

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

District: Lakewood School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: April 22, 2002

Monitoring Team: Melinda Zangrillo, Stephen A. Coplin, Debbie Masarsky

Background Information

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Lakewood School District conducted a self assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Lakewood 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 Lakewood 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 April 8, 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 and child study team members.

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 public information. The required statements of assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding staff and parent training.

Area of Need:

Staff and Parent Training - During the on-site monitoring it was indicated by district staff that they require staff development in the areas of behavior management for the behaviorally disordered program and the self-contained program at the high school. Additionally, at the public focus group meeting, parents indicated that they needed training in the area of special education processes, such as the development of IEPs, and the role of the parent in that development.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of professional development and parent training in the areas identified during the on-site monitoring and at the public focus group meeting. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the trainings.**

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of documentation of frequency/duration of related services, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding extended school year, provision of related services, goals/objectives for related services, transfer students and length of school day/year. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding location of related services and the inadequacy of instructional materials.

Areas of Need:

Location of Related Services – During the on-site monitoring, a review of IEPs indicated the district does not identify the location of related services in IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the location of related services is identified in IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Materials and Textbooks - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and through information obtained at the public focus group meeting that instructional staff do not have adequate materials, nor do they have current textbooks to ensure public school students with disabilities have the opportunity to access and progress in the general education curriculum.

- **The district will revise the improvement to include procedures to ensure the district provides its instructional staff with sufficient materials to afford students**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

with disabilities the opportunity to access and progress in the general education curriculum. The plan must include a needs assessment and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding consent, provision/content of district notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, participants at identification/eligibility/IEP meetings, documentation of attempts at parental participation and 15/20 day timelines. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral & Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of child find.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the district's referral process, direct referrals and pre-referral interventions. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service training. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include this element.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding health summaries and vision/hearing screenings.

Areas of Need:

Health Summaries - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews that the school nurse does not consistently review and summarize available health/medical information when a student is referred to the child study team.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that upon receipt of a referral to the child study team, the school nurse reviews and summarizes available health/medical information. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Vision/Hearing Screenings - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the school nurses do not screen students referred to the child study team for vision and hearing problems.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts vision/hearing screenings when students are referred to the child study team for evaluation. The plan must include a mechanism to document those results in student files. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding standardized assessment/functional assessments/ multidisciplinary evaluations/ written reports for students eligible for speech/language services and documentation of acceptance/rejection of reports. 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 monitoring visit regarding written reports for students eligible for special education/related services.

Area of Need:

Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although written reports for students eligible for special education and related services are signed, they are not dated.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that assessment reports developed by child study team members are dated. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of reevaluation planning meetings/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding three-year timelines for reevaluations and reevaluation of preschool students by June 30th of the last year of the program. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

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 area of SLD eligibility statements.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding eligibility criteria, eligibility meeting participants and copies of evaluation reports to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service training. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of age of majority.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding required considerations/statements, goals/objective/CCCS, teacher responsibility/access, delays in implementation of IEPs, IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year and copies of IEPs to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas or need. The district further identified the need for parents to observe proposed placements. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding 90-day/annual review timelines.

Area of Need:

90-Day/Annual Review Timelines – During the on-site monitoring district staff indicated that 90-day/annual review timelines are not being met because of an insufficient number of child study team members. This was acknowledged by district administrators.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district meets the required 90-day/annual review timelines. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the numbers of additional staff members the district will need to employ to ensure compliance with these timelines. The plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section IX: LRE

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding individualized-decision-making, documentation of LRE considerations/required statements/supplementary aids and services, regular education access within the district, notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities and continuum of programs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is not sufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include this component.

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

Section X: Transition from Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding preschool transition planning conferences and transition from early intervention program to preschool disabled program by age three. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include this component.

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

Section X: Transition to Post School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding invitations to students/agencies, shared-time vocational personnel/agency representative participation at transition meetings, agency failure to participate at meetings and/or to provide services and the documentation of: Statement of Needed Transition Services, Transition Service Needs Statement, student interests/preferences, courses of study, desired post school outcomes and post school liaison. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of staff training. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include these components.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding discipline procedures, notification to case managers, suspension tracking, functional behavioral

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations, and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern regarding interim alternative educational settings. The improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of staff training. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding student participation, approved accommodation/modification, IEP documentation and alternate assessments. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include this component.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding IEP requirements, notice of graduation and student notification/participation in graduation exercises/activities within district. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of age ranges.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding class/group sizes and consultation time for regular/special education teachers. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of staff training. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding parent/adult student access, access sheets, maintenance/destruction of student records and the documentation of location of other student records. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Lakewood School District on April 22, 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 revisions, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with the members of the instructional staff and with the child study team members the district had recently hired. Parents expressed concerns regarding the lack of parental training, the Life Skills program at the high school and the lack of adequate instructional materials. Some nonpublic school parents expressed concerns regarding their inability to access full educational services for their children within the nonpublic settings.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment included policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, documentation of frequency/duration of related services, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, independent evaluations, child find activities, standardized assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, bilingual evaluations, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, reevaluation planning meetings/participants, SLD eligibility statements, age of majority, age ranges and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, provision of related services, goals/objectives for related services, transfer students, length of school day/year, parental consent, provision/content of all notices, notices in native languages, interpreters at meetings, required participants at identification/eligibility/IEP meetings, documentation of attempts at parental participation, 15/20-day timelines, referral process, direct referrals, pre-referral interventions, standardized assessments, multidisciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written reports for students eligible for speech/language services, documentation of acceptance/rejection of reports, 3-yr timelines for reevaluations, reevaluations of preschool students by June 30th of the last year of the program, eligibility criteria/statements, eligibility meeting participants, copies of evaluation reports/IEPs to parents, IEP required consideration, IEP implementation delays, teacher access/responsibility of IEPs, IEPs in effect at the beginning of the school year, individualized-decision-making, LRE documentation, regular education access within the district, notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities within the district, continuum, transition to preschool, transition to post school, discipline procedures, statewide assessment process, graduation requirements, class/group sizes, consultation time for regular/special education teachers, parent/adult student access to student records, access sheets, maintenance/destruction of student records and the documentation of location of other student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding staff and parent training, instructional materials, location of related services, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, written reports and 90-day/annual review timelines.

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.