

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

District: Seaside Park Borough School District

County: Ocean

Monitoring Dates: September 10, 11, 2002

Monitoring Team: Dorothenia Boyd – Jackson, Stephen Coplin

Background Information:

During the 2001 - 2002 school year, the Seaside Park 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 Park 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 Park 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 Park Borough School District, on September 5, 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 administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for its **Enrichment Science Program**, which is designed to enhance the scientific knowledge of students in grade K-6. The program supplements the instruction provided by the classroom teacher. The Enrichment Science teacher involves the students in additional hands-on activities that serve to enhance the

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concepts previously presented by the classroom teacher. All students (regular education and special education) are included in this enrichment class.

The district provides a **Peer Readers Program** where sixth grade students are paired with first grade students. The sixth graders serve as role models for the younger students who enjoy special reading time and individual attention. Older students develop a sense of self-worth and importance. All students (regular education and special education) participate in this program.

The district also recognizes two **Students of the Month** for their good citizenship, diligence, and commitment to school work. Special education students have been recipients of this award a number of times.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline and Statewide Assessment were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies/procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of staff training. 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 extended school year, provision of programs, frequency/duration/location of related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certification of personnel.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of student transfer procedures. 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.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding speech/language goals and objectives.

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Area(s) of Need:

Speech/Language Goals and Objectives – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that speech/language goals and objectives are inconsistently developed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech/language goals and objectives are developed and incorporated into IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure 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, provision of notice of a meeting, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of selecting/training surrogate parents and content of written notice. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding content of notice of a meeting and provision of written notice.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Notice of a Meeting - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district's notice of a meeting does not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure its notices of a meeting are amended to include all required components. It is recommended the district adopt the notice forms developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Provision of Written Notice Following an Eligibility Meeting - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that although parents are provided with written notice following an identification meeting, an IEP meeting and an annual review meeting, they are not provided with written notice following an eligibility meeting for students eligible for special education/related services and students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district provides and documents the provision of written notice following eligibility meetings. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of pre-referral interventions, direct referrals and identification meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the referral process/procedures. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks 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. The plan needs to be revised to include these components. The district further identified concerns in the areas of identification meeting timelines, health summary and vision/hearing screenings. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding Child Find.

Area(s) of Need:

Child Find – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district's Child Find activities do not include students ages 6 through 21 or migrant and homeless students who may be potentially disabled.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Child Find activities include students ages 6 through 21 and migrant and homeless students who may be potentially disabled. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent 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 standardized assessments/functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of insufficient nature and scope for speech/language evaluations. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service 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 speech/language evaluation reports.

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Area(s) of Need:

Speech/Language Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that speech/language evaluation reports do not contain an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher which fulfills the multidisciplinary component of the evaluation, components of a functional assessment and the results of standardized testing that were administered to the student as part of the assessment process.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech/language reports include all required components. The improvement plan must also include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of convening eligibility meetings with required participants, eligibility criteria and signatures of agreement/disagreement with rationale when appropriate.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to convening an eligibility meeting. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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 the statement of specific learning disability (SLD).

Area(s) of Need:

Statement of Specific Learning Disability (SLD) - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the eligibility statement for specific learning disability does not indicate that the term specific learning disability does not apply to students who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor disabilities, general cognitive deficits, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure it amends its eligibility statement for specific learning disability to include all required components.**

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of convening IEP meetings with required participants, alignment of goals/objectives with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines and teacher access/responsibility for implementation of the IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of provision of IEPs to parents/teachers prior to implementation. 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 element. The district further identified concerns in the statement of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP). The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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 components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding IEP required considerations/statements for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Considerations/Required Statements – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews that IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services do not contain the required components and statements.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to ensure its IEP format is amended to include all required components and considerations. It is recommended that the district adopt the IEP format developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of notification to out-of-district students regarding participation in nonacademic/extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, supplemental aids and services and the continuum of programs options in the district. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service 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.

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Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

This section is not applicable because Seaside Park Borough is a K-6 school district.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size/age range/waivers, group size for speech therapy, home instruction and collaborative consultation time for special and regular education teachers.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the provision of resource programs according to code requirements. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service 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 XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access to student records/request from parents and maintenance/destruction of records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of student records in other locations.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Student Records in Other Locations - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not identify the location of other records in the central file.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other student records maintained by the district is identified in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Seaside Park Borough School District on September 10, 11, 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 the one parent that attended expressed her satisfaction with her child's pre-school disabled program.

Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline and Statewide Assessment were identified as compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified as compliant by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site monitoring visit.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies/procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of programs, frequency/duration/location of related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certification of personnel, consent, provision of notice of a meeting, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting participants, written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, eligibility meeting with required participants, eligibility criteria, agreement/disagreement for eligibility, IEP meetings with required participants, alignment of goals/objectives with core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90 day timelines, teacher access/responsibility for IEPs, notification to out-of-district students regarding nonacademic/extracurricular activities, preschool transition planning conferences, early intervention to pre-school, class size/age range/waivers, group size for speech therapy, home instruction, consultation time for teachers, access to student records and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff training, transfer procedures, surrogate parents, content of written notice, referral process/procedures, identification meeting timelines, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, insufficient nature and scope for speech/language evaluations, provision of evaluation reports to parents, IEPs to parents/teachers prior to implementation, PLEPs, individualized decision-making process, consideration of supplemental aids/services, continuum of program options, and the provision of resource programs according to code requirements.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding speech/language goals and objectives, content of notice of a meeting, provision of notice following an eligibility meeting, child find, speech/language evaluation reports, statement of specific learning disabilities, considerations/required statements for students eligible for speech/language services and documentation of other locations of student records.

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