

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

District: Montville Township School District

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: February 24, 25 and 26, 2003

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Tucci, Zola Mills and Janet Wright

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Montville 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 Montville 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 Montville 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 the Montville High School on February 25, 2003.

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:

The district is commended for programs focused on enhancing acceptance, responsibility and relationship building through the Footprints program. The Footprints program allows classified high school students to prepare and implement lessons for preschoolers under the joint supervision of the resource center and preschool teachers.

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The district's commitment to technology is demonstrated by the use of a Kurzweil Reader in all seven schools. This technology allows students, including students with disabilities, access to grade level texts and materials through the use of a scanner and computer which reads text to the student. Other software programs used to enhance learning are Earobics, Kidspiration and Inspiration.

The district is commended for its long commitment to student involvement in transition activities through the Dare To Dream program. This is an annual student leadership conference focusing on transition to post secondary education held at Morris County College. Students, including students with disabilities, from Montville were chosen last year to serve as leaders and group facilitators.

The district is commended for its support of the parent group, Parents of Exceptional Children. Parents of Exceptional Children focuses on a wide array of community involvement programs which include peer mentoring, recreation activities, fathers' and mothers' support groups, community education, and fund raising activities that supplement district needs.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Transition, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, Programs and Services and Student Records 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, related services of speech, physical therapy and counseling, length of school day and year, transfer students and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of adaptive physical education and timely commencement of occupational therapy. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding facilities. Observation in an elementary school indicated a dual use of a resource room. This information has been provided to the county office.

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, and identification meeting timelines and participants.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the referral process and pre-referral interventions. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, age of majority, annual and ninety-day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of inclusion of standardized test scores in the present level of educational performance statements, considerations and required statements, and goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring.

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, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of nonacademic and extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section X: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of discipline procedures, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, and procedural safeguards.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of documentation to the case manager. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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 Montville Township School District on February 24, 25 and 26, 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 acknowledged for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify all but two minor areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of activities that resulted in the correction of many areas 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.

At a focus group meeting held during the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents expressed a desire to see transition services expanded to include a transition coordinator. Although parents expressed satisfaction with their case managers, they felt too much time was spent on paperwork. Parents would like to see the district hire additional child study team staff to more effectively conduct case management activities.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, professional and parent development, dissemination of IDEA, extended school year, related services of speech, physical therapy and counseling, length of day and year, transfer students, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP meeting participants, age of majority, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, individualized decision making, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement, student and agency invitation, pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, functional behavior analysis, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational setting, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, graduation requirements, out of district participation, written notice of graduation, class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes for speech, home instruction, access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records, and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding implementation date for occupational therapy, provision of adaptive physical education, referral process and pre-referral interventions in general education, considerations and required statements, alignment of goals and objectives with the core curriculum content

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standards, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, and documentation to the case manager.

The on-site visit identified one minor area regarding facilities.

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