

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

District: Moonachie School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: June 3, 2002

Monitoring Team: Janet Wright and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Moonachie School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Moonachie 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 Moonachie 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 this 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 Robert L. Craig Elementary School, on May 28, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, 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 Moonachie School District is commended for providing group and individual counseling for all students, parent and family guidance, monthly parent workshops and English-as-a-Second-Language classes for adults.

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The district has initiated a school-wide behavior management program that uses a three-tier system to encourage students to exhibit appropriate behaviors in school. Students have an opportunity to earn rewards by following school rules for twenty consecutive days. Data indicate that as students make their way to level three each month, the number of behavioral problems has declined.

The district provides summer tutoring and after-school recreation and homework programs. These programs promote education, as well as opportunities to learn to play by the rules, for good sportsmanship and for group participation.

Community service programs, including mentoring and an arts program, are also offered to encourage community involvement in the district.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of policies and procedures.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional/parent development and dissemination of IDEA information. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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 extended school year, related services for speech therapy, counseling and transportation, length of school year/day, facilities, and certification.

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

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

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, written notice, meetings, native language and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, the referral process, and health summary. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring 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 bilingual evaluations and acceptance or rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding multi-disciplinary and standardized assessments, functional assessment, and written reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about the correction of the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments and functional assessments.

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

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Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of timelines, planning meetings, participants at reevaluation planning meeting, and turning age five.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review 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 monitoring visit.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of criteria and the provision of evaluation reports to parents. The district's plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, goals/objectives relating to the core curriculum content standards, age of majority and ninety-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations/required statements, implementation dates, annual review timelines and teacher access to and knowledge of the IEP. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of concern. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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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/documentation, and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of use of supplemental aids and services, regular education access and nonacademic/extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section X: Transition – Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

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

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

Section X: Transition – Transition From School Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age-fourteen transition services needs and courses of study.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student invitation and preferences/interests. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the area of preferences and interests.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavioral

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intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determinations and interim alternative educational setting (IAES). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of approved accommodations/modifications, IEP documentation, and alternate assessment.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the areas of participation and child study team knowledge of statewide assessment content. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of written notice.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP requirements, diploma and participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section XIV: Program 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 sizes for speech, and home instruction approvals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consultation time and class descriptions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to

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address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the area of consultation time.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent/adult-student access to records, access sheets, maintenance/destruction of records and documentation of locations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in 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 Moonachie School District on June 3, 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 flawless review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, nearly all of these identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the Moonachie School District's programs and services. Parents commended the district for the initiation of activities that support the community. Parents did express concern that services may be affected by the defeat of the school budget.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, extended school year, provision of related services of speech and counseling, length of school year/day, facilities, certifications, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, direct referrals (parent/staff), summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, participants and timelines for identification meeting, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, turning age five, eligibility meetings and participants, documentation of eligibility, IEP participants, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, individualized decision making, *Oberti* factors, considerations and documentation, continuum, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, age fourteen transition service needs and courses, approved accommodations/modifications for statewide assessments, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, written notice of graduation, programs and services, class-size/waivers, age-range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional/parent development, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of related services of occupational and physical therapy, transfer students, surrogate parents, written notice, holding of meetings, native language and independent evaluations, Child Find 3-21, referral processes, health summary, multi-disciplinary and standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, reevaluation timelines, eligibility criteria, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP considerations/required statements, implementation dates, annual review timelines, teacher knowledge/access, supplementary aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, student invite, preferences and interests, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, BIP/FBA, manifestation determination, IAES, participation in statewide assessment, graduation

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IEP requirements, diploma, participation, collaboration time, class descriptions, parent/adult-student access, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of student records and documentation of locations.

The on-site visit identified no additional areas of need and determined the improvement plan requires no revisions.