

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

District: Kingwood Township School District

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: September 10, 2002

Monitoring Team: Barbara J. Tucker, Deborah Masarsky, Georgianna Pilesky

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Kingwood Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Kingwood Township 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 Kingwood Township 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 Kingwood Township School on September 5, 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, child study team members and the speech/language therapist.

District Strengths:

The district promotes disability awareness and acceptance of diversity among students; provides social skills training; facilitates play groups through community building exercises for students with disabilities in the general education classroom; hosts a disability seminar for its

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fourth graders; and involves its students in an ongoing program with the Katzenbach School for the Deaf.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, IEP, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Programs and Services were determined to be areas of total 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 in-service for professional and paraprofessional staff. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training. The improvement plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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

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, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certification of staff.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of provision of counseling services as required by IEPs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site monitoring, it was noted that as of September 2002, the district has hired additional staff to provide counseling services.

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 notices in native language, interpreters at meeting and independent evaluations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parental consent to release student records and surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site monitoring, it was noted that in July 2002 the district had developed procedures to select and train surrogate parents.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the content of written notices, provision of written notices and speech/language screenings.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Written Notices - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined through staff interviews and file review that notices do not contain all of the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure its notices contain all required components. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Provision of Written Notices - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined through staff interviews and review of files that written notices are inconsistently provided to parents within mandated timelines.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notices are consistently provided to parents within mandated timelines and that this provision is documented in the file. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Speech/Language Screenings - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined through an interview with the speech/language therapist that all transfer students are individually screened to determine if a speech/language evaluation is warranted. The district does not obtain parental consent prior to this screening.

- **The district must immediately cease this screening practice. The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written parental consent is obtained prior to conducting an individualized assessment to determine the presence of a disability. The improvement plan must include in-service and 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 the referral process, direct referrals, and identification meetings/timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of prereferral interventions, health summary, and vision and hearing screenings. The district's improvement

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plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interviews and document review that the district has implemented activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding child find activities for migrant and homeless children.

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined through record review that the district's child find information does not include migrant and homeless children.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities include migrant and homeless children.**

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, functional assessments, signed and dated written reports and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of acceptance/rejection of outside reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews and document review that the district has implemented activities to bring about correction in this area.

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, Present Levels of Educational Performance statements, goals/objectives, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, teacher access/responsibility and 90-day timelines.

An area of need was determined during the on-site monitoring regarding disagreement of eligibility.

Area(s) of Need:

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Disagreement of Eligibility - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that although the district's eligibility form contains a section to document agreement with eligibility determinations by all participants, the form does not contain a section for a participant(s) to state an opposing opinion.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure it has the ability to document opposing opinions regarding eligibility determinations.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets, maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of the location of other records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of parental access to student records. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include this element.

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

Summary

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On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Kingwood Township School District on September 10, 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 that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision should bring about systemic change. The district is also commended for immediately implementing activities to correct many of the self-identified issues prior to the on-site monitoring. 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 their satisfaction with the district's programs and services, with the communication between themselves and district staff, with the high quality of education, with the district's in-class support programs and with the small class sizes. Parents of autistic students praised the district for its willingness to hire consultants to assist them in developing and/or finding appropriate programs and placements for their children.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included Reevaluation, IEP, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Programs and Services.

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, notices in native language, interpreters at meeting, independent evaluations, referral process, direct referrals, and identification meetings/timelines, participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, signed and dated written reports, bilingual evaluations, meeting participants, Present Levels of Educational Performance statements, goals/objectives, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, teacher access/responsibility, 90-day timelines, access sheets, maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of the location of other records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service for professional and paraprofessional staff, provision of counseling services, surrogate parents, pre-referral interventions, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, parent(s) access to student records and parental consent to release student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding child find, content/provision of written notices, eligibility determinations and speech/language screenings.

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