

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

**District:** Madison School District

**County:** Morris

**Monitoring Dates:** March 18, 19 and 20, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Damen Cooper, Gary Molenaar, Susan Smahl

**Background Information:**

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, the Madison School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Madison Public Schools 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 Madison 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 at Madison School on March 12, 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 district is to be commended for its Willow Tree program. The State Department of Education Character Education Funding and Madison Alliance Against Substance Abuse support this program at Madison Junior School. The Willow Tree program is a preventative program designed to help shape youth leaders by supporting them in the prevention of alcohol, drug, and tobacco use and violence.

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

The district also has an award winning WIN/WIN conflict resolution program. This program teaches students the six steps to help avoid clashes with family members, friends, and teachers.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**Graduation Requirements** 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.

#### **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 area of professional/parent development. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

#### **II. F.A.P.E.**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of counseling, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, related services goals and objectives for preschool students, transfer students and the adaptive physical education program. 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.

#### **III. Procedural Safeguards**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of native language.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings and independent evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of

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

consent. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and in-service training to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its plan to include these components. Additionally, the district identified concerns in the areas of independent evaluations, twenty-day timeline and procedural safeguards. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to 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 components.

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

### **IV. Location, Referral, Identification**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, direct referrals and summer referrals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process and identification meeting participants and timelines. 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 visit regarding health summaries and vision and hearing screenings.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Health summaries and Vision/Hearing Screenings** – During the on-site it was determined that although the district is conducting screenings and summarizing health information prior to the identification meeting, they are not maintaining documentation of these activities.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it maintains documentation of health summaries and vision and hearing screenings in student records. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **V. Evaluation**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of functional assessments. The district has not submitted an improvement plan to address

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

this area of need. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include a procedure, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding written reports for students eligible for speech and language services.

### **Area of Need:**

**Written Reports** – During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that individual reports include statements regarding issues that may only be determined by the members of the IEP team and not by individual evaluators. This information included eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure individual reports do not contain statements or determinations that may only be made by a duly configured IEP team. The plan must include staff development and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

## **VI. Reevaluation**

### **Summary of Finding:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in all areas of the reevaluation process. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

## **VII. Eligibility**

### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility and copy of evaluation reports to parents. 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.

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

**VIII. IEP**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of considerations/required statements.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP implementation, goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS), age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety-day timelines and teacher knowledge/access. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

**IX. Least Restrictive Environment**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of Oberti Factors.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making and continuum. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of supplementary aids/services, regular education access and nonacademic/extracurricular participation. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is insufficient to 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.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding consideration/required statements.

**Area of need:**

**Consideration/required statements** – During the on-site, a review of records indicated the district's least restrictive environment statement does not include the required components identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(d)3,4.

- **The district will revise its improvement to include procedures to ensure LRE statements contain all required considerations and statements. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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

### **X. Transition**

#### **Transition to Post School**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of courses and preference/interest.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitation, agency involvement, age fourteen transition service needs and age sixteen-needed transition services. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is insufficient to 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 components.

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

#### **Transition to Preschool**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of early intervention program (EIP) to preschool by age three. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area 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 components.

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

### **XI. Discipline**

#### **Summary of Findings**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of discipline procedures, suspension tracking and behavioral intervention plans/functional behavioral assessment.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to the case manager, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings (IAES) and procedural safeguards for discipline. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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

### **XII. Statewide Assessment**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of approved accommodations/modifications and the special review assessment (SRA). 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.

### **XIV. Programs And Services**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of home instruction/approvals and child study team members having an apportioned amount of time. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

### **XV. Student Records**

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

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

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

**Maintenance and Destruction** – During the on-site, a review of records indicated that the district is does not have procedures in place for the maintenance and destruction of records.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all documents are maintained and destroyed in accordance with N.J.A.C.6:3-6.3 The improvement plan must include in-service training**

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

**and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.**

**Documentation of Locations –** During the on-site a review of records indicated that central files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure central files identify the locations of other student records maintained by the district.**



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

## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Madison School District on March 18, 19, and 20, 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 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, about sixty-five parents expressed their dissatisfaction with some of the district's programs and services, including the belief that their input at IEP meetings was not always considered and that there is a lack of communication between the team members and the parents. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district 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 and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, counseling goal and objectives, length of school year/day, facilities, certifications, native language, Child Find 3-21, referral process, direct referrals (parent/staff), summer evaluations, multi-disciplinary and standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, considerations/required statements, eligibility meetings, Oberti factors, preschool transition planning conference, courses, preferences and interests, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, BIP/FBA, participation in statewide assessment, alternate assessment, IEP documentation, graduation requirements, programs and services, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and parent/adult student access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional/parent development, extended school year, provision of related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, independent evaluations, referral processes, participants and timelines for identification meeting, functional assessments, reevaluation, participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, goals and objective aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, teacher knowledge/access, individualized decision making, supplementary aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, student agency invitation, agency involvement in transition, age fourteen and sixteen transition service needs, procedural safeguards for discipline, documentation to case manager, manifestation determination, IAES, accommodations/modifications, SRA, child study team apportioned time, home instruction, parent/adult student access, access sheets.

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

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, written reports, LRE considerations/required statements, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other location.

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.