

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

District: Middlesex County Vocational/Technical High Schools **County:** Middlesex

Monitoring Dates: May 28, 29, 2003

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Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools 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 Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools 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 East Brunswick Campus on May 14, 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 superintendent, special education administrators, building principals, vice principals, general education and special education teachers, child study team members and students.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for a 0% drop out rate for the 2001-2002 school year. Thirteen percent (13%) of students with disabilities who graduated in June 2002

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continued their education in either college or post-secondary training programs and eighty five percent (85%) secured employment.

The district is commended for involving their special education students at the various campuses in **Special Projects**. During the school year, students at the Piscataway Campus, with the efforts of the welding instructor, completed their "Eagle Sculpture Project" that commemorated the 9/11 tragedy. The construction of this project was featured on New Jersey Television Network and in the Star Ledger. This project required students to create a symbol of patriotism, unity and the American spirit. Students at the East Brunswick Campus created culinary events, such as a Spanish Luncheon, to coincide with various school programs. Additionally, East Brunswick students constructed a full size one-story house using blueprints. The purpose of these projects was to help students develop job skills that would allow them to more successfully enter the work force.

The district also provides a **Health Service Program** at the East Brunswick Campus where students volunteer at the Roosevelt Care Center and/or Head Start. The students rotated through the various departments at the Roosevelt facility and learned how to communicate with the elderly. At the Head Start Program, students spent time as aides to the teachers and learned how to work with young children.

The district is commended for their use of advanced technology in both academic and shop classes to assist students in the acquisition and application of content material. Several teachers have been trained in a variety of applications and techniques that are used as teaching aids for students with multiple learning styles. One noteworthy technological system is the **Interactive White-Board** that is used for classroom instruction and student assessment.

The district is further commended for the **Performing Arts Program** that is partnered with the Papermill Playhouse staff. The students were mentored by the director of the theatre to produce and perform their original play.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provision, Free and Appropriate Public Education, Evaluation, Transition, Statewide Assessment and Graduation Requirements 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 III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent and content/provision of notice.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notices in native language and interpreters/translators at meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of child find, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings and identification meetings within timelines with required participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of implementation/effectiveness of pre-referral interventions, documentation of pre-referral interventions and pre-referral interventions as a prerequisite to CST evaluation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of reevaluations within three years or sooner if warranted and regular education teachers in attendance at reevaluation planning meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 meetings/participants and the statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD).

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of copies of evaluation reports to parent(s)/adult student no later than 10 days prior to the eligibility conference and criteria for establishing eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

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Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of annual review timelines, considerations/required statements, provision of IEPs to parents and annual goals/objectives related to core curriculum content standards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of 90-day timelines for implementation of IEPs, the provision of copies of IEPs to adult students, IEPs in effect/implemented prior to the provision of special education programs/related services and IEP teacher access/responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of continuum of programs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district has expanded their in-class support resource programs this school year and has plans for further expansion for the 2003-2004 school year.

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 functional behavioral assessments, behavior improvement plans, manifestation determination meetings and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of district-wide uniform discipline procedures that include the role of the child study team and case manager. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class/group size and age range.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of consultation time between regular and special education teachers. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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, access to student records and documentation of the location of other student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of standardized procedures for maintaining student records, standardized organization of student records and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 Middlesex County Vocational and Technical High Schools on May 28, 29 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 highly commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

The district is commended for a 0% drop out rate for the 2001-2002 school year. Thirteen percent (13%) of students with disabilities who graduated in June 2002 continued their education in either college or post-secondary training programs and eighty five percent (85%) secured employment.

The parents of one student attended the focus group meeting at the East Brunswick Campus. These parents expressed their satisfaction with the program at the East Brunswick Campus. They indicated that their son has progressed since entering the program at the beginning of this school year.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent/staff development, policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, extended school year, provision of related services, goals/objectives for related services, documentation of frequency/location/duration for related services, transfer students, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, consent, content/provision of notices, child find, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings, identification meetings within timelines with required participants, multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, acceptance/rejection of reports, signed/dated evaluation reports, independent evaluations, bilingual evaluations, eligibility meetings/participants, statement of eligibility, participants at IEP meetings, annual review timelines, consideration/required statements, provision of IEPs to parents, goals/objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, individualized decision-making process, supplementary aids/services, least restrictive environment documentation, regular education access, provision of transition services, student/agency invitations, statement of "Transition Service Needs," statement of "Needed Transition Services," participation in statewide assessment, alternate proficiency assessment, documentation of statewide assessment, accommodations/modifications in statewide assessment, IEP documentation of graduation requirements, written notice of graduation, age range, class/group size and access sheets in student records and documentation of the location of other student records on the cumulative file.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding surrogate parents, notices in native language, interpreters/translators at meetings, pre-referral evaluations, 3-year timelines for reevaluations, regular education teacher attendance at reevaluation planning meetings, provision of evaluation reports to parent/adult students no later than 10 days prior to the eligibility conference, eligibility criteria for Specific Learning Disability, 90-day timelines for implementation of IEPs, IEPs

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in effect/implemented prior to the provision of special education programs/related services and/or at the beginning of the school year, IEP teacher access/responsibility, continuum of programs, district-wide uniform discipline procedures, consultation time between regular and special education teachers, standardized procedures for maintaining student records, standardized organization of student records, access to student records and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures.

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