

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

**District:** City of Orange Township School District

**County:** Essex

**Monitoring Dates:** June 3, 4, and 5, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Zola Mills and Damen Cooper

### **Background Information:**

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the City of Orange 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 City of Orange 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 City of Orange Township 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 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 district is commended for the development of a program for primary age autistic students and for the commitment of maintaining that program as these students progress through the grades.

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The district participates in a grant program that provides school-based youth services that include mental health counseling, tutoring, group therapy utilizing the SANKOFA Violence Prevention curriculum and recreational services.

Individual schools within the district are also commended for the provision of a variety of programs such as the LeapFrog Program which is field testing national reading and math standards; a sixth grade class that is partnered with another class in another district through e-mail, joint field trips and culminating in a year end picnic that serves to establish wider relationships and acceptance of cultural diversity; a New Jersey Performing Arts Program that sends instructors to the district to conduct a dance program; a corporate partnership to bring in community volunteers to enhance reading programs; and the Peace Makers Program under the auspices of a New Jersey Department of Education Grant to establish a peer mediation panel.

Additionally, the district is instituting a collaborative teaching model at Cleveland School next year with their capacity building grant. This will enable the district to form a combined class with general education and special education students in one classroom with both a general education and a special education teacher.

### **I. General Provisions**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures, professional/parent development and dissemination of IDEA information. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these needs.

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

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the related services, adaptive physical education, transfer students, related service of transportation, and facilities. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components. The district also identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, length of school year/day and certification. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue. The district further identified concerns in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings, native language and independent evaluations. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

**IV. Location, Referral, Identification**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, referral process, vision/hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines and participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of direct referrals, health summary and summer referrals. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

**V. Evaluation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding multi-disciplinary assessments, and standardized and functional assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns regarding written reports, bilingual evaluations and acceptance or rejection of reports. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

**VI. Reevaluation**

**Summary of Finding:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of timelines, planning meetings and turning age five. The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised

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to include these components. The district further identified a concern in the area of participants at reevaluation planning meetings. No improvement plan was submitted to address this area of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

### **VII. Eligibility**

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with the provision of evaluation reports to parents and criteria. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of criteria. The district's plan is insufficient to address the provision of reports to parents because it contains an inappropriate procedure. The plan needs to be revised to reflect the change in the administrative code. The district further identified concerns with meetings, participants and documentation of eligibility. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

### **VIII. IEP**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations/required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review/ninety-day timelines and teacher access to and knowledge of the IEP. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of concern because it lacks procedures, in-service training, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. During the on-site visit, it was noted that the district has already implemented activities that have resulted in improvements in the development of present levels of educational performance statements. The district further identified a concern in the area of the alignment of goals/objectives with the core content curriculum standards. No improvement plan was submitted to address this area of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

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**IX. LRE**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individual decision-making, regular education access and nonacademic/extracurricular participation. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of continuum for preschool youngsters. No improvement plan was submitted to address this area of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

**X. Transition**

**School to Post-School**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with agency involvement and courses. The district's plan is sufficient to address these concerns. The district further identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitation, age fourteen transition service needs and age sixteen needed transition services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of concern because it lacks procedures, in-service training, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

**Pre-school to school**

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of pre-school transition planning conference and placement in program by age three. The district's plan is sufficient to address these concerns.

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

**XI. Discipline**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

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**XII. Statewide Assessment**

**Summary of findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern with participation, alternate assessment and child study team knowledge of statewide assessments. The district's plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district also identified concerns in the areas of approved accommodations/modifications and IEP documentation. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

**XIII. Graduation**

**Summary of findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP requirements, diploma, participation and written notice. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address IEP graduation requirements because it lacks in-service training and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training. The plan needs to be revised to include these components. The district did not submit a plan to address the issues of written notice of graduation and participation. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

**XIV. Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of class size waivers. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this concern because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district also identified a concern regarding common planning time. The improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks in-service training and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training. The plan needs to be revised to include these components. The district further identified concerns in the areas of age range waivers, group sizes for speech and home instruction approvals. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

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**XV. Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of access sheets, staff knowledge of student records policies, and parent/adult student access to records. The district's plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of maintenance of records and documentation of locations. No improvement plan was submitted to address these areas of need. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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 Orange Township Public School District on June 3, 4 and 5, 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 exceptionally comprehensive 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 with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the three parents who attended expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services, including the preschool program, and the district's willingness to provide appropriate out-of-district placements. 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.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding general provisions, professional/parent development, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of related services, length of school year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, obtaining consent, notices of meetings, written notice, holding of meetings, native language and independent evaluations, child find 3-21, referral processes, direct referrals (parent/staff), summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, participants and timelines for identification meeting, multi-disciplinary and standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, participants at planning meeting, turning age five, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, copies of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, considerations/required statements, goals and objective aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, teacher knowledge/access, individualized decision making, Oberti factors, considerations and documentation, supplementary aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age three, student agency invite, agency involvement in transition, age fourteen and sixteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, BIP/FBA, manifestation determination, IAES, participation in statewide assessment, accommodations/modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, graduation IEP requirements, diploma, participation, written notice, programs and services class size/waiver, age range/waiver, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, parent/adult student access, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of student records and documentation of locations.

The on-site monitoring visit did not identify any additional areas of need.

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 those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.