

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

**District:** Palmyra School District

**County:** Burlington

**Monitoring Dates:** March 10, 11, 12, 2003

**Monitoring Team:** Patricia Fair, Julia Harmelin

***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Palmyra School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Palmyra 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 Palmyra 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 Delaware Avenue School on March 5, 2003. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

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 has implemented a student information system called Student Records. The system allows school administrators and teachers to manage student records and to more efficiently provide parents with information regarding their children's progress.

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

The child study team conducts student reviews three times a year. These reviews consist of meetings in which team members and teachers meet to discuss the progress of students. These are in addition to mandated IEP meetings. Building administrators provide coverage for teachers to allow them to attend these meetings.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:***

**Graduation** was determined to be an area of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

### ***Section I: General Provisions***

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site, it was determined that the district has already begun to implement activities to bring about correction in this area.

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, length of school day/year, and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the provision of related services and staff limitations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of location of related services and facilities. The county office has been notified of the facilities issue.

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

**Related Service** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that IEPs do not indicate the location where related services will be provided.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs include the location where related services will be provided. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.**
- **facility issue**

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

**Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, notice of a meeting, provision of written notice, native language and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consent for reevaluation and components of written notice. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, it was determined that the district had implemented activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

**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 and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions and over representation of minority students in special education. 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.

**Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, accept/rejection of reports and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district-identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments, specifically summer evaluations. 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.

**Section VI: Reevaluation**

**Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings, participants and reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of a student's last year in preschool.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of three-year timelines and completing reevaluations without undue delay. 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.

### **Section VII: Eligibility**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of criteria and the provision of a copy 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 visit.

### **Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consideration and required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants, considerations and required statements, teacher responsibilities/access to IEP and goals and objectives. The districts improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

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

**Extended School Year** – During the on-site monitoring interviews with staff and record review it was determined that implementation dates for extended school year are not included in IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that implementation dates for extended school year programs are identified in IEPs.**

### **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Oberti, considerations and regular education access.

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individual decision-making, supplemental aids and services, non-academic and extracurricular participation and continuum. The barriers identified by the district included scheduling, staff attitude, availability of programs and administrative inconvenience. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age 14 transition service needs and student/agency invitation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age 16 needed transition services and student's interests and preferences. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and early intervention to preschool disabled by age 3.

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

#### **Section XI: Discipline**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plans and manifestation determination meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to case manager, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

#### **Section XII: Statewide Assessment**

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

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the SRA process and alternative assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

### **Section XIV: Programs and Services**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range waivers and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class size and consultation time. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site it was determined that the district had implemented activities that brought about correction in these areas.

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

### **Section XV: Student Records**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of staff knowledge of policies and procedures regarding student records and amendment of records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of other locations.

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

**Documentation of Location of Records** – During the on-site monitoring interviews with staff and record review indicated that central files do not document the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files document the location of other records maintained by the district.**

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

## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Palmyra School District on March 10, 11, 12, 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 commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective actions to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of those 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 district's programs and services. Parents expressed their satisfaction with inclusive programs, transition services, preschool services, related services and the frequent communication with child study team members and teachers.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included, policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, length of school day and year, certifications, surrogate parents, notice of a meeting, provision of written notice, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, accept and rejection of reports, independent evaluations, planning meetings, participants, reevaluations completed by June 30<sup>th</sup> of students last year in preschool, documentation of eligibility, consideration and required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90 day timelines, Oberti, considerations, regular education access, age 14 transition service needs, student agency invitation, preschool transition plan conference, early intervention to preschool disabled by age 3, functional behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings to preschool, participants in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, age range, home instruction, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional development, provision of related services, consent for reevaluation, components of written notice, functional assessments, over representation, three year timeline undue delay, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents, meeting participants, teachers responsibilities, IEP development, goals and objectives, individual decision making, supplemental aids and services, non-academic and extracurricular participation, continuum, age 16 needed transition services, student interests and preferences, discipline, SRA, alternative assessments, group size for resource centers, programs, case management, consultation time, staff knowledge of policies and procedures regarding student records and amendment of records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, facilities, location of related services, and documentation of the location of other records.

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

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