

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Quinton Township School District **County:** Salem

Monitoring Dates: October 8, 9, 10, 2002

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair and Julia Harmelin

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Quinton Township School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Quinton Township 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 Quinton Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Quinton Township School on October 3, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, 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, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for bringing back six students from out-of-district programs in the past year to ensure placement in the least restrictive environment.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

It would appear that because of the many supportive programs available in the district, the district has been able to maintain a low classification rate while still addressing the needs of those students who are experiencing difficulties within the academic environment.

To address the needs of its hearing and visually impaired student, the district provides an FM system and sign language instruction, as well as obtains services from the Commission for the Blind.

The district provides a supportive transition program for all seventh and eighth grade students to better prepare their students for high school.

The district implements a long-standing discipline policy that has been recognized by Rutgers Law School as a commendable program. This program has served to reduce the number of disciplinary actions.

The district also implements a peer-mentoring program for at-risk students, which includes students with disabilities.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE, LRI, Reevaluation, and Statewide Assessment were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, meetings, attempts at parent participation, native language, and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notice of a meeting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns with surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address surrogate parents because it lacks in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

Area of Need:

Written Notice - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that although the district uses the IEP as a component of written notice, parents do not receive a copy of the IEP within 15 days of the meeting.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice is provided to parents within 15 days of a**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

meeting. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, and acceptance and rejection of reports.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments.

Area of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that all components of a functional assessment, specifically teacher and parent interviews, are not being conducted consistently.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district conducts parent and teacher interviews as a part of the assessment process. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of provision of copies of the evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to meetings. During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews indicated the district had already implemented activities to correct this area of need prior to the on-site visit.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives related to the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), age of majority, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher knowledge and access.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding implementation dates.

Area(s) of Need:

Implementation Dates - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through record review that IEPs do not identify the implementation dates when ESY services are provided.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year implementation dates are identified in IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti, considerations and documentation, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of nonacademic and extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this issue because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service, 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.

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student and agency invitation, age 16 needed transition services, courses of study and preferences and interests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of agency involvement. The district did not submit an improvement plan to address this area. The district must revise its improvement plan 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 age 14 transition service needs.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Area of Need:

Age 14 Transition Service Needs - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that age 14 transition service needs are not addressed in the IEP for students who will turn 14 during the time that IEP is being implemented.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that transition service needs for students turning age 14 during the time that IEP is being implemented are included in the IEP. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conference and early intervention program to preschool disabled by age three.

During the self-assessment process the district identified no concerns.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, suspension tracking, behavior intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determinations, and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notification to the case manager. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks procedures, in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training 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.

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP requirements, participation, and written notice.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of choice of diploma for out-of-district students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of common planning time for teachers. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

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 for students eligible for special education and related services, maintenance, and destruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional staff knowledge of student records policies and procedures. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of locations of other records.

Area of Need:

Documentation of Locations of Other Records - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined through staff interview and record review that central files do not document the locations of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents the location of other records maintained by the district in the students' central files.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Quinton Township School District on October 8, 9, 10, 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 exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas 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, especially with the teaching staff and the child study team members. Many of the concerns raised by 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 general provisions, free and appropriate education, consent, meetings, attempts at parent participation, native language, independent evaluations, location, referral, and identification, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, eligibility meetings, participants, criteria, documentation of eligibility, participants, reevaluation, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives related to the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), age of majority, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher knowledge and access, individualized decision-making, Oberti, considerations and documentation, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, continuum, student and agency invitation, age 16 needed transition services, courses of study, preferences and interests, preschool transition planning conference, early intervention program to preschool disabled by age three, procedures, suspension tracking, behavior intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings, statewide assessment, IEP requirements, participation, written notice of graduation, class size, age range, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, personnel, programs, parent and adult student access, access sheets for students eligible for special education and related services, maintenance, and destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding notice of a meeting, surrogate parents, provision of copies of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to a meeting, nonacademic and extracurricular participation for students with disabilities and out-of-district students, agency involvement, suspension documentation to the case manager, choice of diploma for out-of-district students, common planning time for teachers, and professional staff knowledge of student records policies and procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding written notice, functional assessments, IEP implementation dates, age 14 transition service needs, and documentation of locations of other records.

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

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Quinton Township School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.