

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

**District:** Pemberton Borough School District

**County:** Burlington

**Monitoring Dates:** September 17, 18, & 19, 2001

**Monitoring Team:** Kenneth Richards, Catherine Thomas, Deborah Knauss

**Background Information**

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Pemberton Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Pemberton Borough 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 Pemberton Borough 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.

The focus group meeting scheduled for September 11, 2001 was cancelled as a result of the national crisis occurring on that date. Input from parents was obtained during parent telephone surveys conducted as part of the on-site monitoring process. Information obtained was reviewed and considered in making determinations regarding district wide systemic practices and program implementation.

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, superintendent/building principal, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

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

### **District Strengths:**

The district should be commended for its commitment to the provision of staff development opportunities. Staff expressed confidence that the district would continue to address additional training needs identified in the future.

The district has implemented the Wilson Reading Program and has demonstrated a commitment of both time and resources to staff development regarding the implementation of this program.

The district has also provided services and additional resources to students that go above and beyond those services required by individual IEPs.

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

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

#### **I. General Provisions**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of policies and procedures. The improvement plan submitted by the district is insufficient because it lacks appropriate timelines. The plan needs to be revised to identify more appropriate timelines.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding professional development.

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

**Staff Development** - Interviews conducted with staff during on-site monitoring indicated a high level of satisfaction with the staff development opportunities provided by the district. However, staff identified additional needs in the areas of core curriculum content standards, specific disabilities, their impact on learning, strategies, and code regulation updates.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to address the staff development needs identified during on-site monitoring. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the staff development.**

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

**II. F.A.P.E.**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, related services, length of school day and transfer students. The district's plan is insufficient to address these issues because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component. An additional area of need was identified during self-assessment regarding the length of the school day for students placed in out-of-district programs. The district implemented procedures that corrected this area prior to the on-site monitoring visit.

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 surrogate parents, consent, written notice, meetings, native language and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of polices and procedures, notice of meetings and the provision of the due process hearing rules. The improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised 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 child find activity, direct referrals, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of the referral process and health summary. The district submitted an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks an in-service component and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

An additional area of need was identified during on-site monitoring regarding speech and language referrals.

### **Area of Need:**

**Speech and Language Referrals** - On-site record review determined that the speech and language referral form does not include a space that would allow the referring party to identify the date the referral was made.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure speech/language referral forms are dated.**

## **V. Evaluation**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and bi-lingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of functional assessments and acceptance/rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks an in-service component and an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. The district also identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations and written reports. The improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

## **VI. Reevaluation**

### **Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings, participants and turning age 5

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of timelines and documentation of consent. The improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

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

**VII. Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, participants, documentation of eligibility, and providing parents with a copy of evaluation reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of eligibility criteria. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures to adopt a severe discrepancy formula and to provide training regarding that formula. The plan also needs to include a mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of the training.

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 participants, considerations/required statements, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher knowledge and access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of age of majority. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an in-service component and an administrative oversight component to ensure compliance in this area. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding goals and objectives and the reassignment of personal aides.

**Areas of Need:**

**Aides** – On-site monitoring determined that 1:1 aides are reassigned to cover classes when teachers are absent.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure appropriate substitutes are employed in the event a teacher is absent.**

**Goals and Objectives** – On-site record review determined that annual goals and objectives are not written in measurable terms.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure goals and objectives are written in measurable terms.**

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

**IX. LRE**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of supplemental aids and services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of nonacademic/extracurricular activities and continuum of programs. The improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The improvement plan must be revised to include these components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the individual decision-making process.

**Areas of Need:**

**Individual Decision-Making Process** – On-site interviews and information provided in the self-assessment document identified concerns with the individual decision-making process as a result of scheduling constraints and program availability. For example, in-class resource programs are not considered because this option is not available in the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure placement and program decisions are based on the individual needs of students and not on program availability.**

**X. Transition**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of the statement of needed transition services, preferences and interests and the identification of a liaison to post secondary resources. The improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding student invitations, technical consultation with other state agencies, and courses of study.

**Areas of Need:**

**Technical Consultation** – On-site record review and staff interviews determined that beginning at age fourteen, the district does not consult with DVR, DOL and other agencies regarding the need for technical services.

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

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure technical consultation is considered and documented for students, when appropriate, beginning at age fourteen.**

**Courses of Study** – On-site record review determined that courses of study are not identified in the IEP.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure courses of study are included in IEPs for those students fourteen years of age or younger when appropriate.**

**Student Invitations** – Though on-site record review verified the attendance of students at IEP meetings when transition services are discussed, the district does not document the provision of that invitation in the student file.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure it maintains documentation of student invitations in files.**

### **XI. Discipline**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of discipline procedures and interim alternative educational services (IAES). The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an in-service component and an administrative oversight component. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding behavior intervention plans.

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

**Behavior Intervention Plans** – During the on-site, record review indicated the form used by the district to develop BIPs was not being filled out completely. As a result, plans lacked relevant information required to effectively implement the BIP.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure BIPs include all relevant information. The plan must include an in-service component and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures.**

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

**XII. State wide Assessment**

**Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of alternative assessment. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an in-service component. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

**XIII. Graduation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of graduation requirements. The improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these procedures.

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

**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/waivers, group size, and home instruction approvals.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of program descriptions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.



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

### **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Pemberton Borough School District on September 17, 18 & 19, 2001. 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.

Areas identified by the district as consistently compliant during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included dissemination of IDEA information, facilities, surrogate parents, certifications, consent, written notice, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, child find activities, direct referral, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, planning meetings, participants, turning age five, documentation of eligibility, copies of evaluation reports to parents, consideration and required statements in the IEP, implementation dates, annual review and ninety day timelines, teacher access/knowledge, the provision of supplemental aides and services, regular education access, preschool transition and EIP to PSD by age three, suspension tracking, documentation to case manager, manifestation determination, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations/modifications, IEP documentation of assessments, class size, age range, group size home instruction approval, and all areas of student records.

During the self assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, related services, transfer students, extended school year, notice of meeting, provision of due process hearing rules, referral process, health summary, functional assessments, acceptance/rejection of reports, multi-disciplinary reports, written reports to determine eligibility for speech and language services, reevaluation timelines, criteria, age of majority, participation in non academic/extracurricular activities, continuum, statement of needed transition services, interests/preferences, identification of liaison to post secondary resources, interim alternative educational settings, alternative assessments, informing parents of state graduation requirements and program descriptions.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding professional development, speech and language referrals, goals and objectives, individual decision-making, student invitation to IEP meetings, statement of transition service needs, and behavior intervention plans.

Within forty five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district is required to 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 indicated that require a revision of the improvement plan submitted as part of the self-assessment document.

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