

(IDEA) and the New Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) was assessed. Systemic areas of need are identified in the findings below.

District Strengths

The district has developed several handbooks for use by speech-language therapists, child study teams, special education teachers and general education teachers. The IEP Manual for general education teachers addresses topics such as the role and responsibilities of the general education teacher, the process to determine eligibility, disabilities categories, development of the IEP, the placement decision-making process, program descriptions, definitions, key points to remember, and PRISE. General education teachers felt that because of this handbook they were better able to fully participate in IEP meetings.

The handbooks developed for the speech-language therapists and child study teams contain samples of the notice letters, the IEP format, PRISE, core curriculum content standards, and guidelines for writing PLEP statements. The speech-language therapists, child study teams, general education teachers, special education teachers and principals received in-service training by the director and supervisors regarding these handbooks.

Statement of Findings

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the need to provide in-service training regarding positive behavioral supports and interventions and effective transition practices. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address this area of need because it does not include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training. The plan must be revised to include that mechanism.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of transfer students and oversight of IEP implementation. The district submitted an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses the issue of oversight of IEP implementation. However, the plan does not include an oversight component to ensure transfer student procedures are consistently and appropriately implemented on a district-wide basis. The plan must be revised to include that oversight component.

Additional areas were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding related services and extended school year.

Areas of Need:

Related Services – During the on-site monitoring, a review of records indicated that goals and objectives for speech/language services and counseling are not consistently developed and incorporated into IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the development and inclusion of related services goals and objectives in IEPs.**

Extended School Year – On site record review and interviews with staff determined that the provision of extended school year services is not considered on an individual basis for all students with disabilities at all grade levels.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure extended school year services are considered and discussed for all students and that documentation of this discussion is included in the IEP.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the components of notice of meetings and written notice, participants at meetings, documentation of attempts to secure the participation of parent(s), and native language issues.

Areas of Need:

Components of Notices of Meetings and Written Notices – Though the district has revised its notices of meetings and written notices, the forms are still missing required components or contain erroneous information. Additionally, during the on-site monitoring it was determined that when the parent does not attend an IEP meeting, the district implements the proposed IEP changes prior to the expiration of the 15-day notice period.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure notices of meetings and written notices contain the required components. It is recommended that the district adopt the sample notice forms developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. The plan must also ensure that any change proposed subsequent to an IEP meeting is not implemented prior to the 15-day review period unless the parent signs agreement to the immediate implementation of the change.**

Teacher Participation at Meetings – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that guidance counselors at the middle schools and high school often participate as the regular education teacher at meetings. Interviews with staff and administrators indicated that guidance counselors do not have assigned instructional/teaching responsibilities.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the student's regular education teacher participates in IEP meetings.**

Documentation of Attempts to Ensure Parental Participation – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently document attempts to secure the participation of parent(s) at meetings, especially at the high school.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure documentation of attempts to secure the participation of parent(s) at meetings.**

Native Language – During the on-site monitoring it was determined the district does not provide notices of meetings and written notices in languages other than English, even when feasible.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure notices are provided in the native language of the parent, when feasible.**

Section IV: Location, Referral & Identification

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the need to revise their pre-referral procedures. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an oversight component and a staff development component. The plan must be revised to include these components to ensure compliance with these procedures by instructional staff, child study teams, and administrative staff and to ensure the consistent implementation of these procedures on a district-wide basis.

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

Section V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding use of multi-disciplinary and standardized assessments, provision of signed and dated reports, conducting bilingual evaluations, and documentation of acceptance and rejection of reports.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding components of a functional assessment.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the written evaluation reports for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services do not consistently contain the required components of a functional assessment. The record review indicated different components were missing from different records.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services contain all required components.**

Section VI. Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding reevaluation timelines, conducting planning meetings with the appropriate participants, and conducting reevaluations for students with disabilities turning age 5.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding notice of a reevaluation meeting, and documentation of attempts to secure parent participation at reevaluation meetings. Notice of a meeting is addressed in Section III: Procedural Safeguards and parent participation is addressed Section VIII: IEP.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified an area of need regarding participants at eligibility meetings for students determined eligible for speech-language services. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address this need because it lacks an oversight component. The plan must be revised to include that component.

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

Areas of Need:

Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently provide copies of evaluation reports to parents.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of evaluation reports to parents no later than it provides notice of the student's eligibility. The plan must include a mechanism to document that provision in the student's file.**

Section VIII: Individual Education Programs

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with meeting participants for students attending a shared-time vocational school (addressed in Section III), informing teachers of the contents of IEPs, age of majority, annual review timelines and provision of the IEP to parents prior to implementation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address annual review timelines. However, the plan needs to be revised to include an oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of procedures regarding the provision of information to teachers, and the provision of the IEP to parents.

An additional area of need was identified during on-site monitoring regarding implementation of the IEP before the 15-day notice period has expired. This was addressed in Section III – Procedural Safeguards.

Areas of Need:

Transfer of Rights - During the self-assessment process the district determined that they do not consistently inform parents and students that rights will transfer to the student upon reaching the age of majority.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the notification of transfer of rights at age of majority is provided to both the parent(s) and student at least three years before the student reaches age 18.**

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with regular education access for preschool disabled students. The district improvement plan sufficiently addresses this area of need.

Additional of areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding regular education access for school-aged students and the individual decision-making process.

Areas of Need:

Access to Regular Education Programs and Continuum of Placement Options/Individual Decision-Making Process - A review of data and interviews with

district staff during on-site monitoring indicated that access to regular education programs by students with disabilities varies throughout the district because of the limited availability of in-class support programs. Interviews with staff further indicated that the decision-making process is impacted by the availability of existing program options in the district and is therefore not based on the student's individual needs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students with disabilities have opportunities to access regular education programs through the provision of appropriate supports and services. The plan will include specific strategies that the district will employ to increase the availability of these supports and services.**

Section X: Transition

Transition from School to Post-School

Summary Of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the need for goals and objectives to be related to students' desired post-school outcomes. The improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks appropriate procedures to clearly relate student preferences and interests to the development of goals and objectives. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

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

Areas of Need:

Invitation to Agencies - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that agencies responsible for providing and/or paying for transition services are not invited to attend IEP meetings when transition will be discussed.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that agencies responsible for providing and/or paying for transition services are invited to IEP meetings and that the letter of invitation is documented in the student's record.**

Student Invitations - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that students age 14 and above are not invited to attend IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, nor are they prepared to be participants or to self-advocate at these meetings.

- **The district revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure students are invited to attend IEP meetings where transition is to be discussed and that they are appropriately prepared to self-advocate at IEP meetings. The plan must include a mechanism to document the provision of the letter of invitation in the file.**

Section XI: Discipline

Summary Of Findings:

The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to provide notification of removals to case managers and include reasons for removal. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks appropriate procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these procedures and to include an oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of these procedures.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings and functional behavior assessments/behavior intervention plans.

Areas of Need:

Suspension Tracking - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that student suspensions are neither tracked accurately nor correctly calculated. Though the district has a database that could be used to accurately track these removals, the data that is being entered is incorrect.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all student suspensions are accurately recorded, tracked and calculated. The plan must include in-service training regarding discipline procedures as well as an oversight component to ensure the accuracy of the data that is being entered into the system.**

Manifestation Determination Meeting, FBAs, and BIPs - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that as a result of inconsistent notification to case managers when classified students are suspended, manifestation determination meetings are inconsistently conducted. It was further determined that IEP teams are not consistently conducting functional behavioral assessments or developing and/or reviewing behavioral intervention plans.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that members of the IEP team convene a meeting to conduct manifestation determination meetings when a particular removal constitutes a change in placement and to determine the need for a functional behavior assessment or to review and/or revise the behavior intervention plan. The plan must include a mechanism to document the provision of notice as well as an in-service component to ensure consistent implementation of these procedures.**

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary Of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding student participation in statewide assessments, provision of approved accommodations and provision of alternate assessments.

An area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding documentation of accommodations/modifications and the identification of specific statewide assessments in IEPs.

Areas of Need:

Accommodations and Modifications - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that accommodations and modifications for students participating in statewide assessments were not consistently documented in students' IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that accommodations and modifications for students participating in statewide assessments are documented in individual IEPs.**

Assessment Documentation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that specific statewide assessments were not consistently identified in IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that statewide assessments such as the HSPT, GEPA, and ESPA are specifically identified in IEPs.**

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding IEP requirements and diplomas.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding notification of participation in graduation activities to out-of-district students and written notice of graduation.

Areas of Need:

Out-of-District Students' Participation in Graduation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently invite students enrolled in out-of-district placements to participate in graduation activities in the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that out-of-district students are invited to participate in graduation activities in the district and to ensure documentation of the invitation in students' files.**

Written Notice - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not provide written notice to students and parent(s) prior to graduation.

- **The district will revise the improvement to include procedures to ensure that parents and adult students are provided with written notice of graduation. It is recommended that the district use the *Notice of Graduation* developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a need regarding descriptions of special class programs. The district has developed an improvement plan that sufficiently addresses this issue.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding class size.

Area of Need:

Class Size - During the on-site monitoring, areas of need were noted with class size for resource programs at all levels.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that class sizes for resource programs are maintained in accordance with code. The plan must include an oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of these procedures on a district-wide basis throughout the school year.**

Section XV. Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified needs regarding maintaining a record of access to a student record and informing the professional staff about student records policies and procedures. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these issues.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding documentation of the location of student records.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Location of Student Records – During the on-site monitoring record review indicated that central files of students do not contain any indication that additional records are located in other places.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure the district documents in the central file the location of other student records collected and maintained by the district.**

Summary

An on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Piscataway Township School District from April 23-27, 2001. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. As a result of the thorough and comprehensive review conducted by the district during the self-assessment process, the district was able to self-identify a number of areas that require improvement as well as develop a comprehensive improvement plan to bring about systemic change in those areas of need.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, transfer students, oversight of IEP implementation, pre-referral process, participants in eligibility meetings, participants at IEP meetings for shared time vocational students, annual review timelines, documentation of dates of services, frequency, location and duration, age of majority, provision of IEP to parents prior to implementation, regular education access for preschool special education students, transition goals and objectives related to post-school outcomes, discipline notification to case manager, descriptions of special education classes, access to student files, and informing staff of student record policies and procedures.

In addition to the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process, the on-site monitoring identified other areas related to extended school year, goals and objectives for related services, notice issues, participants at meetings, native language issues, assessment issues, provision of evaluation reports to parents, implementation of IEP prior to 15- day notice, regular education access for school-age students, continuum of program options, agency and student invitations to IEP meetings for transition, discipline issues, statewide and graduation documentation issues, class size, and location of student records. These areas will need to be addressed by the district through the revision of its improvement plan.

Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district is required to revise its improvement plan to address the additional areas of need and to resubmit the plan to the Office of Special Education Programs.