

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

**District:** Penns Grove-Carneys Point School District

**County:** Salem

**Monitoring Dates:** May 6, 7, 8, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Caryl Carthew, Patricia Fair, Kenneth Richards

**Background Information**

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Penns Grove-Carneys Point School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Penns Grove-Carneys Point 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 Penns Grove-Carneys Point 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 at the Lafayette Pershing Elementary School on April 30, 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.

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### **District Strengths:**

The district is commended for developing partnerships with community based resources to provide counseling and partial care services to students.

The district has also implemented programs such as the young consumer program that teaches functional consumer skills in community settings.

The district has recognized the need for parental involvement at the preschool level and has encouraged and supported parental participation in the computer lab.

Programs such as Responsible Riders reinforce positive behavior while on school buses by affording students the opportunity to earn “behavior bucks” rewards for appropriate behavior.

### **I. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures and professional development. 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.

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

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, related services (including adaptive physical education), length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, hearing aids and oversight of IEPs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address the areas of transfer students, facilities and oversight of IEPs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address length of school day and year because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address the areas of extended school year and related services because the plan lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plans need to be revised to include these elements. The district did not submit an improvement plan in the area of the provision of hearing aids. The plan needs

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to be revised to include procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required change.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of counseling and the duration of related services.

### **Area of Need:**

**Provision of Counseling** – During the on-site visit, interviews with staff and record review determined that students at the high school and middle school do not consistently receive counseling in accordance with the frequency and duration identified in IEPs. Guidance counselors at the high school indicated that because of their high case loads and other responsibilities, they cannot provide counseling services as required by IEPs. At the elementary level, staff vacancies impact on the provision of counseling services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure counseling services are provided in accordance with IEP. The plan must include a mechanism to determine whether the district has sufficient staff to provide these mandated services. The plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

**Duration of Related Services** – During the on-site visit, record review indicated that IEPs reflect a range of time for the duration of services instead of a specific amount of time. None of the IEPs included a criteria that would assist in the determination of whether the students would require the least or the most amount of time identified within the range.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure duration of related services is specifically documented in the IEP. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

### **III. Procedural Safeguards**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, meetings, and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, native language, written notice and notice of meetings. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address all areas with the exception of notice of a meeting. That improvement plan is not sufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding nature and scope of evaluations for students eligible for speech and language services and notice of meeting.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Evaluation Plan** - During the on-site visit it was determined through record review that notice of the nature and scope of the evaluation for students eligible for speech and language services do not include an explanation of why the action is being taken, a description of other factors considered and why they were rejected, and a description of other factors relevant to the proposal.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the notice of evaluation includes all required components. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedure.**

**Notice of Meeting** – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review that the district's notices of a meeting do not include all required components. The missing components vary from notice to notice.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure notice of meeting forms contain all required components. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedure.**

## **IV. LOCATION, REFERRAL, IDENTIFICATION**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of summer referrals and health summary.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of child find activities, referral, direct referral, vision and hearing screenings and identification timelines. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address all areas with the exception of child find. The district did not submit an improvement plan to address the area of child find activities. The plan needs to be revised to include procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of 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 identification-meeting participants.

### **Area of Need:**

**Identification Meeting Participants** – During the on-site visit, record review determined that speech therapists and regular education teachers do not consistently attend identification meetings at the preschool level.

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- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure required participants participate in preschool identification meetings. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedure.**

### V. EVALUATION

#### Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi disciplinary evaluations, functional assessment, written reports and acceptance/rejection of reports. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of concern.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding written reports.

#### Area of Need:

**Written Reports** - During the on-site visit it was determined through record review that speech therapists do not prepare a written report subsequent to conducting speech and language assessments.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech therapists prepare written reports documenting the results of their assessments and that the reports include all required components. The plan must include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

### V. REEVALUATION

#### Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of turning age five and planning meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of timelines and thoroughness of evaluations when assessments are warranted. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of concern.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding reevaluation planning meetings

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### Area of Need:

**Reevaluation Planning Meetings** – During the on-site visit it was determined through staff interviews and record review that reevaluation planning meetings are not conducted for students eligible for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure reevaluation planning meetings are conducted for students eligible for speech and language services. The plan must include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

### VI. ELIGIBILITY

#### Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings and documentation of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants, criteria and copy of evaluation reports to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan in the areas of participants and criteria that is sufficient to address these areas of concern. The improvement plan submitted in the area of the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents is not sufficient because it lacks procedures 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.

### VIII. IEP

#### Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of annual review and 90 day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age of majority, participants, teacher access and knowledge, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives/CCCS, parent observation of proposed programs, implementation dates and timelines. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address all areas with the exception of participants. The improvement plan submitted in the area of participants is not sufficient because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

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

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### **IX: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, considerations/documentation, participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, regular education access, and supplemental aids and services. The district has developed an improvement plan in the areas of participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, regular education access and supplemental aides and services that is sufficient to address these areas of concern. The improvement plan submitted in the areas of individualized decision-making and considerations/documentation is not sufficient because it lacks appropriate procedures to address the barriers identified during the on-site visit. The improvement plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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

### **IX. TRANSITION**

#### **Preschool Transition:**

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and EIP to PSD by age three.

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

#### **Transition to Post School:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student/agency invitation, agency involvement, age 14 transition service needs and age 16 needed transition services. The district submitted an improvement plan that is not sufficient because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

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### **XI. DISCIPLINE**

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking BIP/FBA, manifestation determination and IAES. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of concern.

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

### **XII. STATE WIDE ASSESSMENT**

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation and IEP documentation

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of approved accommodations/modifications and alternative assessments. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of concern.

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 areas of participation and diploma.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of written notice of graduation. The district did not submit an improvement plan to address this area of need. The district needs to develop an improvement plan that includes procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

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

**Documentation of Requirements** – During the on-site visit, record review indicated that IEPs for students who will turn age fourteen during the course of that IEP do not include graduation requirements.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure high school graduation requirements are documented in IEPs for**



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**those students who are or will be fourteen during the course of that IEP. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

### **XIV. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers, group size for speech therapy and home instruction, case management responsibilities, program descriptions, common planning time and in-class replacement. The district has submitted an improvement plan that is sufficient to address the areas of case management responsibilities, speech therapy, and in-class replacement. The district did not submit improvement plans in the areas of class size, age range, common planning time home instruction and program descriptions. The improvement plan needs to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding home instruction approvals.

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

**Home Instruction Approvals** – During the on-site visit, record review indicated the district does not consistently request or obtain approval from the county office prior to placing a student on home instruction.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district requests and obtains county office approval prior to initiating a program of home instruction. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedure.**

### **XV. STUDENT RECORDS**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of documenting location of student records. 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.

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## Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Penns Grove-Carneys Point School District on May 6, 7, 8, 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 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. 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. Among those raised were individualized decision-making and the variability of procedures from school to school.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the dissemination of IDEA information, certification, consent, meetings, independent evaluations, summer referrals, health summary, bilingual evaluations, standardized assessments, reevaluation turning age five, reevaluation planning meeting participants, eligibility meetings, documentation of eligibility, annual review, 90 day timelines, continuum, pre school planning conference and EIP to PSD by age three, participation in statewide assessment and IEP documentation, graduation participation, diploma schedules, parent/student access, maintenance and destruction of records

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, professional development, extended school year, related services, length of day/year, transfer students, facilities, adaptive physical education, hearing aids, oversight of IEPs, surrogate parents, native language written notice, notice of meetings, child find activities, referral and direct referral, vision and hearing screenings, identification timelines, multi disciplinary evaluations, functional assessment, written reports and acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, thoroughness of reevaluations, eligibility meeting participants, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents, age of majority, IEP meeting participants, teacher access and knowledge, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives/CCCS, parent observation of proposed programs, implementation dates, individual decision-making, consideration/documentation, participation in non academic and extra curricular activities, regular education access, supplemental aids and services, student/agency invitation, agency involvement, age 14 transition service needs, age 16 needed transition services, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking BIP/FBA, manifestation determination, IAES, approved accommodations/modifications for statewide assessment, alternative assessment, written notice of graduation, class size/waivers, age range/waivers, group size for speech therapy, speech therapy, home instruction, case management responsibilities, program descriptions, common planning time, in-class replacement and documenting location of student records

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The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the provision of counseling, evaluation plans, notice of meetings, reevaluation planning meetings, identification meeting participants, written reports, related services, documentation of graduation requirements and home instruction approvals.

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.