

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

District: Manasquan School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: February 25, 2004

Monitoring Team: Michelle Davis Young, Vanessa Leonard and Deborah Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Manasquan School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Manasquan 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 Manasquan 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 Manasquan High School on February 10, 2004. 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, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for its **Project Awareness** program. The goal of this program is to provide activities for 4th through 8th grade students before and after school that promote student interest in the fine and performing arts.

The district is also commended for the **Summer Enrichment** program offered by the district's PTA in which students in kindergarten through 8th grade are provided with

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academic enrichment and nonacademic activities. These activities are age/grade level specific and address science, math, cooking and arts and crafts.

Data Summary:

The data provided by the Manasquan School District indicate that over the last three years the district's classification rate has consistently remained at least 1% below the state average. Further review of this data and the self-assessment document indicated that although the district's classification rate consistently decreased over the last three years, the district continues to focus on this area by developing improvement plans that address pre-referral interventions and the referral process. The data also indicated that during the 2001-2002 school year, 57.5% of the district's special needs students were educated in the general education setting for at least 80% of the school day. Through the development of additional in-class support programs and the hiring/training of instructional staff for the 2002-2003 school year, the district was able to increase this number to 75.7%. As a result, the district currently exceeds the state average by 34.1% in this area.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Least Restrictive Environment 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 of policies and procedures, parent training and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of in-service training for professional and paraprofessional 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 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, frequency, duration and location of related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of IEP documentation of goals/objectives for related services. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, administrative knowledge of transfer student procedures and adaptive physical education. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas 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 consent, provision of notices of meetings, content and provision of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of surrogate parents. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the content of notices of meetings.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Notices of Meetings – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the district's notices of meetings do not contain a statement that notifies that parent that "at the discretion of the parent or school district other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student may be invited by the parent or the school district."

- **The district will revise its notices of meetings to include the above statement. This will ensure that parents are afforded the opportunity to bring individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student to IEP meetings.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of child find activities, direct referrals from parents/staff, health summaries and identification meeting timelines/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of vision/hearing screenings. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process and pre-referral interventions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 multi-disciplinary evaluation, standardized assessments, written reports signed/dated and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services, evaluation information that addresses student progress and acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of reevaluation planning meetings/participants and reevaluation completed by June 30th of the student's last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of three-year reevaluation timelines. 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 VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meeting/participants and statement of eligibility for specific learning disability.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale, criteria for specific learning disability (SLD) and copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings/participants, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, IEPs to parents, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs) and teacher access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of 90-day timelines and teacher responsibility. Although the district initially identified these as areas of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations/required statements in IEPs for student's eligible for special education and related services and for student's eligible for speech/language services, implementation dates and annual review timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of statements of Transition Services Needs and Needed Transition Services and student/agency invitation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preferences/interests surveys/assessments and agency linkages. The district's improvement plan regarding preferences/interests surveys/assessments is sufficient to address this area of need. However, the district did not include an improvement plan to address the area of concern regarding agency linkages. **The district will revise its improvement plan to address this area of need. This will ensure that appropriate linkages with other agencies are established for students with disabilities and their families in order to facilitate the transition process. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of this activity.**

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention program to preschool

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disabilities program by age three. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 behavior assessment, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings, 45-day return and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of documentation to 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 and modifications, IEP documentation and alternate proficiency assessment.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of child study team knowledge. 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 XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP requirements and out-of-district student participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of written notice of graduation. 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.

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class size/waivers, class description and insufficient staff. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas 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 areas of access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of access/requests. 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.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Manasquan School District on January 23, 2004 and February 25, 2004. 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 Manasquan School District is to be commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of their review, the district was able to identify all but one area of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision is sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of the improvement plan activities to address some of the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. Additionally, the district is 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.

The Manasquan School District has maintained a classification rate that has consistently remained below the state average over the last three years. The district is has developed an improvement plan to address pre-referral interventions and the referral process. The district is further commended for developing additional in-class support programs and hiring/training instructional staff which has resulted in the district exceeding the state average by 34.1% in the area of special needs students being educated in the general education setting for at least 80% of the school day.

Approximately 25 parents, child study team members and administrators attended a focus group meeting held on February 10, 2003. Phone interviews were also conducted on February 26, 2004, with approximately 10-15 additional parents. Throughout this process, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's special education programs and services in the Manasquan School District. The district involves parents in the decision-making process by providing notices of meetings in a timely manner and holding meetings at a mutually convenient time. Additionally, parents praised the efforts of the child study team members in actively accepting and including parental input and in developing IEPs that address student needs. A parent reported that she was pleased with the transition services provided for her child. Some parents are concerned about the district's inability to address the needs of students with more severe disabilities and the provision of paraprofessionals. Many parents expressed concerns regarding the provision of inclusion services throughout the district stating that general education teachers appear to be resistant to the process and lack the ability and/or desire to implement the accommodations and modifications required by student IEPs. These parents indicated that barriers to achieving success in these areas are related to a lack of training for professional and paraprofessional staff. Finally, parents reported that they are provided with IEPs, appropriate written notice and that preschool students have programs in place by age three.

Least Restrictive Environment was an area determined to be compliant with all of the standards.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included of policies and procedures, parent training, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of programs and related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications, consent, provision of notices of meetings and content/provision of written notice, notices in native language, interpreter at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referrals from parents/staff, health

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summaries, identification meeting timelines/participants, multi-disciplinary evaluation, standardized assessments, written reports signed/dated, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation planning meeting/participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of a students' last year in preschool, eligibility meeting/participants, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, IEP meetings/participants, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, IEPs to parents, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs) teacher access, decision-making process, Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) documentation, consideration of supplementary aids and services, regular education access for in-district students, continuum of programs, notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, statements of Transition Services Needs and Needed Transition Services, student/agency invitation, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessment, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings, 45-day return, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, student participation on statewide assessments, approved accommodations/modifications, IEP documentation, alternate proficiency assessment, IEP requirements for graduation, out-of-district student participation in graduation, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, consultation time, access sheets, maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of other locations of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-services training for professional and paraprofessional staff, extended school year, IEP documentation of goals/objectives for related services administrative knowledge of transfer student procedures, adaptive physical education, surrogate parents, referral process, documentation of pre-referral interventions, vision/hearing screenings, functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services, evaluation information that addresses student progress, acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports, three-year reevaluation timelines, signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale, criteria for specific learning disability, copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings, considerations/required statements in IEPs for student's eligible for special education and related services and for student's eligible for speech/language services, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher responsibility, preferences/interests surveys and assessments, outside agency linkages, preschool transition planning conferences, early intervention program to preschool disabilities program by age three, documentation to case manager, child study team knowledge of statewide assessment components, written notice of graduation, class size/waivers, class description, insufficient staff and access/requests

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards regarding content of notices of meetings.

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