

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Manalapan-Englishtown School District **County:** Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: March 24 and 25, 2003

Monitoring Team: Michelle Davis, Debbie Masarsky, Kimberly Murray,
and Barbara Tucker

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional 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 Manalapan-Englishtown School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the 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 Manalapan-Englishtown Middle School on March 12, 2003. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, 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, speech/language therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

Social Skills Program – All students have the opportunity to participate in an eight week long after-school program designed to increase appropriate social skills and provide tools to effectively deal with challenging situations.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Location, Referral and Identification and **Reevaluation** were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs 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 provision of programs and related services, goals and objectives for related services, length of school day/year, transfer student procedures, facilities and certifications.

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

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of selection and training of surrogate parents, consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision/components of written notice and provision of special education code to parents. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components. It is recommended that the district adopt the model notices developed by the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

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

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, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of reports.

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

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments and dated written reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that speech/language therapists do not include the required components of a functional assessment in their evaluation reports.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech/language therapists include all required components of the functional assessment in their evaluation reports as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d). The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Dated Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that assessment reports do not consistently document the date the report was developed. As a result it cannot be determined when these reports were developed.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all evaluators date their evaluation reports when developed. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent 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 and participants, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale and the provision of copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the meeting.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of eligibility criteria for specific learning disability (SLD). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

No additional areas of need were 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 present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with

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the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants and IEP required statements/considerations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of IEPs to parents and access to teachers prior to implementation.

Area(s) of Need:

Provision of IEPs to Parents/Teachers Prior to Implementation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that for annual reviews and IEP revisions, the district does not consistently provide parents with a copy of the IEP prior to implementation of the program and teachers are not afforded access to those IEPs in a timely manner.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parents and teachers receive a copy/have access to the IEP prior to program implementation. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplementary aids/services and access to regular education.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of out-of-district student participation in academic/extracurricular activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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 in the area of student invitation to meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding post secondary transition services.

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Area(s) of Need:

Post-Secondary Transition Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district completes the post secondary outcome and technical consultation sections of the “Statement of Transition Service Needs” for students who will turn 14 during the life of the IEP, the district does not include students’ interests and preferences or courses of study within this statement.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district consistently completes all sections within the “Statement of Transition Service Needs” for students who will turn 14 during the life of the IEP. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the preschool transition planning conference and early intervention programs to preschool by age three.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment/behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational setting, 45-day return and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of written notification to the case manager. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student participation, approved accommodations/modifications and alternate proficiency assessments.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of graduation requirements in IEPs, choice of diploma for out-of-district students, and participation in district graduation activities for out-of-district students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding identification of specific statewide assessments in IEPs.

Area(s) of Need:

Statewide Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district does not consistently identify the specific statewide assessment that will be administered to the student in the IEP.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district consistently identifies in students' IEPs, the specific statewide assessment in which the student will be participating. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section XIII: Graduation

This section is not applicable in this preschool through grade eight district.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of description of special class programs and collaborative time for staff. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of parent access/requests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of access sheets in student records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Student Records in Other Locations - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not identify all of the locations of other student records in the central file.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Manalapan-Englishtown School District on March 24-25, 2003. 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 that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the areas 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 on March 12, 2003, attended by approximately thirty parents and held prior to the monitoring visit, some parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services. They also stated that the district's staff does an exceptional job with students with disabilities. However, other parents voiced concerns about staff not understanding what to look for regarding the nature of the student's disability, language development programs, the need for more staff training and the need for additional resources for students with disabilities. Parents also expressed concerns about transition to high school, extended school year, in-class support programs, student schedules, facilities and classes which exceed class size requirements. Many of these issues were 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 provision of programs and related services, goals and objectives for related services, length of school day/year, transfer student procedures, facilities, certifications, selection and training of surrogate parents, consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, eligibility meeting and participants, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale, copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the meeting, present levels of education performance, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplementary aids/services, access to regular education, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention program to preschool by age three, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment/behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational setting, 45-day return, procedural safeguards, participation, approved accommodations/modifications, alternate proficiency assessments, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction and parent access/requests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, provision/content of notice of meetings and written notice, multi-disciplinary assessments, eligibility criteria for specific learning disability (SLD), IEP meeting participants, IEP required statements/considerations, out-of district student participation in nonacademic/extracurricular activities, student/agency invitation to meetings, written notification to the case manager, graduation requirements in IEPs,

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choice of diploma for out-of-district students, participation in district graduation activities for out-of-district students, description of special class programs and consultation time for staff and access sheet in student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding functional assessments, dated evaluation reports, provision of IEPs to parents/teachers prior to implementation, post-secondary transition, statewide assessment and documentation of student records in other locations.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.