

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

District: Seaside Heights Borough School District **County:** Ocean

Monitoring Date: March 18, 2003

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Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Seaside Heights 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 Seaside Heights 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 Seaside Heights 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 Seaside Heights Borough School District on March 18, 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:

Job Shadowing Program - The district has a job shadowing program in which 5th and 6th grade students, including students with disabilities, are invited to visit community-

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based businesses for a part of the school day to observe the work environment and participate in business related activities.

Theater Company – All students participate in the “good touch, bad touch program” in which student have the opportunity to “act out” various problems that they may encounter on a daily basis and provide examples of possible positive solutions to these problems to an audience of their peers.

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 parent training and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures and in-service training for professional and paraprofessional staff. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 length of school day/year, certifications, and facilities.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of transfer students. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of goals and objectives and the inclusion of frequency, duration, and location of related services in the IEP and the provision of related services. **The district’s improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year - During the on-site monitoring, in interviews with child study team members it was reported that although extended school year is discussed at each

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IEP meeting, for those students for whom it was determined not to be warranted, the IEP does not contain the regression/recoupment criteria that was applied. Instead, the ESY section is marked “not applicable” or is left blank.

- **The district needs to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs clearly document the consideration of extended school year for all students and indicates the criteria that was used to determine an ESY program was not warranted. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of selection and training of surrogate parents. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns in the areas of the provision of a copy of special education regulations to parents and the content of notices. **The district’s improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. The district also identified concerns in the areas of the provision of notices to parents/adult students, 15-day timelines and 20-day timelines. **The district’s improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-services training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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 area of direct referrals from parents and staff.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the areas of child find, health appraisals and vision/hearing screenings, pre-referral interventions, referral procedures and participants at identification meetings. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 areas of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of acceptance/rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. The district further identified concerns in the area of multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments and signed/dated evaluation reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that reports do not contain all of the required components of a functional assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that evaluation reports contain all of the required components of a functional assessment in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d). The plan must include in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Signed and Dated Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that reports are not consistently signed by the evaluator nor are they dated when developed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure evaluation reports are sign by the evaluator and dated when developed. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent 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, planning meeting participants and three-year reevaluation timelines.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it**

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lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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 and participants.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of eligibility criteria. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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 component. The district further identified concerns in the areas of the provision of evaluation reports to parents/adult students and the statistical formula for determining eligibility for specific learning disabled (SLD). **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding agreement/disagreement with eligibility.

Area(s) of Need:

Agreement/Disagreement with Eligibility - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not have a procedure to document agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure all participants at the eligibility meeting document their agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent 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 meetings, participants at meetings, considerations/required statements, present levels of educational performance statements, teacher access to IEPs and teacher responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the provision of a copy of the IEPs to parents prior to implementation, monitoring the implementation of IEPs for preschool students by age three, implementation dates of

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students' IEPs and ensuring that parents and students are provided with the opportunity to observe proposed programs. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. The district further identified a concern in the area of goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding 90-day timelines and IEP implementation.

Area(s) of Need:

90-Day Timelines for Students Referred During the Summer Months - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and staff interviews that the district does not meet the 90-day timeline for implementation of initial IEPs for students referred during summer months because the district does not employ staff to evaluate students, write reports and develop IEPs during these months.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it employs staff in sufficient numbers to conduct mandated activities and meet required timelines during the summer months.**

IEP Implementation - During the on-site visit, it was determined through staff interviews and record review that the district does not provide in-class support for students whose IEPs require this program in the areas of science, social studies and health because the district does not have sufficient staff to provide these services in the identified subject areas.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides in-class support to all students who require that program. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the need for additional staff in the event redeployment of existing staff is insufficient.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision-making process, consideration of supplementary aids and services, access to regular education and notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of least restrictive environment (LRE) and continuum of programs because the district does not offer a full continuum of placements at all grade levels. Additionally, the district has procedures/practices that prohibit students that function below grade level from being

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placed in the regular classroom. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to remove the identified barriers, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

This section is not applicable in this preschool through grade six district.

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding early intervention to preschool disabled by age three and preschool transition planning conference.

Area(s) of Need:

Early Intervention to Preschool Disabled by Age Three and Preschool Transition Planning Conference - During the on-site visit, the district reported that they have not had any communication with community-based early intervention programs since the 1999-2000 school year. As a result, they are not aware of students who are in these programs who require special education services. As such, students who are currently in EIP are not identified, evaluated and placed by their third birthday.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it reestablishes communication with community-based early intervention programs to ensure the provision of services by the student's third birthday. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of notification to case manager. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

This section is not applicable in this preschool through grade six district.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process the district identified a concern in the area of class sizes. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring class sizes into compliance.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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 area of access/requests.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of documentation of other locations of records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 Seaside Heights Borough School District on March 18, 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 exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all 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.

No parents attended the focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit in spite of the outreach conducted by the district.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent training, dissemination of IDEA information, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, consent, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referrals from parents and staff, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation timelines/participants/meetings, eligibility meetings/participants, IEP meetings, participants at meetings, IEP considerations/required statements, present level of educational performance statements, teacher access/responsibility, decision-making process, consideration of supplementary aids and services, access to regular education notification/participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, preschool transition planning conference, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, statewide assessment participation/accommodations/modifications/IEP documentation, alternate proficiency assessment, age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction and access/request.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, in-services training for professional and paraprofessional staff, transfer students, provision of related services, goals/objectives/frequency/duration/location of related services, selection and training of surrogate parents, provision of special education regulation to parents, provision/content of notices, 15/20-day timelines, child find activities, referral procedures, pre-referral interventions, health appraisal, vision/hearing screening, participant at identification meetings, accept/rejection of reports, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, eligibility criteria, evaluation reports to parents, statistical formula for determining eligibility for specific learning disability, copy of IEP to parents, implementation dates of students' IEPs, observation of proposed programs, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, least restrictive environment documentation, continuum of programs, notification to case manager, class size/waivers and documentation of other location of records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, functional assessments, signed/dated evaluation

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reports, agreement/disagreement with eligibility, 90-day timelines for students referred during the summer months, IEP implementation and early intervention to preschool disabled by age three.

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