

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

District: Sea Girt Borough School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: December 2, 3, 2002

Monitoring Team: Debbie Masarsky, Stephen Coplin

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Sea Girt Borough School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Sea Girt Borough 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 Sea Girt Borough 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 Sea Girt Elementary School on November 26, 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 administrator, building principal, speech therapist, general education and special education teachers and child study team members.

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Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent development, policies/procedures and dissemination of public information. The required Statement of Assurances and procedures have been submitted to the county office.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of staff development. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service training to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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 provision of programs/related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individual decision-making, documentation for extended school year, goals/objectives for related services and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified 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 notices in native language, meetings/participants for students eligible for special education/related services, independent evaluations and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding content/provision of notices and consent.

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Area(s) of Need:

Content of Notices - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that with the exception of notice of an identification meeting and written notice following an IEP meeting, all other notices do not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise its notices to ensure they contain the required components. It is suggested that the district adopt the notices developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Provision of Notices - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not provide notice following an eligibility meeting. Furthermore, for students eligible for speech/language services, the district does not provide notice of a meeting for an eligibility/IEP meeting and written notice following an eligibility meeting.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district provides notice of meetings and written notice as required by code. In addition, the district must document the provision of all notices in student files. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Consent - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently obtain written parental consent prior to evaluating students who may be eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it obtains written parental consent prior to conducting assessments. The improvement plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process and health summaries.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-referral interventions, hearing/vision screenings and child find information distributed widely throughout the community for ages 3-21. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element. The district further identified a concern in the area of referral dates. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regard 20-day timelines.

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Area(s) of Need:

20-Day Timelines - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that the district does not consistently convene identification meetings within the required 20-day timelines.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that identification meetings are convened within 20-days of receiving a referral. 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 the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and signed reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of non-discriminatory assessment tools. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service training to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include this element. The district further identified a concern in the area of acceptance/rejection of all or parts of reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. In addition, the district identified multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services as an area of need. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks appropriate procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding written reports and functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Written Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that written speech reports are not dated. As such, it cannot be determined when these reports were developed.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure all speech assessment reports are dated when developed. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Functional Assessments for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and an interview with the speech therapist that the district does not include the required components of

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the functional assessment in evaluation reports for students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district includes all required components of the functional assessment in speech reports in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d). The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meetings, participants and reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of reevaluations within three years of the previous determination of eligibility or sooner if warranted. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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 for students for special education/related services and agreement/disagreement with eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of eligibility criteria for specific learning disability (SLD). The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element. The district further identified a concern in the area of provision of copies of evaluation reports to parent(s) at least ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks appropriate procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding statement of eligibility for specific learning disability and eligibility meetings, participants for students eligible for speech/language services.

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Area(s) of Need:

Statement of Eligibility for Specific Learning Disability - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews and record review that for students determined eligible for special education/related services under the category specific learning disability, the district does not document in the eligibility statement, the specific area(s) of severe discrepancy between the student's current achievement and intellectual ability and does not state that the student's disability is not primarily a result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when documenting eligibility for specific learning disability, the district includes all the components in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(c)11. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Eligibility Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through an interview with the speech therapist and through record review that the district does not convene eligibility meetings for students who may be eligible for speech/language services. Instead, the speech therapist determines whether a student is eligible for speech/language services and then provides a letter to the parent(s) informing them of her decision and the amount of therapy that will be provided.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that an eligibility meeting is convened with the required participants to determine whether a student is eligible for speech/language services. The district's plan must include 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.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education/related services, IEP meetings, participants for students eligible for special education/related services, provision of IEPs to parents and goals/objectives related to core curriculum content standards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of 90-day timelines and IEP teacher access/responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. The district further identified concerns in the areas of IEPs in effect/implemented at the beginning of the school year, annual review timelines and IEPs completed by June 30th of the student's last year in the elementary school with input from the staff of the secondary school. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an

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administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the convening of IEP team meetings for students eligible for speech/language services and components of IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

IEP Team Meeting Participants/consent - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through an interview with the speech therapist and through record review that the district does not convene initial IEP meetings for students eligible for speech/language services. Instead, the speech therapist develops the IEP and provides a copy to the parent(s).

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEP meetings are convened with the required participants. The procedures must include a mechanism to ensure parental consent is obtained prior to implementing the program. The plan must include 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.**

IEP Components - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services do not contain benchmarks or short-term objectives, criteria for short-term objectives and evaluation procedures to measure progress in the annual goals.

- **The district needs to revise its IEP format to ensure it includes all required components in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7. It is suggested that the district adopt the state IEP format developed by the Office of Special Education Programs. 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 process/consideration of supplementary aids/services for students ages 5-14, regular education access, continuum of programs for students ages 5-14 and notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic/extracurricular activities.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the decision-making process/continuum for preschool disabled students.

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Area(s) Need:

Decision-Making Process/Continuum for Preschool Disabled Students - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not consider placement of preschool disabled students into regular nursery programs with supplementary aids/services because the district has not established linkages with these programs and because prior to convening an IEP team meeting, the case manager and parent(s) have discussed placement in a self-contained program as the only option.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it develops linkages with community-based preschool settings, considers those settings for each student, and then provides services within those settings, with appropriate supports and services, when appropriate. The procedures must also include a mechanism to document the supplementary aids and services that were considered and the reasons for rejection when a student is not placed in a regular education program. The plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant 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 input to gather interests and preferences and the statement of "Transition Service Needs." The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding student invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed.

Area(s) of Need:

Student Invitation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not invite students to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district invites students to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed. The district's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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 IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address

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these areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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 provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of written notification to the case manager. The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address this area because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

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 in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessment (APA), approved accommodations/modifications and IEP documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of staff knowledge of the content of statewide assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section XIII: Graduation (K through 8th grade district)

Summary of Findings:

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of graduation requirements in IEPs.

Area(s) of Need:

Graduation Requirements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not complete the graduation

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requirement section for students who will be 14 and transitioning into high school during the duration of the IEP.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district completes the graduation requirement section of the IEP for students who will turn 14 years of age and will be transitioning into the high school district during the time the IEP is in effect. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class and group size, age range and consultation time between regular and special education teachers.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of descriptions for each special education program. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 staff knowledge of student record policies/procedures.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of access/review student records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the documentation of other location(s) of student records.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations of Student Records - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not document the location of other student record(s) in the central file.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the district documents the location of other student record(s) in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Sea Girt Borough School District on December 2, 3, 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 comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify 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, five parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services, student progress and the district's willingness to try new teaching methods.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent development, policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, provision of programs/related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, notices in native language, consent/meeting participants for students eligible for special education/related services, interpreters, independent evaluations, interpreters at meetings, referral process, health summaries, multidisciplinary evaluations/functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, signed reports, reevaluation by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, agreement/disagreement with eligibility, IEP meetings/considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education/related services, provision of IEPs to parents, goals/objectives related to the core content curriculum standards, continuum/ individualized decision-making process/supplementary aids/services ages 5-14, regular education access, notification/participation of in-district students in non-academic/extra-curricular activities, provision of procedural safeguard right for potentially disabled students, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plans, interim alternative educational settings, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessments, age range, class/group size, consultation time for special and regular education teachers and staff knowledge of student records policies/procedures.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, extended school year, transfer students, goals/objectives for related services, surrogate parents, pre-referral interventions, child find, hearing/vision screenings, referral dates, non-discriminatory assessment tools, acceptance/rejection of reports, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, reevaluation timelines, copies of evaluation reports to parents, eligibility criteria for SLD, annual review/90-day timelines, IEP teacher access responsibility, IEPs in effect/implemented at the beginning of the school year, IEPs completed by June 30th of the students last year in the elementary school with input from the staff of the secondary school, implementation of IEPs of preschoolers by age three, preschool transition planning conferences, student input to transition meetings/interests and preferences, statement of Transition Service Needs, written notification to case managers, staff

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knowledge of the content of statewide assessments, descriptions of special education programs and access/review student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding content/provision of notices, consent, 20-day timelines, dated written reports, functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, eligibility meetings/participants for students eligible for speech/language services, convening of IEP team meetings for students eligible for speech/language services, components of IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services, the decision-making process/continuum for preschool disabled students, provision of student invitations to IEP meetings when transition will be discussed, documentation of graduation requirements in IEPs and documentation of other location(s) of student records.

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