

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

**District:** Paterson

**County:** Passaic

**Monitoring Dates:** December 4 – 12, 2000

**Monitoring Team:** Donna Bogart, Stephanie DeBruyne, Karen Ellmore, Joshua Gillenson, Peggy Thorpe O'Reilly

**Background Information**

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Paterson Public Schools conducted a self-assessment to determine if the district's practices regarding the provision of special education programs and services meet federal and state requirements. A steering committee comprised of district staff, board members, community representatives, and parents was established to gather and review all information collected, in order to evaluate it for the purpose of completing the district's self-assessment.

In 1999, the parents and staff were invited to attend a public meeting as the first step in the self-assessment process. Information was collected from additional sources within the district that was the basis for the self-assessment and improvement plan. This document cited district strengths and areas of need and outlined activities for improvement which addressed identified areas of need.

A second public meeting was held in the district on November 20, 2000 prior to the monitoring visit. The monitoring team from the New Jersey State Department of Education facilitated this focus group which included parents and district representatives. At this meeting, only three parents were in attendance. During the on-site monitoring visit, the district provided a meeting area for other parents to meet with the monitoring team. They reported some satisfaction with, as well as concerns about the district's provision of special education programs and services.

**District Strengths**

The district has been addressing the area of Transition from School to Post-School over the past five years. The district was awarded a Transition Grant from the Office of Special Education Programs during the 1997-98 school year. As a result, Paterson became the lead district in the county, facilitating the Passaic County Transition Consortium that is composed of various school districts, institutions of higher learning, and service provider agencies. The Consortium establishes linkages between service providers and school districts to ensure that students with disabilities have the

opportunities and support services needed to lead productive and satisfying lives. The district hired a transition counselor who has established interagency linkages to assist students secure employment. Furthermore, the district has established programs including Future Prep, a work experience program provided over the summer for students with special needs.

## **Section I: General Provisions**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the classification rate, the need to update the general procedures special education manual, and the need for staff and parent training. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address training needs and the procedures manual issue.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Classification Rate** – The district's self-assessment identified that the classification rate has been increasing over the last five years. Data review indicates that there has been an increase in students referred for initial evaluations for special education and related services. In the last year, the district has classified an additional 721 students, which is a 22.8% increase from the previous year. The district's overall classification rate has now risen from 10.7% for 1998-99 to 13.5% for 1999-00.

Staff throughout the district reported that there has been an increase in the number of students referred, particularly at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade levels. They indicated that district administrators were not following an appropriate procedure when they failed to provide team members with documentation of interventions in the regular education program and/or when they failed to provide documentation that indicates the nature of the students' problems is such that a direct referral is warranted.

Furthermore, staff reported that interventions in general education are not readily available to students. Though the district's improvement plan addresses some activities in Section IV, additional activities are needed to sufficiently address this area of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that district personnel, including administrators outside of the Department of Special Services, implement appropriate procedures for the referral and classification of students. The plan must ensure administrators provide appropriate documentation of interventions in the general education setting or, when considering a direct referral, provide appropriate documentation that indicates the nature of the student's problem is such that a direct referral is warranted.**

## Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education

### Summary of Findings:

Through its self-assessment process, the district identified multiple areas of need regarding insufficient numbers of related services staff, a lack of materials and programs, scheduling conflicts, and the need to increase the variety of in-school placement options for suspended students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address staffing shortages, suspension options, and observations of proposed placements.

Additional areas of need emerged during the course of on-site monitoring regarding extended school year services, appropriate facilities for instruction, transfer students, transportation, provision of 1:1 aides, and use of speech language therapists as substitutes for regular education teachers.

### Areas of Need:

**Lack of materials and programs** – The self-assessment document cites a lack of needed materials and programs. However, the improvement plan does not include activities to correct this issue.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include specific activities and timelines to address the lack of materials and programs.**

**Scheduling conflicts** – While the self-assessment process identified this as an area of need, there is no corresponding activity in the improvement plan.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include strategies that will correct the scheduling issue.**

**Extended School Year** – During the on-site monitoring visit, interviews with staff indicated extended school year services are not consistently discussed during IEP meetings, nor are they available on a district-wide basis. Staff indicated extended school year services were restricted to specific eligibility categories such as pre-school disabled. Staff further indicated that they are discouraged from including ESY on IEPs, as these recommendations will be denied by administrators.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure extended school year services are considered and discussed, and, when appropriate, are provided for students in all disability categories, throughout the district.**

**Appropriate facilities for instruction** – School visits conducted during the course of on-site monitoring indicated a number of facility-related issues. This information has been provided to the county office of education for further action.

**Transfer students** - During on-site monitoring, interviews with parents and district staff indicated that students transferring into the district with IEPs that require out-of-district placements automatically have their IEPs changed to programs that are available within the district. Both team members and parents indicated these changes were inappropriate because, in most cases, the IEPs requiring out-of-district programs were the appropriate programs to meet the needs of the students.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that placement decisions for transfer students are based on the identified needs of the students and not on availability of program options. The improvement plan must specify the manner in which the district will oversee the implementation of this procedure.**

**Transportation** – Interviews with both staff and parents identified areas of need in relation to transportation. It was reported that difficulties in initiating transportation services causes frequent delays in the provision of educational service, ranging from three days to twelve weeks. Furthermore, some parents reported that they were advised by the district to transport students themselves or to keep youngsters home until a permanent transportation plan was established.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure the timely provision of transportation. The improvement plan must also include provisions for on-going administrative oversight to ensure the implementation of this procedure.**

**Provision of 1:1 aides** – During the on-site monitoring visit, an area of need regarding changes in assignment of 1:1 aides was identified. Interviews with parents and child study team members indicated that principals have removed aides assigned to individual children without convening an IEP meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that individual aides are provided as required by IEPs and that any change is brought about through the IEP process.**

**Use of speech-language therapists as regular education substitutes** – Interviews with staff during the monitoring visit indicated that speech language therapists were sometimes reassigned as substitutes for regular education teachers. This practice further impacts on the insufficient number of speech-language therapists identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that strategies for addressing substitute teaching needs do not impede or interrupt the delivery of scheduled speech-language and/or other special education services.**

## Section III: Procedural Safeguards

### Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified several areas of need regarding timelines, required participants at meetings, and the provision of notices of IEP meetings to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address timelines and meeting participants.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of notices of meetings for meetings other than IEP meetings, provision of written notices, the components of notices of meetings and written notices, the provision of Parental Rights in Special Education (PRISE) to parents, the age of majority, native language issues, and requests for independent evaluations.

### Areas of Need:

**Provision of Notices of Meetings and Written Notices** – As a result of the self-assessment process, the district identified that they were not providing notice of IEP meetings to parents and teachers. Although the improvement plan indicates that a form needs to be developed in order to address the issue of notification, the activity is insufficient to address this area of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement to ensure that notices of meetings and written notices are provided to parents as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14. The plan will include a component of administrative oversight.**

**Components of Notices of Meetings and Written Notices** – The district has revised their notices of meetings and written notices periodically, with the most recent versions completed on September 2000. One side of the notice is in English, while the reverse side is in Spanish. These formats were reviewed during the on-site visit.

The notices of meetings do not identify specific roles of the members who will participate in the meeting, nor do they indicate that the parent may bring someone knowledgeable about their child to the meeting with them. Furthermore, these notices of meetings do not indicate what required enclosures are being provided to parents (P.R.I.S.E., N.J.A.C. 6A:14, 1:6A).

The district provided samples of two different formats for written notice. Each form contained missing or erroneous information.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that notices of meetings and written notices contain the required components. It is recommended that the district adopt and implement the sample notice formats issued by the Office of Special Education Programs on September 29, 2000. The plan will**

**address how child study teams will be provided with these revised documents.**

**Provision of P.R.I.S.E. –** Interviews with child study team members during the on-site monitoring visit indicated that Parental Rights in Special Education (P.R.I.S.E.) is not readily available for them to provide to parents.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that the July 2000 version of P.R.I.S.E. (with the corrected page 21) is readily available for child study teams to provide to parents.**

**Age of Majority –** A review of records determined that parents and students are not being consistently notified that rights will be transferred to students upon their reaching the age of majority.

The district indicated that this notification of age of majority is done through the IEP. Though the June 2000 IEP revision reflects the new three-year requirement, the September 2000 revision does not.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that parents and students are notified at least three years before the student reaches the age of 18 that rights will transfer. The district is urged to adopt the state's model IEP format.**

**Communicating with parents whose native language is other than English-** Interviews with district staff indicated that translators are always provided when parents do not speak English. A review of student records during the on-site visit did not document that translators were in attendance at meetings. In addition, notices and written notices within the files were in English, only. As reported earlier, though the district has issued all of their notice formats in both English and Spanish, a review of records of students whose parents speak Spanish only found that the Spanish side of the form letter was completed by district personnel in English, or the English side was completed, not the Spanish side.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure translators attend meetings with parents whose language is other than English, and that their presence is documented. The plan must also include a component to ensure notices are provided to parents in languages other than English when feasible.**

**Processing requests for Independent Evaluations –** A review of records of students whose parents requested independent evaluations indicated the district took an average of three months to respond to the requests.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that when a written request for an independent evaluation is received, the district responds to the request within 20 days as required by N.J.A. C. 6A:14-2.3(f)5.**

#### **Section IV: Location, Referral, and Identification**

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

The district has developed procedures to locate, refer, and identify students ages 3 to 21. The district provides some interventions in general education programs to alleviate the student's educational deficits.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need in relation to timelines and inconsistency in the application of guidelines for the PAC process. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

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

**Summer referrals** – Information gathered from interviews with staff indicated that summer CST staffing is used to complete outstanding cases from the previous school year. As a result, few, if any, new referrals are addressed during the summer.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include a procedure to ensure adequate summer staffing to address summer referrals.**

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

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

The self-assessment identified several areas of need, including insufficient bilingual staff to evaluate students in their native language when needed; improvement of functional assessment procedures, especially in the area of behavior; and the approval or rejection of outside reports submitted to the child study team. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

#### **Section VI: Reevaluation**

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified the need to provide training in

the area of reevaluations. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the participation of regular education teachers at the reevaluation planning meeting.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Teacher Participation** – Interviews with district staff and a review of student records determined that regular education teachers are not consistently attending the reevaluation planning meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that regular education teachers participate in reevaluation planning meetings.**

**Section VII: Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

The self-assessment identified several areas of need including lack of participation of general education teachers in the eligibility meetings; an inability to meet the 90-day timeline due to the lack of sufficient CST staff; and a need to develop a statistical formula and criteria for determining a severe discrepancy. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the provision of reports to parents.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Copy of Reports** – Interviews noted that parents receive written reports of their child's evaluation reports only when they ask for it.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that parents are routinely given a copy of their child's evaluation reports at the time of eligibility.**

**Section VIII: Individualized Education Program**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding appropriate participants at meetings, provision of notices, and adhering to timelines. These areas of need have been addressed in Section III: Procedural Safeguards.



The district further identified areas of need regarding the implementation of IEPs, teachers having knowledge of their responsibility to implement IEPs, and the alignment of goals and objectives to the core curriculum content standards. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address teacher training needs.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP considerations and required statements.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Implementation of IEPs** - During the self-assessment process, the district identified that IEPs are not implemented as soon as possible following the IEP meeting. The self-assessment indicated that one explanation for this delay is the insufficient number of teachers, lack of classes along the continuum (see Section IX: LRE), and delays in transportation. The district's improvement plan does not contain specific activities that will sufficiently address this area of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include specific activities that will ensure that adequate staff, programs, and transportation are available to implement IEPs.**

**Alignment of goals and objectives to the Core Curriculum Content Standards –** During the self-assessment process, the district identified that the IEP team does not develop annual goals and objectives that are aligned with the general education curriculum. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address this area of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that child study team members and teachers have received training in the core curriculum content standards. The plan must include a mechanism to ensure the training has brought about the desired outcome as well as an administrative oversight component to ensure that IEPs reflect core curriculum content standards.**

**IEP Considerations and Required Statements**—A review of IEPs indicated that child study teams are not consistently utilizing the latest IEP format. Child study teams indicated that the district had recently arranged for the IEP to be computerized. All team members were provided with a copy of the computerized IEP program on a diskette, with the intention that teams would utilize the diskettes to develop IEPs. However, because some team members do not have access to computers, they are using IEP formats that do not contain all of the required components.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that considerations and required statements are included in the IEPs for students eligible for special education and related services as well as for students eligible for**

**speech/language services. The plan will address computer access for team members.**

## **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding Least Restrictive Environment. These focused on the need to increase the continuum of placement options in general education. Throughout the entire self-assessment document, the district identified that students were being placed in programs throughout the district based upon program availability, rather than on their individual needs.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding participation in general education, IEP documentation of LRE decision-making, consideration and provision of supplementary aids and services, and participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Continuum of Placement Options** – During the self-assessment process, the district identified that a continuum of placement options was not available throughout the district. In Section XIV: Programs and Services, the district reported that more placement options and specialized programs for students with disabilities were needed. The report further addressed the need to expand in-class support programs. The district did not develop an improvement plan for this area of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that a full continuum of placement options exists. The plan will address strategies that the district will employ to identify program needs throughout the district.**

**Participation in General Education Programs** - During the self-assessment process, the district identified that students with educational disabilities were not participating in general education programs. Interviews with district personnel and a review of student records determined that limited numbers of students with disabilities were participating in general education programs. Additionally, students placed in self-contained classes had limited access to general education. They were not part of homerooms and were not consistently involved in extracurricular activities with peers. Furthermore, it was reported that the needs of students would be met more appropriately through a coordination of program planning activities between the Department of Special Services and those departments identifying and developing regular education program options.

Although areas of need were identified, activities for improvement were not submitted for all areas.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that students with disabilities have access to general education programs. The plan will address how the district will coordinate planning activities between staff from the Department of Special Services and other district administrators in the long range planning of district programs for all students.**

**IEP Documentation of LRE Decision Making** - A review of records found that teams were continuing to use different formats. Many IEPs contained boilerplate language and did not reflect the flow of discussion regarding placement decisions. These appeared to encourage justification for special class placement (in terms of the student's learning needs) as the first point of discussion; there was no consideration of program modifications and supplementary aids and services for the regular class, nor an explanation of why they were not appropriate before considering the need for removal.

IEPs did not consistently include information about the benefits of regular class placement. All IEPs documented the benefits of special class placements in terms of what this placement would provide.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that the IEP documentation of the LRE decision-making process follows the recommended format established within the recently revised version of the state model IEP.**

**Participation in extracurricular and nonacademic activities** – Interviews with district staff indicated that many students do not participate in extracurricular and/or nonacademic activities. Students in self-contained programs were bussed to their respective schools, and since no after-school bussing exists, these students were not able to stay after school to participate in activities. Furthermore, students placed in out-of-district settings do not receive information regarding activities within their neighborhood schools. This lack of information becomes a barrier to including students in these activities.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that students with disabilities have access to and can participate in extracurricular and nonacademic activities.**

## **Section X: Transition**

### **A. Transition from School to Post-School**

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

In May 2000, the district participated in technical assistance sessions conducted through the Office of Special Education Programs focusing on Transition from School to Post-School. These sessions, coupled with the self-assessment process, assisted the

district in identifying areas of need regarding transition. These areas included IEP documentation, training for the child study teams specific to transition, the need for additional transition counselors, and empowering students to advocate for their own needs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding student and agency representative invitations to meetings.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Documentation of Invitation to Students and Agency Representatives to IEP Meetings** – During the on-site monitoring visit a review of records and interviews with child study teams and the transition counselor identified that the district was not sending written notices of meetings to students or to agencies regarding IEP meetings. District staff reported that invitations were given verbally and both students and agencies were attending meetings. The district had not identified this as an area of need during the self-assessment process.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that students and agencies are provided with written notification of meetings.**

## **B. Transition to Pre-School**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding district participation in the transition planning conference and implementing IEPs by the child's third birthday. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

## **Section XI: Discipline**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district determined that manifestation determination meetings were not being conducted due to large caseloads, time constraints, and lack of participation by parents. The self-assessment process also identified that special education teachers were not involved in the determination of the extent of services needed by the student. Furthermore, the district identified a need for more appropriate Interim Alternative Educational Programs. The district has developed an improvement plan that addresses the IAES issue.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding written notification to the case managers, functional behavioral assessments, and behavior intervention plans.

## **Areas of Need:**

**Manifestation Determination Meetings** – During the self-assessment process, the district identified that manifestation determination meetings were not being conducted according to timelines required, or not being done at all due to large caseloads, time constraints, and lack of participation by parents. Though the district's improvement plan contains one activity, the hiring of additional child study team members, to address this area of need, additional activities are needed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include a training component to ensure district principals and child study team members are fully aware of the purpose of manifestation determination meetings. The plan will address the training needs of newly hired child study teams.**

**Lack of involvement by Special Education Teachers** – During the self-assessment process, the district identified that special education teachers were not involved in the determination of the extent of services needed by the student when the student was suspended, either cumulatively or consecutively, beyond ten days. The district's improvement plan addresses training of teachers regarding the maintenance of current IEP goals for students being disciplined. This activity is insufficient to address the area of need.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure special education teachers are included in the process to determine the extent of services the student will receive during the period of suspension.**

**Written notification to case managers-** During the on-site visit, it was determined through interviews with child study team members that they were not routinely being informed of suspensions. Some team members reported that they would not find out until months later that one of their students had been suspended.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that when students are suspended, case managers are informed in writing.**

**Functional Behavioral Assessments and Behavior Intervention Plans** – During the on-site visit, it was determined that FBAs and BIPs were not being conducted when needed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that functional behavioral assessments are conducted and behavior intervention plans are developed. The plan will include a training component regarding both of these processes.**

## Section XII: Statewide Assessment

### Summary of Findings:

The district self-assessment document identified statewide assessment as an area of need. In general, the district cited a lack of formalized procedures for statewide assessment and participation by students with special needs. Additionally, the district has identified a need for staff training to facilitate participation by students with special needs as well as the implementation of appropriate accommodations/modifications. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding access to grade level instruction, provision of accommodations and modifications, and alternate assessments.

### Areas of Need:

**Accessing Appropriate Grade Level Instruction** - Interviews with district staff and a review of IEPs indicated instructional staff and team members have no awareness of how to implement the core curriculum content standards, with modifications, at a student's grade level. Instead, the goals and objectives are developed using the core curriculum content standards identified at the student's functional reading level. As a result, students are receiving the same instruction in content areas every year if reading levels do not improve.

Additionally, staff indicated that the district has promoted students in seventh grade to the ninth grade (if age appropriate) to eliminate that student from taking the 8<sup>th</sup> grade assessment.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure students are accessing appropriate grade level content instruction to afford students the opportunity to participate in statewide assessments.**

**Accommodations and Modifications** – A review of student IEPs indicate that accommodations and modifications are included, however, information from interviews indicated that the required accommodations and modifications were not consistently provided. In some schools, students were provided the necessary accommodations and modifications for some but not all sections of the assessments. In other schools, students were tested in their homeroom, without modifications and/or accommodations.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure all modifications/accommodations listed in student IEPs are provided. The plan must include an oversight component to ensure full implementation of this procedure.**

**Locally determined alternate assessment** – A review of IEPs and interviews with staff members indicated that a specific alternate assessment has not been adopted.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure the adoption of an alternate assessment until such time one is developed by the Department of Education.**

### **Section XIII: Graduation Requirements**

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

The district's self-assessment identified one area of need regarding the participation of students in out-of-district placements in graduation activities. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding documentation of graduation requirements in IEPs and the provision of written notice of graduation.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Graduation requirements in IEP** – A review of student records indicates that graduation requirements are not consistently documented in IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure consistent documentation of graduation requirements in IEPs.**

**Written Notice of Graduation** — A review of student records indicated that a “written notice of graduation” is not being sent to parents and adult students. Since graduation is defined as a “change in placement, written notice is required.

- **The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that written notice is provided to parents/adult students prior to high school graduation.**

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

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the

insufficient numbers of child study teams and related service personnel, and oversubscribed class sizes due to lack of teachers. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit pertaining to the lack of sufficient information available to child study teams about the programs and placements at the district operated academies.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Lack of information regarding district-operated academies** - The district identified that the students with educational disabilities are not included in the district academies and alternative programs. The improvement plan addresses activities to ensure that the Department of Special Services will be involved in the development of any new programs to ensure that students with disabilities are included.

During the on-site monitoring visit, teams expressed a concern about their lack of knowledge of the district-operated academies. They reported that they were aware of only Westside Café, located at JFK High School, specifically for special needs students. The teams were unaware of the other seventeen academies that existed throughout the district for high school students, and did not know what the admission requirements were. Teams reported that information was not being shared and that students with disabilities were not considered potential candidates for the academies (other than Westside Café).

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure all students have the opportunity to be considered for placement in academy programs. The plan must include a mechanism to ensure team members have the necessary information regarding the different programs operated by the district as well as any admission requirements for these specific programs.**

## **Section XV: Student Records**

### **Summary of Findings:**

The district did not address Student Records in its self-assessment document.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding teacher access to IEPs and documentation of locations of other records maintained by the district.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Teacher access to IEPs** – Staff report that, in Clusters 1 and 2, IEPs are maintained in child study team offices. Teachers wishing to review IEPs obtain access through a CST



staff member. However, because many teams have multiple school assignments, their offices are not open and accessible to staff every day of the week. Additionally, some teachers expressed confusion regarding their right to access IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure consistent access to IEPs by teachers. The plan must include strategies to ensure teachers are informed of these procedures.**

**Documentation of locations** – A review of student records indicated that not all cumulative files identified the locations of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that all cumulative files identify the locations of other records.**

## Summary

The on-site monitoring visit was conducted in Paterson from December 4-12, 2000 after a public focus meeting. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of self-assessment findings and review the appropriateness of the resulting improvement plan. The district identified a significant number of areas of need throughout the self-assessment process. Additionally, the improvement plan contains activities that are designed to improve services to students, parents, and staff.

As indicated in the self-assessment, the district identified concerns regarding the number of students referred and the rate at which the students are classified, insufficient staff, student participation in grade appropriate content area instruction and extracurricular activities, and access to general education programs.

The on-site monitoring identified additional areas of need regarding parental notification, inappropriate facilities, the inappropriate use of related service providers as substitute teachers, and additional issues regarding student access to general education programs. Furthermore, the district's inappropriate referral procedures will need to be addressed in a more comprehensive manner. When combined, areas of need identified during self-assessment and the on-site visit indicates systemic noncompliance that negatively impacts the district's ability to provide special education programs and services in an effective, efficient manner.

Within forty-five (45) days of the receipt of this monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs.