

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

District: Lakehurst

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: April 24, 25, 2002

Monitoring Team: Stephen Coplin, Debbie Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Lakehurst School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Lakehurst 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 Lakehurst 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 on March 21, 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 "Special Education Group" for parents of primary age students meets monthly during the school day and is facilitated by the social worker who discusses various topics of interest or concern. Parents are then able to observe activities in the preschool program.

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Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation was determined to be an area 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/procedures and dissemination of public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with staff and parent in-service training. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the trainings. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

Section II: FAPE

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, provision of related services, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with goals and objectives for related services. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, provision of notice of a meeting within timelines and content/provision of written notices within timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with content of notice of a meeting, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and sources for independent evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an

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administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral & Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the referral process, health summary, vision/hearing screenings and identification meetings within timelines with required participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with Child Find activities, pre-referral interventions and documentation of referral date. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the use of assessment tools, evaluations, functional assessments, reports, acceptance/rejection of all or parts of reports and multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services only. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of eligibility meetings.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility, required participants at eligibility meetings and the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required change. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section VIII: Individual Education Program

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of implementation dates of IEPs and annual review /90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with progress reporting, provision of IEPs to parents, meeting participants, informing teachers/providers of their responsibilities related to IEPs, present levels of educational performance statements, annual goals/objectives related to core curriculum content standards, considerations/required statements, frequency/amount of instructional time for in-class support programs and age of majority. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently 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 elements. It is recommended that the district adopt the IEP form developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding changes to students' programs/placements without convening an IEP team meeting.

Area of Need:

Changes to Students' Programs/Placements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews, parent contacts and file review that changes were made to programs and placements without conducting IEP meetings and without providing written notice of the proposed changes.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts IEP meetings and provides appropriate written notice prior to changing programs and/or services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making process, supplementary aids/services, continuum of programs, LRE considerations and participation of in-district students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the lack of notification and participation of out-of-district students in extracurricular/nonacademic activities with non-disabled peers. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

No additional 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 area of course of study.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with student/agency invitations, agency involvement, participation of vocational personnel, preferences/interests, community linkages and statement of transition service needs (at age 14 or younger if appropriate). The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section X: Transition from Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of preschool transition planning conference.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern with preschoolers having their IEPs implemented no later than age three. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary Of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, interim alternative educational settings and provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding notification to case managers, services for students when short-term removals are not a change in placement, manifestation determination, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plans, transmission of records to appropriate authorities and procedures when a student is a danger to himself or others. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation, approved accommodations/modifications and IEP documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern with alternate assessments, criteria to determine whether a student will participate in the statewide assessment or alternate assessments and child study team knowledge of content of statewide assessment. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. It is recommended that each child study team member receive a copy of "The Directory of Test Specifications" (DTS) for each content area and/or the sample form of the ESPA and GEPA.

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

Section XIII: Graduation requirements do not pertain to this K-8 school district.

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range and group size for speech.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with employment of child study teams, speech/language therapists/other school personnel employed in numbers sufficient to ensure the provision of required programs/services, consultation time for special education and general education teachers, supplementary instruction, home instruction and group sizes for support resource programs. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas 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 elements.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of access to student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with access sheets, documentation of other locations of student records and staff knowledge of student record policies. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas 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 elements.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Lakehurst School District on April 24, 25, 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 all but one area of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revisions, 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, the seven parents that attended expressed positive comments regarding the district's programs and services. Parents also commented on the excellent "Fast ForWord" specialized reading program. One parent voiced a concern with the district's ability to provide parents with information regarding special education. The district has identified this need in their self-assessment and has addressed it in the improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, extended school year, provision of related services, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, certification, surrogate parents, consent, notices, meetings, referral process, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, identification meetings within timelines, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, reevaluation timelines, reevaluation by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, implementation dates on IEPs, annual review/90-day timelines, individualized decision making process, supplementary aids/services, continuum, LRE considerations, participation of in-district students in non-academic/extra-curricular activities, courses of study for students transitioning into high school, preschool transition planning conferences, suspension tracking, interim alternative educational setting, provision of provision procedural safeguard rights, participation in statewide assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, age range, group size for speech and access to student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff/parent in-service training, goals/objectives for related services, notices, interpreters at meetings, sources for independent evaluations, Child Find activities, pre-referral interventions, documentation of referral dates, discriminatory assessment tools, bilingual evaluations, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, eligibility criteria/statement, copy of evaluation reports to parents, provision of IEPs to parents, required meeting participants, teacher IEP responsibilities, progress reporting for annual goals/objectives, present levels of educational performance statements, IEP considerations/required statements, participation for out of district students in extracurricular/nonacademic activities, post-school/preschool transition, discipline, alternate assessments, child study team knowledge of content of statewide assessments, employment of sufficient child study team members/speech language

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therapists/other school personnel in numbers sufficient to ensure the provision of required programs/services, consultation time, home instruction, group size for resource programs, access sheets, documentation of location of other student records and staff knowledge of student record policy.

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need regarding changes to students' programs/placement without convening an IEP team meeting.

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 one area of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.