

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Monmouth Regional High School District **County:** Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: January 6, 7, 8, 2003

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky, Stephen A. Coplin

Background Information:

During the 2001-2002 school year, the Monmouth Regional High School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Monmouth Regional High 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 Monmouth Regional High 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 Monmouth Regional 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, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district provides a Buddy Program for transitioning eighth grade students from Tinton Falls and Eatontown. All regular and special education students are assigned a "Buddy" to help them acclimate to Monmouth Regional High School.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Transition 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, provision of related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, transfer students, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding goals and objectives for counseling.

Area(s) of Need:

Goals and Objectives - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not develop goals and objectives for counseling.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when counseling is provided as a related service, goals and objectives are developed and included in IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, content/provision of notices for students eligible for special education/related services and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. The district further identified concerns in the areas of parental participation at meetings and notices in native language. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding content and provision of notices for students eligible for speech/language services.

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Area(s) of Need:

Content and Provision of Notice for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that for students eligible for speech/language services, the district's notices do not contain all the required components. Furthermore, the speech therapist does not provide written notice of eligibility.

- **The district needs to revise its notices to ensure they contain the required components. The improvement plan must also include procedures to ensure written notice is provided to parent(s)/adult students when determinations of eligibility are made. The district's plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the district adopt the model notices developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions and identification meetings within timelines with required participants.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding child find, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings.

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through an interview with the director that the district does not conduct any child find activities in the community to locate, identify and refer potentially disabled students ages 13-21.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities are conducted in the community throughout the school year, including summer months to locate, identify and refer potentially disabled children including migrant and homeless children. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Health Summaries and Vision/hearing Screenings - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with child study team members and record review that when a student is referred to the child study team for evaluation, the school nurse does not summarize available health information for the child study team. Furthermore, the district does not conduct vision and hearing screenings for students referred to the child study team for evaluation.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that for students referred to the child study team for evaluation, the school nurse summarizes available health information, conducts vision**

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and hearing screenings and provides the information to the child study team. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.

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, acceptance/rejection of all or parts of reports, signed reports, bilingual evaluations and independent evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding multidisciplinary evaluations, functional assessments and dated reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Multidisciplinary Evaluations for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the speech therapist does not include the written educational impact statement from the classroom teacher in the evaluation reports of students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the speech therapist includes the written educational impact statement from the classroom teacher within the evaluation reports of students eligible for speech/language services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Multidisciplinary Evaluations for Students Eligible for Special Education and Related Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with the child study team that child study team members do not conduct any evaluations for students who may be determined eligible under the disability category of Other Health Impaired. Instead, they simply obtain a medical assessment.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when a student is being evaluated to determine if they are eligible for special education/related services under the category of Other Health Impaired, at least two members of the child study team conduct assessments to determine if the student's health impairment adversely affects the educational performance. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with the child study team and speech therapist that evaluators do not consistently conduct functional assessments as a part of the evaluation process. Child study team members indicated during the interviews that they do not conduct functional assessments because they are of little value. Some evaluators have included interviews with the parent if a social is done.

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- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure evaluators conduct functional assessments in accordance with 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, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district's evaluation reports are signed, reports are not consistently dated. As a result, it cannot be determined when these reports are 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, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding planning meeting participants and the three-year timeline for reevaluations.

Area(s) of Need:

Three-Year Timeline for Reevaluations - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently complete reevaluations within the three-year timeline or sooner if warranted.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all reevaluations are completed within the three-year timeline or sooner if warranted. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Reevaluation Planning Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that regular education teachers do not attend reevaluation planning meetings.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all required participants are invited and attend reevaluation planning meetings. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings and eligibility criteria.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability (SLD), participants at eligibility meetings and copies of evaluation reports to parent(s)/adult students at least ten days prior to the eligibility meeting.

Areas(s) of Need:

Statement of Eligibility for SLD - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that for students determined eligible for special education/related services under the category specific learning disability (SLD), the district does not document in the eligibility statement, the area(s) of severe discrepancy between the student's current achievement and intellectual ability and does not state that the student's disability is not primarily a result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when documenting the eligibility statement for SLD, the district includes the components required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(c)11. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Eligibility Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that regular education teachers do not attend eligibility meetings.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all required participants are invited to and attend eligibility meetings. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Provision of Copies of Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that copies of evaluation reports are not consistently provided to parent(s)/adult students at least ten days prior to eligibility meetings.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that copies of evaluation reports are consistently provided to parent(s)/adult students at least ten days prior to eligibility meetings. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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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 considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education/related services, age of majority, implementation dates on IEPs, IEP teacher responsibility and annual goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation of shared-time vocational staff at IEP meetings, annual review timelines and 90-day timelines. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding, development of IEPs for out-of-district students, provision of IEPs to teachers/parent(s)/adult students prior to implementation, provision of special education programs, documentation of beginning/ending dates and duration of special education programs, IEP considerations/required statements for students eligible for speech/language services and IEP meeting participants for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

IEPs for Out-of-District Students - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with the director and child study team members that for classified students who are being placed in out-of-district programs, the district does not develop an IEP prior to the implementation of the program, but rather waits 30 to 60 days after placement until the private school arranges the IEP meeting.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district convenes an IEP meeting to develop an IEP for an out-of-district placement. The plan must further ensure parents/adult students are provided with written notice of that proposed action within 15-days of the IEP meeting. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Provision of IEPs - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently provide teachers/parent(s)/adult students with copies of IEPs prior to implementation.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district provides teachers/parent(s)/adult students with copies of IEPs prior to implementation. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Provision of Programs and Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the “Statement of Special Education Programs/Related Services” in the IEPs of students who are placed in the Challenge Program does not accurately reflect the type of special education program they are receiving.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure students receive the programs and services required by their IEPs. The procedures must further ensure that in the event placement in the Challenge Program results in a change of program/services, the district must reconvene the IEP team, revise the IEP and provide written notice to the parent/adult pupil. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Documentation of Beginning/Ending Dates/Duration of Special Education Programs - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not document the beginning and ending dates and the duration of special education programs in IEPs.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents the beginning and ending dates and the duration of special education programs in the IEP. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

IEP Considerations and Required Statements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that for students eligible for speech/language services, the district’s IEPs do not contain the required considerations and statements.

- **The district needs to revise its IEP format for students eligible for speech/language services to ensure it contains the required considerations and statements. It is recommended that the district adopt the model IEP developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

IEP Meeting Participants for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services- During the on-site monitoring it was determined that for students eligible for speech/language services, regular education teachers do not attend IEP meetings.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that a regular education teacher is invited to and attends IEP meetings of students eligible for speech/language services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the 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 individualized decision-making process, supplementary aids/services, regular education access and continuum of programs.

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An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of the decision-making process in the least restrictive environment (LRE).

Area(s) of Need:

LRE Documentation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with child study team members that although students are placed in programs along the continuum, including instruction within the general education setting with supports and services, and there is an appropriate discussion of the supplementary aids and services considered and rejected, the individualized decision-making process is not documented in the LRE section of the IEP. Instead, every IEP has the same statement regardless of placement.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents in the LRE section of IEPs the individualized decision-making process and the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in documentation to the case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students.

Area(s) of Need:

Procedural Safeguard Rights - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with the director and vice principals that the district does not have a procedure to ensure students who are potentially disabled are provided with educational services when a removal exceeds ten days.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students who are potentially disabled are provided with educational services when they are removed as a result of a disciplinary action. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

The district did not identify any areas of need in Graduation.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of graduation requirements in IEPs and written notice of graduation.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Graduation Requirements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with the child study team and record review that when a student is exempt from any graduation requirement the district does not document the rationale for the exemption.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when a student is exempt from any graduation requirement(s), the district must document within the Graduation Requirement section of the IEP all exemption(s) with a rationale and a description of the alternate requirement for each exemption. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Written Notice of Graduation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with the child study team and record review that the district does not provide written notice of graduation to parent(s) or adult students.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that parent(s) or adult students are provided with written notice of graduation and that this provision is documented in student files. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the district adopt the “Written Notice of Graduation” developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consultation time between regular and special education teachers, class size for self-contained programs, group size for speech and age range.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding group size for resource programs.

Area(s) of Need:

Group Size for Resource Programs - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through review of class lists and interviews with the director and teachers that group

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sizes for in-class support and resource replacement programs exceed limits established in code. Furthermore, the director has indicated that he has not requested individual exceptions to group sizes through the county office.

- **The district needs to bring resource center classes into compliance with group sizes immediately. Additionally, the district must revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all group sizes for resource programs do not exceed limits established in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.6 in the future. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access to student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding destruction of student records and documentation of location of other student records.

Area(s) of Need:

Destruction of Student Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through an interview with the director that although the district maintains student records for five years following the completion of program activities, the district does not attempt to notify parent(s) and or adult students prior to the destruction of these records.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the destruction of pupil records occurs only after written parental or adult pupil notification and written parental or adult pupil permission has been granted or after reasonable attempts of such notification and reasonable attempts to secure parental or adult pupil permission have been unsuccessful. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Documentation of Other Locations of Student Record(s) - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not document the location of other student record(s) maintained by the district in the central file.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents the location of other student record(s) maintained by the district in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Monmouth Regional High School District on January 6, 7, 8, 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. As a result of the district's review, some areas of need were identified and an improvement plan was developed. 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. One parent expressed a concern regarding lack of textbooks available to students. At the focus group meeting, the superintendent affirmed that the district does have a shortage of textbooks, however, he explained that all students are provided with either available textbooks or copied pages from the textbooks. The monitors verified through interviews with staff and parents that students are provided textbooks or copies of pages as needed.

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, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, transfer students, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, consent, content/provision of notices for students eligible for special education/related services (except for invitations to transition-planning meetings), interpreters, referral process, pre-referral interventions, identification meetings within timelines with required participants, standardized assessments, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, signed reports, bilingual evaluations, independent evaluations, reevaluation-planning meetings, eligibility meetings, eligibility criteria, IEP considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education/related services, age of majority, implementation dates on IEPs, IEP teacher responsibility, annual goals/objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, individualized decision making process, supplementary aids/services, regular education access, continuum of programs, agency invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, statement of "Transition Service Needs," statement of "Needed Transition Services," documentation to the case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, consultation time between regular and special education teachers, age range, class size for self-contained programs, group size for speech, access to student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding surrogate parents, parental participation at meetings, notices in native language, participation of shared-time vocational staff at IEP team meetings, annual review/90-day timelines and staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding goals/objectives for counseling, content/provision of notices for students eligible for speech/language services, child find, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, multidisciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, dated written reports, reevaluation planning participants, reevaluation timelines, statement of eligibility for SLD,

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eligibility meeting participants, copies of evaluation reports to parent(s)/adult students at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting, development of IEPs for out-of-district students, provision of IEPs to teachers/parent(s)/adult students prior to implementation, identification of type of special education program, documentation of beginning/ending dates/duration of special education programs, IEP considerations/required statements for students eligible for speech/language services, IEP meeting participants for student eligible for speech/language services, LRE documentation, procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, IEP documentation of graduation requirements, written notice of graduation, group size for resource programs, maintenance/destruction of student records and documentation of other locations of student records.

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