

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

**District:** Pascack Valley Regional High School District

**County:** Bergen

**Monitoring Dates:** February 25 and 26, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Janet Wright, Gladys Miller and Gary Molenaar

**Background Information**

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Pascack Valley Regional High School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Pascack Valley Regional High 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 Pascack Valley Regional High 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 February 11, 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 should be commended for its development of activities that support a collegial environment among faculty and administration and an active parent involvement in school committees and programs. The district has also been awarded a NJ Department of Education Best Practice award for its Senior Projects Program which

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links intern/externships and school based research. In addition, the district provides all students access to senior seminars in the humanities, an interdisciplinary program emphasizing cross content themes and a team teaching program that encompasses physics and building technology.

**Area Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

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

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

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, related services, length of school year, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of transfer students. 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 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 visit.

**Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves complaint in the areas of notices of meetings, written notice, meetings and native language.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of consent for evaluations and independent evaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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

**Summary of Findings:**

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

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-referral interventions, referral process, health summary, and identification meeting timelines. The district's improvement plan is not sufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised too include these elements.

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

**Section V: Evaluation**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments and written reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Section VI: Reevaluation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings and reevaluation meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the three-year reevaluation timelines. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

**Section VII: Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding eligibility meetings, participants at eligibility meetings, review of existing data in determining continued eligibility, eligibility determination criteria, eligibility documentation and copies of evaluation reports to parents or adult students ten days before the meeting. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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**Section VIII: Individualized Education Program**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP meetings, IEP meeting participants, considerations/required statements, alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS), age of majority, ninety-day timelines and teacher access/knowledge. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district also identified concerns in the areas of IEP implementation and annual review timelines. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

**Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding individual decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations/documentation, supplementary aides and services, regular education access, nonacademic/extracurricular participation and continuum. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure full implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component.

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

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

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding invitations to students, agency involvement, statement of transition service needs, statement of needed transition services, consideration of students' interests/preferences and courses of study. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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**Section XI: Discipline**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of disciplinary procedures, documentation to case manager and suspension tracking.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational setting (IAES), return to program after a 45-day removal and provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Section XII: Statewide Assessment**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding alternate assessments and the special review assessment. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Section XIII: Graduation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of diploma, participation and written notice of graduation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding documentation of graduation requirements. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

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**Section XIV: Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size and speech therapy group size.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding age ranges, home instruction/approvals and collaborative time for teachers. 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 to bring about the required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these components.

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 parent/adult student access to records and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of access sheets. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas.

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

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Documentation of Locations** - During the on-site visit a review of records and interviews indicated that central files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that central files identify the locations of other student records maintained by the district.**

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**Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Pascack Valley Regional High School District on February 25 and 26, 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 thorough and 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 revisions, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further 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. However, parents did express their desire for an expansion of vocational/work experience opportunities for their children.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included general provisions, extended school year, provision of related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings, native language, Child Find, direct referrals, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bi-lingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, disciplinary procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, participation in statewide assessments, IEP documentation, approved accommodations/modifications, graduation participation, diploma and written notice, class sizes, speech therapy group sizes, parent/adult student access to records and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding transfer students, consent for evaluation, independent evaluations, surrogate parent, pre-referral interventions, referral process, health summary, identification meeting timelines, functional assessments, written reports, reevaluation timelines, eligibility, IEP, least restrictive environment, transition to post school process and procedures, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational setting, alternate assessments, documentation of graduation requirements, age ranges, home instruction approvals, collaboration time for teachers and access sheets.

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need regarding documentation of locations.

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.