

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

**District:** Manchester Township School District      **County:** Ocean

**Monitoring Dates:** December 10-11, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Michelle E. Davis, Barbara J. Tucker, Stephen A. Coplin,  
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***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Manchester Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Manchester Township 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 Manchester Township 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 Manchester Township High School on December 4, 2002. 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 therapists and child study team members.

**District Strengths:**

**High School Work Program** - The district has developed a cooperative relationship with the Regional Day School at Jackson which provides work experiences for multiply disabled students. This more comprehensive program serves a larger number of students because the services include the identification of numerous work sites,

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transportation to job sites and job shadowing. In addition, this program provides the opportunity for the work-study program coordinator to educate and in-service the classroom teacher regarding the vocational needs of the student. As a result, the teacher is able to integrate these skills into the daily curriculum. The focus of this program is to address the transition needs of student at a much younger age than other agencies.

**Special Olympics Tennis Program** – The district is commended for recognizing the importance of providing students with disabilities the opportunity to develop lifelong recreational habits. The district provides a Special Olympics Tennis program wherein community volunteers provide disabled students with tennis instruction. This program culminates with a tennis tournament that includes students from many other school districts.

**School Savings Program** - The district provides students with the opportunity to learn about banking and economics. The School Saving Program was developed in collaboration with the First Union Bank. Students, including students with disabilities, are able to open individual savings accounts and make deposits into their accounts on a monthly basis at the Wildcat School Bank.

**Junior Impact Club** - The district promotes civic responsibility and service to others through the Junior Impact Club, a volunteer program which combines the elements of community service and learning for all students in grades four and five.

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

**Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment and Statewide Assessment** 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 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 a concern in the area of in-services training needs for parents/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 certification, extended school year, provision of programs/related services, length of school day/year and transfer procedures.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of adaptive physical education for all students with disabilities. 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 consent and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of selection/training of surrogate parents, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, documentation of attempts to obtain parental participation at meetings, provision/content of notice and the convening of 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.

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health, vision and hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines/participants.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding direct referrals by teachers.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Direct Referrals** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff that the district does not allow direct referrals from staff.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that staff have the ability to directly refer a student to the child study team and to participate in a meeting when they believe the nature of the student's problem is such that an evaluation is warranted without delay. At that meeting, a decision may be made that an evaluation is not warranted and that the student needs to be referred to the PAC. The improvement plan must include a mechanism to establish criteria that identifies the type of documentation that would support a staff request for a direct referral. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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**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 evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejections of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of written reports. 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 functional assessments for speech/language report.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Functional Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that speech evaluation reports for students eligible for speech/language services did not consistently contain the developmental/educational history, interventions attempted, informal measures and the written educational impact statement.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services contain the required components as identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d). The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section VII: Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of criteria, signature of agreement/disagreement and copies of evaluation reports to parents/adult students 10 days prior to the meeting.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the statement of eligibility for specific learning disability.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Statement of Eligibility for Specific Learning Disability** – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the eligibility statement for specific learning disability does not include the statement that the term specific learning disability does not apply to students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

- **The district will revise its eligibility statement for specific learning disability to include all required statements.**

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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 consideration and required statements for students eligible for special education and related services, age of majority, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards and implementation dates.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation of vocational personnel at IEP meetings, opportunity for parent/adult student to observe proposed placements, teacher responsibility in implementing student IEPs, provision of IEPs to parent and/or adult student, the development of annual goals and short-term objectives, IEP statements for students eligible for speech language services, annual reviews and 90-day 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 student invitations, transition service needs and preferences and interests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of obtaining agency participation in planning transition services, statement of needed transition services and alternative strategies to meet the student's transition objectives. 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 Preschool**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in areas of preschool transition planning conferences and early intervention to preschool disabled programs by age 3.

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

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**Section XI: Discipline**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, documentation to case managers, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of transmittal of records when reporting a crime, functional behavior assessments and behavior intervention plans. 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 XIII: Graduation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of written notice of graduation and participation of out-of-district students in graduation activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of granting diplomas to elementary students in out-of-district placements. 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 IEP requirements.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Identification of Alternate Requirement(s)** – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that when a student is exempt from course requirements and/or passing all or parts of the High School Proficiency Assessment (HSPA), the district does not identify the alternative requirement(s) for exemption(s) from those graduation requirement(s).

- **The district will revise the IEP format to ensure that it identifies the alternate requirement(s) for graduation when a student is exempted from meeting standard graduation requirements.**

**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 size for speech therapy and consultation time.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of home instruction. 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 areas of access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of providing parents with the list of the types and location of student records upon request. 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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## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Manchester Township School District on December 10-11, 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 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 held prior to the monitoring visit, some parents expressed their satisfaction with the provision of special programs and related services, program options available for students with disabilities in-district and participation of students with disabilities in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. Other parents expressed concerns about the provision of books and supplies for students with disabilities, referral process, sufficient staff, participation of personnel from Division of Developmental Disabilities and Division of Vocation and Rehabilitation at IEP meetings where transition services are being discussed, individualized IEPs and age ranges and facility issues at the high school.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included Reevaluation, Least Restrictive Environment, and Statewide Assessment.

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, certification, extended school year, provision of programs/related services, length of day/year, transfer procedures, consent, independent evaluations, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings timelines/participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejections of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings/participants, reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of students' last year in preschool, criteria, signature of agreement/disagreement, copies of evaluation reports to parents/adult students 10 days prior to the meeting, consideration and required statements for students eligible for special education and related services, age of majority, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, decision-making process, LRE documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access, notification/participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities for out-of-district students, continuum of programs, student invitations, transition service needs and preferences, interests, the preschool transition planning conference, early intervention programs to preschool by age three, suspension tracking, documentation to case managers, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings, procedural safeguards, student participation, approved accommodations/modifications, IEP documentation, alternate proficiency assessment, written notice of graduation, participation of out-of-district students in graduation activities, class size/waivers, age range/waiver, group size/speech therapy, consultation time, access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.



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During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-services training needs for parents and professional/paraprofessional staff, adaptive physical education for all students with disabilities, selection and training of surrogate parents, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, documentation of attempts to obtain parental participation at meetings, provision/content of notice, convening of meetings, written reports, participation of vocational personnel at IEP meetings, opportunity for parent/adult student to observe proposed placements, identifying students eligible for speech language services, annual reviews, teacher responsibility in implementing student IEPs, provision of IEP to parent and/or adult student, 90-day timelines, the development of annual goals and short-term objectives, IEP statements for students eligible for speech/language services, annual reviews, obtaining agency participation in planning transition services, the statement of needed transition services, alternative strategies to meet the student's transition objectives, transmittal of records when reporting a crime, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, granting diplomas to elementary students in out-of-district placements, the provision of home instruction, and providing parents with the list of the types and location of student records upon request.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding direct referrals by teachers, functional assessments for speech language report, the statement of eligibility for specific learning disability and IEP requirements.

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