

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

District: Salem City School District

County: Salem

Monitoring Dates: March 24, 25, & 26, 2003

Monitoring Team: Julia Harmelin and Jane A. Marano

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Salem City School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Salem City 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 Salem City 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 Salem City High School on March 4, 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 administrator, building principals and vice principals, counselors, general education and special education teachers, speech therapist, child study team members, and parents.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for providing the After School ASK 3 test preparation program in the elementary school. The program is offered for four weeks before the test from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. daily. The program is available to all grade three students. The focus is on literacy and math. A light dinner is provided to the students.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

The elementary school has many programs that reward students such as the Citizen of the Month Award, the Principal's Award, the Caught You Being Good/Kind Award, and the Consistent Good Behavior Award. All students are eligible for these awards.

The district is commended for providing the Homework Haven program at the middle school. The program operates under the supervision of teachers and is held three days a week for one hour after school to assist students with completing their homework. Students with disabilities participate in all programs at the middle school.

The high school is participating in the Let Me Learn Project from Rowan University that identifies the learning styles of students which in turn assists teachers with instructional practices.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Statewide Assessment 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 policies and procedures, and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year, related services, length of school day, transfer procedures, and oversight of IEP implementation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent for initial evaluations, initial implementation of IEP, and release of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, consent for reevaluation, notice of a transition meeting, written notice, notice timelines, meetings, native language, and independent evaluations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 summer referrals and identification meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, pre-referral interventions and effectiveness, direct referrals, health summary, vision/hearing screenings, and identification meetings timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments, use of standardized assessments, components of functional assessments (during the school year), written reports, bilingual evaluations, and acceptance/rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of components of functional assessments conducted during the summer months. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of reevaluation planning meetings and participants, and reevaluations for students turning age five.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of reevaluation timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of provision of evaluation reports to parents and documentation of eligibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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 IEP implementation dates, age of majority, and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of IEP meeting participants, IEP components, IEP goals and objectives, procedures for revising IEPs, annual review timelines, and teacher knowledge/access to IEPs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, consideration and documentation of supplemental aids and services, regular education access, continuum of services, and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. The district identified barriers to compliance

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

based on fiscal constraints, availability of space and services, insufficient personnel (only one child study team for all three schools), and the lack of supplemental aids and services in regular education. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding access to academic and nonacademic activities by students in the behavioral disabilities classes at the middle school and the high school.

Area(s) of Need:

Access - During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that students in the self-contained behavioral disabilities class at the middle school and at the high school do not participate in the regular education classroom for nonacademic activities such as art, music, computers, physical education and lunch. Additionally, these students have a shortened school day. A review of IEPs failed to indicate the reasons for this nonparticipation or the shortened school day.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure students in the self-contained behavioral disabilities classes at the middle school and high school have the opportunity to participate in academic and nonacademic activities with their nondisabled peers unless the IEP team can support their exclusion from these activities. Additionally, the plan will ensure these students are afforded educational services within a school day that is the same for their nondisabled peers, unless the IEP team can support a shortened day. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student and agency invitations, agency involvements, statement of transition services needs, and statement of needed transition services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of preschool transition planning conferences and implementation of IEPs by age three. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking and procedures for placement in interim alternative education settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of discipline procedures, notification of removals to case managers, development of behavior intervention plans, functional behavior assessments, manifestation determinations, and identification as potentially disabled. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 diploma and participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of graduation requirements in IEP and provision of written notice of graduation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 age range and group size for speech therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class size for resource programs, homebound instruction, common planning time, and having sufficient CST staff. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parents/adult student access to records, access sheets, and procedures for maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff knowledge of student record procedures. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Area of Need:

Documentation of Location of Pupil Records – During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that the central files do not document the location of other files maintained by the district.

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

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Salem City School District on March 24, 25, & 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 commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify all but two 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, the one parent who attended expressed satisfaction with the district's programs and services. The parent did express a concern regarding the declassification of a student and the student's removal from the special education study skills class.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included special education policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, facilities, certification, consent for initial evaluations/initial implementation of IEP/release of records, summer referrals, identification meeting participants, multi-disciplinary assessments, use of standardized assessments, components of functional assessments (school year), written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports, reevaluation planning meetings/participants, reevaluations of students turning age 5, eligibility meetings/participants, eligibility criteria, documentation of agreement/disagreement of eligibility and rationale, IEP implementation dates, age of majority, 90 day timelines, statewide assessments, graduation participation/diploma, age range for special education classes, group size for speech therapy, access to pupil records, and procedures for maintenance and destruction of pupil records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, extended school year, provision of related services, length of school day, transfer procedures, surrogate parents, consent for reevaluation, written notice, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, pre-referral interventions and effectiveness, direct referral procedures, health summary, hearing/vision screenings, functional assessment components for summer evaluations, reevaluation timelines, provision of evaluation reports to parents before eligibility meetings, documentation of eligibility, IEP development, IEP documentation, IEP revisions, timelines for annual reviews, teacher knowledge/access of IEPs, least restrictive environment, individualized decision-making, access to regular education, participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, continuum of services, preschool transition, transition from school to post-school, discipline, written notice of graduation, graduation requirements in IEP, provision of programs and services, and staff knowledge of pupil records procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding access for students in self-contained classes and documentation of location of pupil records.

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

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