

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Passaic Valley Regional High School District

County: Passaic

Monitoring Dates: March 4 and 5 2002

Monitoring Team: Damen Cooper, Janet Wright and Mitchell Badiner

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Passaic 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 Passaic 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 Passaic 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 at Passaic Valley High School 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 Heroes and Cool Kids program. This program is a not-for-profit organization formed to assist young people in dealing with a variety of difficult issues. This is accomplished, in part, by teaching high school athletes how to be role models for the elementary school students.

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The district also offers a Summer Performing Arts Program. This is a five-week program offered to all students in grades four through eight from the sending districts as well as Passaic Valley High School students. This program provides an opportunity for students to take part in instrumental music lessons, instrumental ensembles, vocal ensembles, jazz improvisations, guitar, percussion, dance and theatre lessons. This summer program is unique in that its staff is comprised of Passaic Valley High School staff and college students who are pursuing degrees in the performing arts.

The district also offers an Intergenerational Prom. This is a prom that is sponsored by the high school students for the senior citizens of the community. The purpose of this event is to encourage students to become involved in community service, to show appreciation for senior citizens and to enhance the relationship between senior citizens and the high school community.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

Reevaluation and Programs and Services 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.

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 a concern in the area of professional/parent development. The district has developed an improvement that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, length of day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of related services and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of IEP changes. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight

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component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents and consent. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals and identification (ID) meeting-timeline participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of Child Find, referral process and direct referrals. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of written reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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The district further identified a concern in the area of functional assessment. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, participants and copy of evaluation reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding criteria and documentation of eligibility. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements.

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

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards (CCCS), annual review timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent participation and age of majority. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of considerations/required statements. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified a concern in the area of teacher participation. The district did not develop an improvement plan to address this area of need. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

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Area of Need:

Implementation dates – During the on-site, a review of records indicated that when parents do not attend an IEP meeting the district does not afford parents the required fifteen days to consider the actions proposed by the district.

- **The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents are afforded the right to consider any proposed action for a period of fifteen days. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of these procedures.**

IEP documentation of program – During the on-site visit, it was determined through interviews and record review that though the district has identified specific classes as regular education academic support classes, a review of class lists indicated that two of the five classes were comprised solely of students with disabilities. The three remaining classes contained two regular education students in each class, with the remaining students being students with disabilities. These classes are identified in the IEPs as supplemental instruction, however, instruction is being provided by a regular education teacher to supplement a variety of general education classes, not a specific academic class as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.5(b).

- **The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure students receive the program and services identified in their IEPs in a manner that complies with the requirements established in N.J.A.C. 6A:14. The plan must also include a mechanism to address the issues regarding the five classes identified during the on-site visit. The plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures and the immediate correction in the five classes.**

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding Oberti Factors, regular education access and nonacademic extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of continuum. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of supplemental aides/services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements and individualized decision-making. The district has not developed an improvement plan to address these areas of need. The district needs to revise its

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improvement plan for each of these areas to include procedures, in-service, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

X. Transition

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of courses of study and preferences/interests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitations and agency involvement. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified a concern in the area of age fourteen transition service needs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified a concern in the area of age sixteen needed transition services. The district's improvement plan does not address this area of need. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

XI. Discipline

Summary of Findings

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of suspension tracking.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of discipline procedures, documentation to case managers, functional behavioral assessments and behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations and interim alternative educational settings. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these components.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

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XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of child study team knowledge of the content of statewide assessment. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The improvement plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

XIII. Graduation

Summary of Findings:

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

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP requirements and written notice of graduation.

Areas of Need:

IEP requirement – During the on-site, a review of records indicated IEPs did not include a rationale or an alternate method to determine eligibility for graduation when students are exempted from credit hours and/or mandated course requirements.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs document graduation requirements for those students who are exempt from particular graduation requirements. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Written notice – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews indicated the district does not provide written notice of graduation.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides written notice of graduation and documents that provision in the student file. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff knowledge of student records policies and procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include these elements. The district further identified concerns in the areas of documentation of other locations. The district did not develop an improvement plan to address this area of need. The district needs to revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Passaic Valley Regional High School District on March 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 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 revision, 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. Parents were pleased with the level of communication they had with the child study team and the responsiveness of many of the teachers, both general education and special education to their needs. 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 the areas of policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications, notices of meetings, written notice, meetings, health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, Identification meeting/timelines, participants, multi-disciplinary, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluations, meetings, participants, copy of evaluation reports to parents, alignments of goal and objectives to the CCCS, annual review timelines, teacher access/responsibility, Oberti factors, regular education access, nonacademic/extracurricular participation, courses, preference/interest, suspension tracking, statewide assessment, graduation participation, programs and services, parent/adult student access to records, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff/parent development, related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, consent, Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, written reports, functional assessments, criteria, documentation of eligibility, IEP participation, age of majority, IEP consideration/required statements, individualized decision making, consideration/required statements, supplemental aides/services, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, age sixteen needed tradition services, agency involvement, student agency invite, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative education setting, child study team knowledge of the content of statewide assessment, staff knowledge of policies and procedures and documentation of other location.

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding notices of meetings, implementation dates, IEP documentation of program, graduation requirements, and written notice of graduation.

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.

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