

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

District: Ramapo Indian Hills School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: March 24 - 26, 2003

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Tucci, Damen Cooper and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Ramapo Indian Hills School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Ramapo Indian Hills School 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 Ramapo Indian Hills 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 Indian Hills High School on March 17, 2003. 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 their advanced technology programs. The Power School Program allows students, teachers, and parents to access district files including up-to-the-minute grades, attendance, and additional educational information. In addition, while in the school buildings, the Power School Program allows wireless access to this data.

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The district is also commended for their IDEA and grant funded educational and work-study summer program. This program is available to those classified students who do not require an extended school year, but would benefit from educational and transition to work readiness skills.

The district is also commended for their comprehensive post-secondary transition program. The Ramapo Indian Hills School District Transition Program focuses on students with special needs and includes a teacher-generated transition handbook, the Coin Career Community Program, and a strong liaison with the Bergen County Special Services School District. The Coin Career Community Program is an internet based program that assists students with career and curriculum connections. Bergen County Special Services provides opportunities for the development of links and partnerships with businesses and industries within the community, job shadowing, internships, job coaching, and parent information and training.

The district provides a strong and varied curriculum. University Programs provide selected high school students, including students with disabilities, with a unique four year high school experience that includes specialized study in an academic area. In addition, the district offers a comprehensive ninth grade reading program for their replacement classes.

The district also provides Student Assistants, a peer tutoring program which provides additional academic support to special education students. Student Assistants offer support five days a week in the resource center or in the self-contained class.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Transition and **Graduation Requirements** 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of professional and parent development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, frequency, duration and location for related services, length of day and year and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of goals and objectives for related services and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding facilities. **This information has been provided to the county office.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices and meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, referral process and pre-referral interventions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports and acceptance and rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility and copy of evaluation reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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 alignment of goals and objectives to core curriculum content standards, age of

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majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations and required statements and provision of IEP to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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, regular education access and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of extracurricular participation for out-of-district students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, functional behavioral assessment and behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination and interim alternate educational setting. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

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

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of alternate proficiency assessment. 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 area of group sizes for speech therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of program descriptions for special classes aligned with core curriculum content standards. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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 access and request sheets, and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of staff knowledge of IEPs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, record review and interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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 Ramapo Indian Hills School District on March 24, 25 and 26, 2003. 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 acknowledged for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result of the prompt implementation of activities, most of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is 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 on March 17, 2003, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents expressed a concern with the transition from the regional middle school to the Ramapo Indian Hills Regional High School that resulted in needed revisions to IEPs once in the high school setting. Parents expressed a desire for a more comprehensive and collaborative transition process with increased involvement by appropriate school personnel during the students' eighth grade year.

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 IDEA, extended school year, frequency, duration and location of related services, length of day and year, certifications, native language, independent evaluations, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation planning meetings and participants, alignment of goals and objectives with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, IEP implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, individualized decision making, regular education and extracurricular access for in-district students, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement, student and agency invitation, suspension tracking, procedural safeguards, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, graduation requirements, out of district participation, written notice of graduation, group sizes for speech, access to student records, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional and parent development, goals and objectives for related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, meetings, Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation to parents, IEP meeting participants, considerations and required statements, provision of IEP to parents, nonacademic and extracurricular participation for out of district students, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, functional behavioral assessment, behavior

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intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational setting, alternate assessments, program description, and staff knowledge of student records.

The on-site visit identified no additional areas of need.