

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

District: Point Pleasant Beach School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: October 21-22, 2001

Monitoring Team: Barbara J. Tucker, Carmen Fanucci, Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson

Background Information

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Point Pleasant Beach School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Point Pleasant Beach 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 Point Pleasant School Beach 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 October 18, 2001. 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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Area Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

Reevaluation was 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.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Policy and Procedures and public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding professional in-service/staff development.

Area of Need:

Professional In-service/Staff Development - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through interviews with staff that they require staff development in the area of serving classified students in general education settings.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include staff development activities regarding the provision of instructional services to classified students in general education settings. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of this staff development.**

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of related services goals and objectives, length of school day and year and facilities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding transfer students. 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 visit regarding extended school year and location of related services in IEPs.

Areas of Need:

Extended School Year - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that although extended school year is considered and discussed at IEP meetings, those considerations and discussions are not documented.

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- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district maintains documentation that extended school year is considered and discussed for all students with disabilities. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Location of Related Services - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the location of related services was not documented in IEPs.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure documentation of the location of related services is included in IEPs. It is recommended that the district adopt the state's model IEP form developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding written notices, meetings and native language. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding interpreters and parental participation.

Areas of Need:

Interpreters - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that although interpreters attend meetings, their attendance is not documented.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that attendance of interpreters at meetings is documented in student files.**

Parental Participation - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined the district does not document its attempts to obtain parental participation at meetings.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it maintains documentation of its attempts to ensure parental participation at meetings.**

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Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding Child Find activities. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding direct referrals from teachers and pre-referral interventions.

Areas of Need:

Direct Referrals - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district's procedures do not include a mechanism for teachers to directly refer a student to the child study team.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure staff have the ability to directly refer a student to the child study team and to participate in meetings when they believe the nature of the student's problem is such that an evaluation is warranted without delay. At that meeting, a decision may be made that an evaluation is not warranted and that the student needs to be referred to PAC. The improvement plan must include a mechanism to establish a criteria that identifies the type of documentation that would support a staff request for a direct referral. The plan must further include an administrative oversight component to ensure full implementation of these activities. It is recommended that the district provide staff development regarding the direct referral process.**

Pre-referral Interventions - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not document the effectiveness of pre-referral interventions.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district maintains documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of pre-referral interventions. The improvement plan must include an in-service component and an administrative oversight component to ensure the district identifies and implements intervention strategies that are sufficient in nature and scope to adequately address the difficulties the students are experiencing.**

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Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, multi-disciplinary evaluations and bilingual evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding functional assessments and acceptance/rejection of reports by speech/language therapists.

Areas of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that evaluation reports for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech language services do not include all of the required components of a functional assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure functional assessments include all required components in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-3.4 (d) 2.**

Speech Acceptance/Rejection of Reports - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that speech/language specialists do not document the acceptance/rejection of outside reports and assessments.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech/language specialists document the acceptance/rejection of reports or assessments that are provided for consideration by outside specialists, agencies or other districts.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding evaluation reports, and provision of reports to parents.

Area of Need:

Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring visit it was determined that although written reports were developed, they were not dated and signed by the evaluator. In addition, staff interviews indicated that though copies of evaluation reports were provided to parents, the district does not maintain documentation of this provision.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports are dated/signed by the evaluator. The plan**

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must also include procedures to ensure the district maintains documentation of the provision of reports to parents.

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines and teacher knowledge/access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding age of majority and reporting student progress to parents. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the documentation of copies of IEPs to parents.

Area of Need:

Copies of IEPs to Parents - During the on-site monitoring visit, interviews with parents and staff indicated that though IEPs are provided to parents, this provision is not documented in students' files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the provision of IEPs to parents is documented in students' files.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding supplemental aids and services for preschool handicapped students and identification of a variety of educational programs and services. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the documentation of LRE statements, and documentation of non-academic/ extracurricular participation by out-of-district students.

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Areas of Need:

LRE Statements - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that although many classified school-aged students are receiving educational services in general education settings, LRE statements are not individualized and do not document the individual considerations that lead to the removal of some students from regular education.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that LRE statements include the necessary information to document the process and considerations that resulted in a student's removal from regular education.**

Notification to Out-of-District Students - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not notify students placed in out-of-district settings of non-academic/extra-curricular activities within the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district notifies students in out-of-district placements of non-academic/ extra-curricular activities available within the district.**

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of statements of needed transition services and transition service needs, IEP considerations and documentation of agency involvement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding community resources. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

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

Area of Need:

Student and Agency invitations to IEP meetings - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that although the district invites students and agencies to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, the district does not maintain documentation of either the student or the agency invitation.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when transition services are to be discussed at IEP meetings for students age 14 or younger, documentation of these invitations is maintained in student file.**

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Section X: Transition to Pre-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition conferences and IEPs implemented by age 3.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding educating preschool students with their non-disabled peers. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these elements.

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

Section XI: Discipline

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding the transmission of disciplinary records to the appropriate authorities. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

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

Areas of Need:

Behavior Intervention Plans - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that behavior intervention plans were modified without convening the IEP team.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it convenes an appropriately configured IEP team when a behavior intervention plan requires revisions. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of these procedures.**

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student participation in statewide assessments and approved accommodations and modifications.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding alternate assessments. 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 monitoring visit regarding the identification of statewide assessments in IEPs.

Area of Need:

Identification of Statewide Assessments - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the IEP does not identify the statewide assessment the student will be participating in at his/her grade level.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs identify the specific assessment(s) students will be participating in at specific grade levels.**

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

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

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

Areas of Need:

Out-of-District Student Participation - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not document that students in out-of-district placements are included in senior activities and/or graduation exercises.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district maintains documentation that students placed in out-of-district settings are notified of senior activities and/or graduation exercises.**

Written notice of Graduation - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not consistently provide written notice of graduation to parents and adult students.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of written notice to parents and adult students prior to graduation. The plan must include a mechanism to document this provision in student files.**

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size and age range waivers, group sizes for speech, schedules and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding a description of each special class program. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding collaborative planning time.

Area of Need:

Collaborative Planning Time - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that special education teachers are not provided time for consultation with general education staff.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that special education teachers and general education teachers have collaborative planning time.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

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

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding the location of other records.

Area of Need:

Location of other records - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that central files do not document the location of other files.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files identify the location of other files maintained by the district.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Point Pleasant Beach School District on October 21-22, 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 areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with revisions, should 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 some 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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of public information, related service goals/objectives, length of school day/year, facilities, surrogate parents, independent evaluations, health summary, child find, vision and hearing screenings, consent, multidisciplinary evaluations, bilingual evaluations, timelines, planning meetings, reevaluations completed by age five, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher knowledge/access to IEPs, statements of needed transition services and transitions service needs, IEP considerations and documentation, agency involvement, of preschool transition conferences, IEPs implemented by age 3, procedural safeguards, student participation in statewide assessments and approved accommodation and modifications, IEP requirements, class size and age range waivers, group sizes for speech, schedules and home instruction, parent and adult student access, access sheets, and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding transfer students, written notices, meetings, native language, age of majority, reporting student progress, community resources, educating preschool students with their non-disabled peers, transmission of disciplinary records to the appropriate authorities, alternate assessments and description of special class programs.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding professional in-service/staff development, location of related services, interpreters, parental participation, direct referrals from teachers, pre-referral intervention process, functional assessments, acceptance/rejection of reports by speech/language therapists, identification meetings, provision of IEPs and reports to parents, individualized decision-making process, LRE statements, participation by out-of-district students in extracurricular activities, student and agency invitation to IEP meetings, behavior intervention plans, statewide assessments, out-of-district students participation in graduation activities, written notice of graduation, and collaborative planning time.

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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.