

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Mount Olive Public School

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: April 15, 16 and 17, 2002

Monitoring Team: Janet Wright, Damen Cooper, Gladys Miller and Zola Mills

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Mount Olive Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Mount Olive 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 Mount Olive Public School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Mount Olive High School on April 9, 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 district is commended for its S.T.A.N.D. program (Students Together Alert Negative Decisions). This club affords students the opportunity to act together to try and help solve problems within their school. Their goal is to persuade students to talk problems out and prevent physical disputes. This programs teaches students respect for self and others.

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The district is further commended for its participation in the Best Buddies program that matches a student with disabilities with a nondisabled peer. This program promotes social understanding and acceptance throughout the school community.

At the elementary level, a Bee Buddy program facilitates the welcoming process for new students in the district. The Bee Buddy program is designed to increase self-esteem and leadership.

Mt. Olive School district has received recognition for staff achievement. One of the social workers has been named school social worker of the year by the New Jersey Association of School Social Workers. In addition, a special education teacher is a finalist for a Best Practice award for her schoolyard garden and habitat program. Her program provides instruction in specific core curriculum standards in a way that allows students to learn related functional life skills, as well as acquiring skills necessary for transition to work.

Mt. Olive provides a wide variety of programs, clubs, and activities for all students beginning in the elementary schools and continuing through high school. The district is commended for its Synergistic Program that was designed in cooperation with BASF Corporation. The goal of the Synergistic System is to facilitate change by transforming classrooms into an interactive environment that fosters and supports learning by utilizing technology.

The district is further commended for its dedication to the inclusion of all special needs students within the general education environment.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions 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.

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of related services for OT, PT, ST and transportation, length of school year/day, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, provision of counseling services and transfer students. 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.

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III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings, native language and independent evaluations. 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.

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-referral interventions, referral process, direct referrals, health summary and identification meeting 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 monitoring visit.

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written reports and acceptance/rejection of reports. 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.

VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

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

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of timelines for reevaluation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with documentation of eligibility and the provision of evaluation reports to parents. 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.

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP implementation dates and alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS).

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations/required statements, age of majority, annual review timelines, ninety-day timelines, progress reporting and teacher access/knowledge of the IEP. 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.

IX. LRE

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations/documentation, regular education access and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of use of supplemental aids and services and nonacademic/extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

X. Transition

Transition to Post School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age fourteen transition services, courses, and needed transition services at age sixteen.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitation, agency involvement and preferences/interests. 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.

Transition to Preschool

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

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plans/functional behavioral assessments (BIP/FBA), 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.

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of findings:

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with participation, alternate assessment and child study team knowledge of approved accommodations,

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and content of statewide assessments. 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.

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 sizes for speech and home instruction approvals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of collaboration time for teachers and implementation of in-class support resource programs. 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.

XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent/adult student access to records, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of signing of access sheets. 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.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Mount Olive Public School District on April 15, 16 and 17, 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 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, many of these identified areas are in the process of being corrected. 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 district's programs and services. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process. Concerns raised by parents were in the area of timely progress reporting from related services staff and overall communications.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included general provisions, provision of related services for OT, PT and ST, length of school year/day, facilities, certifications, Child Find 3-21, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, participants for identification meeting, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, turning age five, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, individualized decision making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, regular education access, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, age sixteen needed transition services, approved accommodations/modifications for statewide assessment, IEP documentation, graduation IEP requirements, diploma, participation, written notice, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, parent/adult student access, maintenance and destruction of student records and documentation of locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, provision of counseling services, transfer students, surrogate parents, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, native language and independent evaluations, pre-referral interventions, referral process, direct referrals (parent/staff), health summary, timelines for identification meeting, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, considerations/required statements, age of majority, annual review and ninety day timelines, teacher knowledge/access, supplementary aids and services, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, student agency invite, agency involvement in transition, preferences and interests, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, BIP/FBA,

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manifestation determination, IAES, participation in statewide assessment, alternate assessment, child study team knowledge of approved accommodations/modifications, collaboration time for teachers, implementation of in-class support resource programs, and access sheets.

The on-site visit did not identify any additional areas of need within the various standards.