

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Roseland School District **County:** Essex

Monitoring Dates: April 8, 2005 & May 5, 2005

Monitoring Team: Kim Murray, Nicole Buten

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Roseland School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Roseland School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 Roseland 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 Lester C. Noecker School, on May 5, 2005. 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

Data Summary:

Over the last three years, the district has had a classification rate, excluding students receiving only speech and language services, ranging from 8.6% to 10.1% which is significantly below the state average for all 3 years. This classification rate can be attributed to the effectiveness of the Intervention & Referral Services Committee and the provision of appropriate pre-referral interventions in general education. The district has consistently placed more than 70% of classified students in general education classes

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for more than 80% of the day. This is a considerable increase over the state average of 41%. Interviews with district staff and review of data demonstrated that small class size, provision of supplementary aids and services and the school-wide commitment to inclusion contribute to this placement data.

District Strengths:

The district provides many beneficial programs in the areas of character education, social and emotional development, infusing technology in the curriculum, parent training and academic support. The district is commended for focusing on the importance of mastery of math and reading skills in the primary grades as a tool for long-term academic success. Students, both general education and special education, who demonstrate academic concerns in reading and math attend a summer institute where these skills are reinforced. In addition, the speech therapist conducts weekly lessons on language development and phonological awareness in the kindergarten classes.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE, Location, Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, IEP, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records 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 identified compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, content and provision of notice of a meeting, content and provision of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of revising the IEP without convening an IEP meeting. The district was able to demonstrate that it has implemented the improvement plan activities and it is no longer area of need.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district identified compliance in the areas of eligibility meeting participants, criteria for eligibility, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability and signatures of agreement/disagreement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of copies of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district was

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able to demonstrate that it has implemented the improvement plan activities and it is no longer area of need.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

As this is a K-6 district, there are no findings in this area.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Roseland School District on April 8, 2005. 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 an exceptionally thorough review conducted as part of the self-assessment process and an improvement plan that addresses all areas of need. In addition, the district is commended for implementing the full plan prior to the onsite monitoring.

Six parents attended the focus group meeting held on May 5, 2005. Overall, parents were satisfied with the program their children were receiving and with the level of communication that existed between team members and themselves. Additionally, parents felt that they were valued members of the IEP team whose involvement was respected. Some parents of younger students felt that they did not receive enough support and guidance during the referral and initial evaluation process. Also, parents felt that more explanation regarding the need for outside evaluators to complete assessments in order to determine eligibility was necessary. Parents of older children expressed concern about their children's readiness, both academically and socially, to meet success at the middle and high school levels.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included General Provisions, FAPE, Location, Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, IEP, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included surrogate parents, consent, content and provision of notice of a meeting, content and provision of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, eligibility meeting participants, criteria for eligibility, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability and signatures of agreement/disagreement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding revising the IEP without convening an IEP meeting and copies of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district was able to demonstrate that it has implemented the improvement plan activities and these are no longer areas of need.

The original improvement plan submitted by the district will be forwarded to the Director, Office of Special Education Programs, for approval. No further action by the district regarding the improvement plan is necessary at this time. Upon approval of the plan, the district will be notified by the County Office of Education.