

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

**District:** Lawnside Borough School District                      **County:** Camden

**Monitoring Dates:** March 25, 26 and 28, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Patricia Fair and Cathy Thomas

***Background Information:***

During the 2000–2001 school year, the Lawnside Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Lawnside Borough School District with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- The provision of a free and 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. As a result, the Lawnside Borough School District developed an improvement plan to address those areas of identified need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing this 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 Lawnside School, on March 13, 2002. Though the district was told to schedule the meeting for 6:30 p.m., the meeting was instead scheduled for 8:00 p.m.; the same time the school board meeting was to be held. The one parent who attended the focus group meeting was brought to a separate room.

During the on-site, the NJDOE team reviewed district documentation, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

***District Strengths:***

The Lawnside Elementary School has an early morning program called the Lawnside Pride Respect Schools News. This news program is run by the students. It provides

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students with information regarding the events of the day. All students have the opportunity to present information to the entire school each morning via a video system.

The district works closely with the employees of Lockheed Martin who provide math tutoring to the students of Lawnside Borough.

### **Section I: General Provisions**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information and professional development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address dissemination of IDEA information and the county office has approved the policies and procedures submitted by the district. The district did not submit a plan to address the area of professional development. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the staff development it provides.

No additional area of need was 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 length of school day and year and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, provision of related services and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address provision of related services because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component. The improvement plan is insufficient to address the areas of extended school year and transfer students because it lack procedures, in-service 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 provision of speech and facilities. The county office has been notified of the facilities issues.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Speech** – During the on-site, it was determined that although the district has employed a part-time speech/language specialist, the district is still unable to provide the speech services required by IEPs. A review of speech schedules and IEPs indicated that all but one student are receiving speech services in a group setting, even IEPs requiring individual services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides speech and language services in accordance**

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with IEPs. The plan must include a mechanism to determine how the district will employ sufficient staff to provide these services. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding surrogate parents, consent, notice of meeting regarding age 14 transition services and invitation to student, native language and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit it was determined that activities had already been implemented to address consent and notice of a meeting.

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

### **Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district identified themselves compliant in the areas of health summary, vision and hearing screenings and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find, the referral process and direct referrals from staff. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to 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.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the referral process.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Referral Process** – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews with staff indicated that Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC) members may not refer a student to the child study team (CST). Instead, they require parents to request the evaluation. If PAC does refer the student, the team does not accept it nor does it convene the identification meeting until the parent request is received.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure PAC members have the opportunity to refer a student to the CST when the committee believes interventions within the general education setting are not sufficient to address the student's needs. The plan must**

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**include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district-identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports and severe discrepancy. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Participants at Identification Meetings** – During the on-site visit, a review of student records indicated that general education teachers are not in attendance at identification meeting for student being considered for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that general education teachers are in attendance at identification meetings for students who may be eligible for speech/language services. The 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 areas of timelines and turning age 5.

No additional area of need was 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 and copies of evaluation reports to parents.

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

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No additional area of need was 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 annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, age of majority and the core curriculum content standards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements, implementation dates, teacher knowledge of IEP responsibilities, IEPs for preschool students, and goals and objectives. The improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of considerations and required statements. The improvement plan is insufficient to address the areas of IEP dates, teacher knowledge/access to IEPs, and goals and objectives because it lacks in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding participants and students receiving speech and language services without an IEP.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Provision of Speech and Language Service** – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews with staff indicated that speech and language services are being provided before IEPs are developed and before parental consent is obtained.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEPs are developed and that consent is obtained prior to the implementation of speech/language services. This plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Participants** – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews with staff indicated that general education teachers do not consistently attend eligibility meetings for students being considered for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure general education teachers attend eligibility meetings for students being considered for speech and language services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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**Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of *Oberti* statements.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, considerations and documentation, supplemental aids and services, general education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation and continuum of options. The improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

**Section X: Transition – Transition from School to Post-School**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment this K-8 district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student/agency invitation, agency involvement and age 14 transition services needs.

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

**Section X: Transition – Transition to Preschool**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with preschool transition planning conference and early intervention to preschool disabled by age 3 years. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Section XI: Discipline**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of manifestation determination.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavior intervention plans and functional behavior assessments, and interim alternative educational settings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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**Section XII: Statewide Assessment**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

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

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

**Section XIII: Graduation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, this K-8 district identified concerns with inviting students in out-of-district placements back to participate in eighth grade graduation exercises. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need

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

**Section XIV: Program and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range and home instruction.

During the self assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of providing preschool programs in-district, providing in-class resource program options and written description of the district's special class programs to the county office. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding common planning time.

**Areas of Need:**

**Common Planning Time** – During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of schedules indicated the district does not provide consultation time for special education and general education teachers.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure special education and general education teachers have consultation time. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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**Section XV: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of destruction of records and documentation of locations

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent/adult-student access, access sheets and maintenance of records. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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## Summary

An on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Lawnside Borough School District on March 25, 26 and 28, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings, resulting from self-assessment, and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that, with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit the one parent who attended expressed concerns which the district had already identified during self-assessment.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included length of school day and year, certification, meetings, health summary, vision and hearing screenings and identification meetings, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, timelines, turning age 5, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents, age of majority, core content curricular standards, *Oberti*, age 14 transition service needs, manifestation determination, class size, age range, home instruction, destruction of records, and documentation of locations of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development, extended school year, provision of related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, consent, notice of meeting, native language, independent evaluations, child find, referral process, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written reports, sever discrepancy, participants, documentations of eligibility, consideration and required statements, implementation dates, teachers knowledge of IEP and responsibilities, individualized decision making, consideration and documentation, supplemental aids and services, general education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, preschool transition plan conference, early intervention to preschool disabled students by age 3, alternative assessments, providing preschool in-district, providing for in-class resource, and programs options.

The on-site visit further identified areas of need within the various standards regarding provision of speech and language services, facilities, referral process, participants and common planning time.

Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of this monitoring report, the Lawnside Borough School District will revise and resubmit their improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit.