

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

district from out-of-district placements. There has been an effort to provide preschoolers with opportunities to learn with typical peer which has resulted in general education placement data far exceeding the state average.

The district also operates a kindergarten class for students with learning disabilities which affords students the opportunity for inclusion on a daily basis in the afternoon. The students are in the morning special class program, and transported daily to Franklin School for inclusion in a typical kindergarten with the support of a special education teacher and paraprofessional.

The district takes great pride in its Special Buddies Program, developed by special education teachers along with child study team members. The Special Buddies Program operates in conjunction with the Saddle Brook High School Interact Club and Saddle Brook Middle School React Club. The Clubs bring general and special education students together to participate in an after-school program. The program is now starting its fourth year. Along with the Special Buddies program, a Reading Buddies Program has been operating for a number of years. This program brings preschoolers with disabilities to Saddle Brook High School on a monthly basis. The preschoolers participate in a story hour led by high school students enrolled in the Child Care Elective course.

The Saddle Brook Community School operates a Professional Development Academy which provides professional development opportunities at no charge for all district employees. The courses address core content areas, instructional activities, and classroom intervention.

Data Summary:

For the past three years, the Saddle Brook School District's classification rate of students requiring special educational programming and services has been consistently below the state average. During the 2002-2003 school year, 41.3% of classified students age 6-21 were placed in general education settings for more than 80% of the school day. This is near the state average of 41.6%. It should be noted since 2000 the district has decreased the numbers of students placed in out-of-district settings by creating more opportunities for in-class support and pull-out resource programs. Furthermore, data indicated that 41.2% of the district's preschool disabled population is educated in general a general education, early childhood setting, in contrast to the state average of 7.6%.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the area of dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures, in-service training for parent, professional and paraprofessional staff. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented activities to bring about correction in the areas of policies and procedures, parent, professional and paraprofessional trainings. **It has been**

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determined that the district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of oversight of IEP implementation, provision of programs and related services, transfer students and hearing aides. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of IEP implementation, provision of programs and related services, transfer students and hearing aides. **It has been determined that the district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented.**

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of interpreters at meetings and meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notices of meetings, consent, parental and student participation at meetings, written notices, notices in native language, and independent evaluations. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of notices of meetings, parental and student participation at meetings, written notices and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas of surrogate parents, consent and notices in native language.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of participants and identification meeting timelines.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas Child Find 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings and initial identification meeting. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summary and vision and hearing screening. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of initial identification meeting.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of standardized assessment and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written report particularly regarding speech evaluations and acceptance and rejection of reports. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas functional assessment and documentation of acceptance and rejection rationale. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations and written reports particularly regarding speech evaluations.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of three year timelines and reevaluations completed by June 30th of student's last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of planning meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of copies of evaluation reports to parents.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of, criteria, signatures of agreement or disagreement rationale, statement of eligibility and evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of meetings and participants, signature of agreement and disagreement and statement of eligibility. **The district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented and can be closed out.** The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas of criteria and provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meeting and participants, considerations and required components, present levels of educational performance, IEPs to parents and teacher access and responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified regarding the individualization of goals and objectives at the middle and high school level.

Area(s) of Need:

Individualized goals and objectives linked with the core curriculum at the middle and high school level – During the desk audit, a review of the IEPs determined that goals and objectives were an exact reiteration of the Core Curriculum Content Standards and indicators. The goals and objectives did not reflect how the standards would be modified to allow the student access to the general education curriculum at the middle and high school levels.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure that IEPs reflect goals and objectives that identify how the standards will be modified to meet the individual student's needs with regard to accessing the general education curriculum. The district may request technical assistance from the Learning Resource Center to assist in this process.**

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No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of general education access, notification and participation of out-of-district placements in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aids and services and continuum of programs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the area of preschool transition planning conference.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of agency invitation and early intervention to preschool disabled placement by age three years. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area. **During the monitoring process, it was determined that the district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented.**

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, preferences and interests, survey and assessments, age sixteen needed transition service and student invitation. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of age 14 transition service needs, preferences and interests, survey and assessments, age sixteen needed transition service and student invitation. **It has been determined that the district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented.**

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of procedures, suspension tracking, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings (IAES) and behavioral intervention plans (BIP).

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation to the case manager, functional behavioral assessments (FBA) and procedural safeguards. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP documentation, alternate assessment, and the process for exemption from passing.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation and approved accommodations and modifications. During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the area of participation. **During the monitoring visit, it was determined that the district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented.**

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified compliance in all areas of graduation.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers and group sizes for speech therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of home instruction, common planning time and case management time. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent and adult-student access to records, access sheets, maintenance of records, and documentation of locations of additional records. staff knowledge of procedures and destruction of records.

During the onsite visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas parent and adult-student access to records, access sheets, maintenance of records, and documentation of locations of additional records. staff knowledge of procedures and destruction of records. **It has been determined that the district's improvement plan in these areas has been successfully implemented.**

No additional areas of need were identified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit.

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Summary

Special education monitoring was completed in the **Saddle Brook School District** on October 25 and 26, 2004. The purpose of this phase of the monitoring process 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 its exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that, with some revision, will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the areas identified as compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs.

The Saddle Brook School District's classification rate of students requiring special educational programming and services has been consistently below the state average. Further, the appropriate consideration of placement in least restrictive environments for a majority of the school day is reflected in the district's placement data. Additionally, data show an equitable distribution of students across various instructional settings, based on category of eligibility and racial-gender groupings.

At a public focus group meeting, four parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. In general, the district was praised for its academically challenging courses and instruction, the professionalism and high quality of staff, the availability of training opportunities for teachers, paraprofessionals and parents and the functional utility of technology throughout the student's school day. Parents noted that special education timelines are maintained, meetings are conducted when necessary, IEP documents are kept current and the range of programming options is adequate.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit included dissemination of IDEA information, length of school day, facilities, certification, interpreters at meetings, identification meeting timelines, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, reevaluations completed by June 30th of the student's last year in preschool, copy of evaluation reports to parents, present levels of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, general education access, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, decision making process, preschool transition planning conference, suspension tracking, behavioral intervention plans manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings, IEP documentation, alternative assessment, process for exemption from passing, graduation requirements, participation of out-of-district students in their elementary school graduation, written notice of graduation, class size waivers, age range waivers, and group size for speech.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-policies and procedures, service training for parent, professional and paraprofessional staff, oversight of IEP implementation, provision of programs and related services, transfer students, hearing aides, surrogate parents, notices of meetings, parental and student participation at meetings, written notices, notices in native language, independent evaluations, Child Find 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screening, initial identification

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meeting, multidisciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, written report particularly speech evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, planning meeting participants, meeting participants, criteria, signatures of agreement or disagreement rationale, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP meeting and participants, considerations/required components, IEPs to parents, present levels of educational performance, teacher access and responsibility, , Oberti, consideration of supplemental aides and services, continuum of programs, agency invitation and early intervention to preschool disables placement by age three, age fourteen transition service needs, preferences and interests, survey and assessments, student transition invitation, age sixteen needed transition services, student invitation, documentation to the case manager, functional behavioral assessments, procedural safeguards, approved accommodations and modifications, home instruction, common planning time, case management time, parent and adult access to records, access sheets, maintenance of records, documentation of other locations of additional records, staff knowledge of student records procedures and destruction of records.

Additional interviews and comprehensive desk audit identified an additional area of need within the various standards, regarding individualized goals and objectives linked with the core curriculum at the middle and high school level.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Saddle Brook School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education programs to address the area that require a revision.