

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

**District:** Neptune Township School District

**County:** Monmouth

**Monitoring Dates:** October 9-10, 2001

**Monitoring Team:** Barbara Tucker, Stephen Coplin, Debbie Masarsky, Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson, Georgianna Parlacoski

**Background Information**

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Neptune School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Neptune 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 Neptune 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 on October 4, 2001. 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.

## **I. General Provisions**

### **Summary of Findings**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Policy and Procedures and public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding in-service for professionals and training for child study teams in case management. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

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

### **Section II: F.A.P.E.**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of day and year and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding adaptive physical education, use of special education staff by administrators to cover regular education classes when substitutes can not be found, transfer students, changes in students' programs or services without conducting IEP meetings and handicapped accessibility at the high school level. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year, goals/objectives for related services, and provision of related services.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Extended School Year** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that although the district has recently adopted the state IEP which includes a space for the documentation of extended school year, the district does not consistently consider or document the need for this program for all students.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year is considered for all students. The plan must include a mechanism to document those considerations in the IEP.**

**Goals and Objectives for Related Services** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that goals and objectives for related services are not consistently developed and incorporated into IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives for all related services are developed and incorporated into IEPs.**

**Provision of Related Services** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff that although IEPs indicated an implementation date of September 1, 2001 for speech services, as of the date of the monitoring visit speech services had not yet begun. Additionally, a review of the speech/language therapists' planned schedules indicated they were scheduling students in a manner that will result in students not receiving the number of sessions they are entitled to receive in accordance with their IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all required related services are provided to students as required in their IEPs. The improvement plan must also include in-service and administrative oversight components 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 and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding procedures for surrogate parents, documentation of attempts to secure parental participation, notices to students, notices in native language, required participants attendance at all meetings and attempts to communicate with parents whose means of communication is not a written language. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding notices.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Notices** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's notice of a meeting and written notices do not contain required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure its notices contain the required components and statements, including required timelines. It is recommended that the district use the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The improvement plan must also include staff development and an**

**administrative oversight component to ensure the proper use of the revised notices.**

#### **Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification**

##### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of the referral process.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding overrepresentation of male minority students in special education programs. To assist the district in its data review and analysis to determine the factors leading to overrepresentation of minorities in special education, the district will participate in technical assistance sessions sponsored by the Office of Special Education Programs during the 2001-2002 school year. The district further identified concerns regarding the documentation of pre-referral interventions. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding Child Find activities, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines and speech identification meetings.

##### **Areas of Need:**

**Child Find Activities** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's Child Find activities are not continued during the summer months and do not include migrant and homeless students.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities continue throughout the school year, including the summer months. These activities must also serve to locate and refer migrant and homeless students who may be identified as potentially disabled.**

**Health Summary and Vision/Hearing Screenings** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently document the student's health summary and vision /hearing screenings in student files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure they document the student's available health/medical information and vision/hearing screenings in the student's file.**

**Identification Meetings** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district conducts identification meetings for students eligible for special education and related services, these meetings are not conducted within the 20-day timeline and do not include the required participants. Additionally it was determined that identification

meetings are not convened for students who may be eligible for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that identification meetings are convened within the 20-day timeline and are conducted with the required participants for all students referred for an evaluation. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight components to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

## **Section V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding administration of tests and evaluation materials that are useful in making determinations about a student's eligibility for special education and services. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services, bilingual evaluations, speech screenings, written reports and acceptance/ rejection of reports.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Multidisciplinary Evaluations** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not conduct multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech and language services due to a language disorder.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that multidisciplinary evaluations are provided for students determined eligible for speech/language services. The improvement plan must include in-service and administrative oversight components to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

**Functional Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined that evaluation reports for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech language services do not include all of the required components of a functional assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure functional assessments include the required components identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4 (d)2. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of this procedure.**

**Bilingual Evaluations** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that bilingual students are being evaluated in English even when it is determined a bilingual evaluation is required.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that bilingual evaluations are conducted when required. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

**Speech Evaluations** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that upon receipt of a teacher referral, the speech therapist conducts a screening with or without parental consent. Based on the results of the screening, the therapist determines the need for an evaluation. If an evaluation is needed, the therapist contacts the parent, explains the results of the screening, obtains verbal consent and sends home a consent form.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that upon receipt of a teacher referral for speech and language services, an identification meeting is conducted with the required participants within 20-days of receipt of that referral to determine whether an evaluation is required. The district must cease the practice of conducting screenings to make this determination. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

**Nature and Scope of the Evaluation/Written Reports** - During the on-site visit it was determined that the district does not provide copies of the nature and scope of the evaluation or evaluation reports to parents. Additionally, evaluators do not date their reports.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides parents with a copy of the notice of the nature and scope of the evaluation and a copy of the evaluation reports. The plan must include a mechanism to ensure each report is dated.**

**Acceptance/Rejection of Reports** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not have procedures for the acceptance/rejection of outside reports and/or assessments.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it documents the acceptance or rejection of an entire report or assessment, or any part of the report or assessment, which may be provided for consideration by outside specialists, agencies or other districts.**

## **Section VI: Reevaluation**

### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding re-evaluation timelines. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes. The district further identified a concern regarding their data management system. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding reevaluations by June 30<sup>th</sup> of a student's last year in a preschool program.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Reevaluation by June 30<sup>th</sup>**- During the on-site monitoring it was determined that reevaluations are not completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of a student's last year in a preschool program.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that reevaluations are completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of a student's last year in a preschool program. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

## **Section VII: Eligibility**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding the criteria/formula for determining severe discrepancy. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding eligibility categories.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Eligibility Categories** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not utilize the current eligibility categories when classifying students eligible for special education and related services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child study team members utilize the current eligibility categories when classifying students eligible for special education and related services.**

## **Section VIII: IEP**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding case manager participation at IEP meetings, increased parental participation at annual review meetings, documentation of the provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, teacher access to IEPs, the need to notify staff of their responsibilities in implementing IEPs, IEP team meetings prior to making changes in students' programs or services, monitoring the implementation of IEPs, and age of majority. The district has developed an improvement plan that is not sufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding goals/objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS).

### **Areas of Need:**

**Core Curriculum Content Standards** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not align IEP goals and objectives with the Core Curriculum Content Standards

- **The district will revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the alignment of goals and objectives with the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The improvement plan must also include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

## **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the consideration of regular education as the first option for school-aged students and preschool students, continuum of placements in each building, provision of in-class support at all levels, participation in the regular education classroom, participation with non-disabled students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities, individual decision-making process, provision of supplementary aides and services in the regular education classroom, the ability of out-of-district students to participate in extra-curricular/non-academic activities, documentation of Least Restrictive Environment in IEPs and teacher training in LRE. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding individual decision-making process for students eligible for speech/ language services.



### **Areas of Need:**

**Individual Decision-Making Process for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services** - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined through staff interviews that the district makes decisions regarding the frequency, duration and group size of speech therapy based on the availability of staff rather than the individual needs of students.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the frequency, duration and group size for speech therapy is based on the individual needs of students rather than the availability of staff. The plan must include a mechanism to allow the district to determine whether it has sufficient staff to implement the new procedures. In the event it does not, the plan must include additional procedures that identify how the district will employ sufficient staff.**

### **Section X: Transition to Post-School**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the Statement of Transition Service Needs, Needed Transition Services Statement, interests/ preferences and courses of study.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding student and agency invitations, provision and monitoring of transition services by outside agencies, agency participation at IEP meetings, and consideration of a variety of community experiences. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the identification of the post-secondary liaison.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Post-Secondary Liaison** – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not identify the post-secondary liaison.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include the identification of the post-secondary liaison in the IEP.**

### **Section X: Transition to Preschool**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding IEPs for preschoolers by the student's third birthday. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and

an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding transition from early intervention programs to preschool programs.

**Areas of Need:**

**Transition Planning Conference** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that a child study team member does not participate in the transition planning conference to ensure a smooth transition from early intervention to preschool.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district participates in the transition planning conference to ensure a smooth transition from early intervention to preschool.**

**Section XI: Discipline**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the need to convene an IEP meeting prior to a change in placement, manifestation determination meetings, IAES, development of behavioral strategies for use by teachers, training for school disciplinarians, notice to case managers and procedural safeguards. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding functional assessments/behavioral intervention plans and tracking of student suspensions.

**Areas of Need:**

**Functional Behavior Assessments Plan and Behavior Intervention Plans** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that as a result of the inconsistent notification to case managers when classified students are suspended, teams do not develop functional behavior assessment plans, conduct functional behavior assessments or develop behavior intervention plans.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include a procedure to ensure case managers are notified, in writing, whenever a classified student is suspended. The plan should include a mechanism to ensure that, if necessary, members of the IEP team meet to develop a functional behavior assessment plan, ensure the plan is implemented, and consider the results when developing the behavior intervention plan. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the revised procedures.**

**Tracking of Suspensions** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that case managers and/or vice principals do not accurately monitor or track the number of consecutive and/or cumulative days that a student with disabilities is suspended.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that case managers and/or vice principals accurately track the number of consecutive and/or cumulative days a student with disabilities is removed from his/her program. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the revised procedures.**

## **Section XII: Statewide Assessment**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the Special Review Assessment and increasing the number of accommodations that may be considered when classified students participate in statewide assessments. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding participation in the statewide assessment program.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Participation in statewide assessments** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through a review of IEPs and a review of the district's list of students who participated in statewide assessments, that although students in self-contained classes were determined eligible to participate in these assessments with accommodations and modifications, not all of these eligible students were allowed to participate.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include a procedure to ensure that all eligible students participate in the statewide assessment program. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures.**

## **Section XIII: Graduation**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of a high school diploma and graduation requirements in IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding students' participation in graduation exercises and related activities. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding written notice of graduation.

**Areas of Need:**

**Written Notice of Graduation** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not provide parent(s) and the adult student with written notice of graduation.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include a procedure to ensure the provision of written notice of graduation to parent(s) and adult students. It is recommended that the district use the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

**Section XIV: Programs and Services**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range, speech-language group size and related service schedules.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding in-class resource options and sufficient staff for in-class support classes. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component. The plan must be revised to include these elements to bring about the required changes.

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

**Section XV: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of maintenance and destruction of records

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding workshops for professional staff on policies and procedures for student records. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding access sheets and the documentation of the location of other records.

**Areas of Need:**

**Access Sheets** - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined that access sheets were not maintained in student files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that access sheets are maintained in student files.**

**Location of Other Records** - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined that the documentation of the location of other records was not found in the central files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other records is documented in central files.**

## Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Neptune School District on October 9-10, 2001. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with revisions, should be sufficient to bring about systemic change.

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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Policy and Procedures and public information, length of day and year, certifications, consent, independent evaluations, the referral process, planning meetings, ensuring the placement of students as close to home as possible, the Statement of Transition Service Needs, Needed Transition Services Statement, interests/ preferences, courses of study, provision of a high school diploma, graduation requirements in students' IEPs, age range, speech-language group size, related service schedules and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding FAPE, programs and services, procedures, documentation issues, native language, required participants at meetings, evaluations, communication with parents, criteria/formula for determining severe discrepancy, increased parental participation, timelines, provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, IEP components and IEP implementation, teacher access to IEPs, the need to notify staff of their responsibilities in implementing IEPs, meetings, continuum of placements, in-class support, individual decision-making process, supplementary aides and services, documentation of Least Restrictive Environment considerations, teacher training in LRE, student and agency invitations, provision and monitoring of transition services, discipline, IEPs for preschoolers by the child's third birthday, provision of a high school diploma, graduation requirements in students' IEPs, sufficient staff for in-class support classes, in-service for professional staff and student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, goals/objectives for related services, provision of related services, content and provision of notices, Child Find activities, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings, timelines, multidisciplinary evaluations for speech/language services, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports, reevaluations by June 30th, eligibility categories, goals/objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, individual decision-making process, post-secondary liaison, transition from early intervention programs to preschool programs, discipline, statewide assessments, graduation, access sheets and student records.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address

the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.