

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

District: Little Egg Harbor School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: November 29, 30, 2001

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky, Barbara Tucker, Georgianna Parlacoski

Background Information

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Little Egg Harbor School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Little Egg Harbor 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 Little Egg Harbor 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 November 13, 2001. 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 district offers a unique program called “Super Scholars” for students with disabilities. This program provides additional instruction in reading and math to assist special education students in transitioning into regular education programs. Instruction is provided four days a week before the school day begins by certified teachers of the handicapped.

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 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 a concern regarding in-service training for professional and paraprofessional staff related to the needs of students with disabilities. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding availability of related service providers, goals and objectives for related services, convening an IEP meeting prior to making changes in the student’s program or services and transfer procedures. 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 district will revise the improvement plan 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 consent for: revaluations, IEP implementation and student records; provision of notices; meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding surrogate parents and content of Written Notice. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns regarding the provision of notices in native language and the utilization of foreign language interpreters at meetings. 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 district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified a concern regarding parental consent for initial evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding content of Notices of a Meeting.

Area of Need:

Notices - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that notices of a meeting do not contain all required statements/components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notices contain all required statements and components. The improvement plan must also include an oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the district use notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals, summer referrals and identification meeting timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding pre-referral interventions and PAC procedures/referrals. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements. The district further identified concerns regarding health/medical summaries and hearing/vision screenings. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight

component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding Child Find activities.

Area of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's Child Find activities are not sufficient to identify students who are potentially disabled.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Child Find activities continue throughout the year, including summer months, to locate and refer potentially disabled students, including migrant and homeless students.**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the functional assessment of students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and for students eligible for speech/language services (ESLS), written reports and acceptance/rejection of outside reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding multidisciplinary evaluations of students eligible for speech/language services.

Area of Need:

Multidisciplinary Evaluations for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services (ESLS) – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the speech therapists conduct their evaluations, a written educational impact statement from the student's teacher is not included in the report.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that multidisciplinary evaluations include the written educational impact statement. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings participants, statement of eligibility and provision of copies of evaluations reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding eligibility criteria. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding copies of evaluation reports to parents.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Copies of Evaluation Reports to Parents – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with parents and staff that although parents are provided with copies of evaluation reports at least ten days prior to the eligibility meeting, the district does not document this provision.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it documents the provision of evaluation reports to parents in students' files.**

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of annual review timelines, IEP meeting participants, goals/objectives related to the core curriculum content standards and implementation dates on IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding 90-day timelines for implementation of IEPs, IEP teacher access/responsibility, required IEP considerations/statements and documentation of in-class-support frequency and amount of instruction in IEPs. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of individualized decision-making.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding required LRE considerations/statements, supplementary aids/services, continuum of programs, regular education access/participation in non-academic/extracurricular activities and program changes. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

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

Section X: Transition to Pre-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of implementation of IEPs by age 3.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding child study team participation in preschool transition planning conferences. 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 the desired changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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 documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), manifestation determinations and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding procedural safeguards of potentially disabled students. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding parental consent for functional behavioral assessments (FBAs).

Area of Need:

Consent for Functional Behavior Assessments (FBAs) – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that when additional assessments are necessary to develop a Behavior Intervention Plan, the district does not obtain parental consent prior to conducting those assessments.

- **The district will revise the improvement to include procedures to ensure that prior to conducting any functional behavioral assessments that requires more than a review of exiting data, the district will obtain parental consent. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

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

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding alternate assessments.

Area of Need:

Alternate Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not have procedures to ensure that when students are exempt from participating in statewide assessments, an alternate assessment is conducted and documented in IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students who are exempted from participating in the statewide assessment program participate in the alternate assessment program (APA) as indicated in the August 1, 2001 memo issued by the Office of Special Education Programs. The district personnel must identify, as soon as possible, students who have been exempt from participating in the ESPA, provide in-service training and begin the assessment process in November.**

Section XIII: Graduation is not applicable in this preschool- 6th grade district.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class sizes, age range, group sizes for speech therapy and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding consultation time for special and regular education teachers. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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 areas of access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding parent access to student records. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks staff training. The district will revise the improvement plan to include in-service training to ensure the implementation of the procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding documentation of other locations of student records.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations of Student Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not identify the location of other records maintained by the district in central files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other records maintained by the district is identified in central files.**

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Little Egg Harbor School District on November 29, 30, 2001. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, 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, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services especially the provision of speech services and team teaching. The district had already identified many of the concerns that were raised by the parents during the focus group meeting during the self-assessment process.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Policies/Procedures, dissemination of public information, extended school year, related services, length of school day/year, timelines, provision of notices, meetings/participants, independent evaluations, direct referrals, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, eligibility statements, goals/objectives related to the core content curriculum standards, implementation dates on IEPs, provision of IEPs to parents, individualized decision-making, early intervention to preschool by age three, discipline procedures, participation in statewide assessments, documentation/accommodations/ modifications in IEPs, class/group sizes, age range, home instruction, access sheets in student records and maintenance/destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding goals/objectives for related services, surrogate parents, consent for initial evaluations, native language notices/meetings, content of written notice, pre-referral interventions, PAC procedures, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, eligibility criteria, IEP required considerations/statements, IEP teacher access/responsibility, observation of proposed placements, individualized decision making, required least restrictive environment consideration/statements, supplementary aids/services, regular education access, nonacademic/extracurricular activities, continuum of programs, child study team participation in preschool transition planning conferences, procedural safeguards of potentially disabled students, resource teacher/regular education teacher consultation time and student record access/requests.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding content of district notices, child find activities, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, copies of evaluation reports to parents, parental consent for functional behavioral assessments, alternate assessments and documentation of other locations of student records.

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 and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.