

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District Strengths:

The district is committed to an inclusive education initiative. This commitment is confirmed by the large percentage of students with disabilities who are being educated in general education settings and rising test scores.

The district also provides extensive professional development opportunities to both general education and special education teachers. The staff has had training in differentiated instruction, intervention and referral service procedures, reading and writing strategies for students with learning disabilities, managing behavior in the classroom and strategies for including students with disabilities in the general education classroom.

Data Summary:

District data indicated that for 2003, 28.2% of students eligible for special education were educated in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day and 29.6% were in general education for 40 to 80% of the school day. These rates were lower than the state averages for that year of 41.6% and 30.3% respectively. For 2004, however, 42.6% of Paramus students eligible for special education were in general education for more than 80% of the day and 46.3% were in general education for 40-80% of their day. This demonstrates a significant increase in the number of students provided opportunities to be educated with their peers. The district identified the continuum or programs as an area of need in the self-assessment but the data indicate that the district has begun to address the problem.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Pre-School Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements and Student Records 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.

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 day, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of related services and adaptive physical education. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a

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review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year- Interviews and review of records determined that extended school year services are provided for students. However, the need for extended school year services is not routinely considered for all students with disabilities.

- **The district will develop an improvement plan that identifies the procedure child study teams will follow to ensure that extended school year is considered for every student with disabilities using the appropriate criteria. In addition, activities must ensure that these considerations are appropriately documented in each IEP.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of notices in native language, independent evaluations and meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices and interpreters at meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in areas of consent.

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 compliance in the areas of Child Find 3-21, pre-referral interventions and identification meeting timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process, direct referrals, health summary and vision and hearing screenings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas.

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 compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, bilingual evaluations and acceptance and rejections of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments and written reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the area of written reports.

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 compliance in the area of participants in planning meetings, and reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews 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 VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings, participants and statement of eligibility.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of, criteria, signatures of agreement or disagreement rationale and copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the meeting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews 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 VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, ninety-day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of meeting participants, consideration of required statement, annual review timelines and IEPs to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding age of majority.

Area(s) of Need:

Age of Majority – A review of records of students, ages fourteen and over, indicated the district did not consistently inform parents and student that all rights will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. Signatures of students acknowledging they were informed of the transfer of rights were not consistently documented.

- **The district will develop an improvement plan that will ensure parents and students will be informed that all rights will transfer to the students on reaching age of majority, at least three years before the student reaches age eighteen as specified in the amendments to N. J. A.C. 6A:14 adopted by the State Board of Education.**

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Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of decision-making process, considerations of supplemental aides and services, general education access, notification and participation in out-of-district nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of continuum of programs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding least restrictive environment documentation.

Area(s) of Need:

Least Restrictive Environment Rationale – A review of records indicated the district uses a standard paragraph without any individualization when students were removed from general education programs. IEPs did not reflect the required considerations.

- **The district will develop an improvement plan that will ensure the decision-making process and documentation requirements for removing a student from general education programs include:**
 - a) **an individualized discussion of what supplementary aids and services and program modification were considered to support the student, and**
 - b) **an explanation of why supplementary aids and services and program modifications were not appropriate to meet the student's individual needs within the general education class.**
- **The district will develop an improvement plan that will ensure that IEPs document a comparison of benefits provided in a regular class and the benefits provided in a special education class.**
- **The district will develop an improvement plan that will ensure that IEPs document the potentially beneficial or harmful effects a placement may have on the student with disabilities or others in the class.**

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Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, age sixteen needed transition services and student and agency involvement. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews 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 Xi: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews 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 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 waiver, group sizes, home instruction and case management time.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of consultation time. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews 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 Paramus School District on December 1 and 2, 2004. 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. As a result of the self-assessment review conducted by the school district, some areas of need were identified and an improvement plan was developed.

District data indicated that for 2003, 28.2% of students eligible for special education were educated in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day and 29.6% were in general education for 40 to 80% of the school day. These rates were lower than the state averages for that year of 41.6% and 30.3% respectively. For 2004, however, 42.6% of Paramus students eligible for special education were in general education for more than 80% of the day and 46.3% were in general education for 40-80% of their day. This demonstrates a significant increase in the number of students provided opportunities to be educated with their peers.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. A number of parents praised the district's programs and staff. Some parents expressed concerns regarding access to general education in a least restrictive environment. Many of the concerns identified by the parents were 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 policies and procedures, professional/parent development, dissemination of IDEA, extended school year, length of day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, notices in native language, independent evaluations, meetings, Child Find 3-21, pre-referral interventions, identification meeting timelines and participants, multidisciplinary evaluation, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, disagreement rational, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, ninety-day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, decision-making process, Oberti, consideration of supplemental aides and services, regular education access, notification and participation of nonacademic and extracurricular participation, pres-school transition planning conference, early intervention prevention to pre-school disabled by age 3, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavior analysis, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational setting, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, IEP graduation requirements, choice of diploma, out of district participation, written notice of graduation, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group sizes, home instruction, case management time, access sheets, parent and adult student access

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requests, maintenance and destruction of records, and documentation of other locations of pupil records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding provision of programs and related services, adaptive physical education, surrogate parents, consent, notice of meetings, written notices, interpreters at meetings, Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, functional assessments, reevaluation timelines, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement/disagreement-rationale, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, consideration of required statements, annual review timelines, IEP to parents, individualized decision making, continuum, age 14 transition service needs, courses and preferences, age 16 needed transition services, agency involvement, pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age 3 and consultation time.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, age of majority and least restrictive environment rationale.

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