grades 5 and 6) in-class support is only offered in the subject areas of science and social studies.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to assure that in-class support is offered to these students in all subject areas. This will assure that the full continuum of placement options will be available to students with disabilities providing an opportunity for students to be educated in the least restrictive environment.**

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative education settings and procedural safeguards.

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

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Kenilworth School District on June 2 and June 14, 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. In general, parents praised the district for their exceptional teaching staff and dedicated child study team members. Concerns regarding direct referrals to the child study team and extended school year were raised by several parents in attendance at the meeting. As a result of these parental concerns, as well as information collected through document review and district interviews, the district is required to revise its improvement plan to address these areas of need.

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, provision of programs, frequency, location and duration of related services, goals and objectives of related services, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, consent, notices of meetings, independent evaluations, identification meetings, Child Find, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside evaluations, three year timelines for reevaluations, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of the students last year in preschool, meeting participants, criteria, documentation of the eligibility statement for students with a specific learning disability (SLD), signatures of agreement/disagreement rationale, meeting participants, considerations and required statements, present levels of education performance statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, regular education access in district, notification to out-of-district students for participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, preschool transition planning conference, begin preschool program by age 3, transition service needs addressed for students age 14 and older, preferences and interests survey and assessments, needed transition services for students age 16 and older, student and agency invite to transition planning meetings, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative education settings, procedural safeguards, statewide assessment participation, approved accommodation and modification for statewide assessment, IEP documentation of statewide assessment, students participating in alternate assessments, IEP requirements for graduation, out-of-district participation in graduation, written notice of graduation, class size waiver, age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, consultation time for teachers, access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of student records, and documentation of records in other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff and parent training, transfer students, adaptive physical education, social skills groups, hearing aides, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, functional assessments, copy of evaluation reports to parents/adult students 10

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days prior to a meeting, teacher access/responsibility, consideration of supplementary aides and services, continuum of programs for preschoolers with disabilities, and documentation of suspension to case manager

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, continuum of placement options and direct referrals from teachers.

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