

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

District: Secaucus School District

County: Hudson

Monitoring Dates: June 2 and 3, 2003

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Tucci, Damen Cooper, Janet Wright, and Zola Mills

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Secaucus Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Secaucus 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 Secaucus Public 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 Secaucus High School on May 21, 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:

The district is commended for their extensive transition program. "At Your Service," is a program designed for the multiply disabled students within the high school. The goal of this program is to assist students to interact successfully within the community. To facilitate these interactions, the students operate an in-house errand service for the faculty and staff of the high school building. Students are transported through town by a

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school vehicle, accompanied by their teacher. Regular sites for transactions include the post office, bank, UPS shipping, lunch establishments, town library and other local stores. This program was honored in the Innovations in Special Education program by the New Jersey School Boards Association.

The district is further commended for their Supported Employment Experience (SEE) program. SEE is an internship program designed to provide special education students with the opportunity to earn credits while learning vocational skills in local businesses or agencies. Work experience is combined with scheduled in-class hours devoted to enhancing workplace related academic and social skills.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Statewide Assessment and Student Records 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 and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of professional and parent development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section II: FAPE

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, goals and objectives, frequency, duration and location of related services, length of school day and year, facilities and certifications.

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. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find 3-21, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings for elementary through high school students, identification meeting participants, identification meeting timelines for students eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process and pre-referral interventions, vision and hearing screenings for preschool students and identification meeting timelines for students eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance and rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations and functional assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area of written reports.

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Area(s) of Need:

Written Reports – During the on-site visit, record review and staff interview indicated that eligibility determinations are included in assessment reports developed by each evaluator.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports do not include statements of eligibility determinations since eligibility determination may only be made by an appropriately configured team. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of timelines for students eligible for special education and related services, planning meetings, participants at planning meetings and reevaluations completed by June 30th of students' last year in preschool.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of timelines for students eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, participants at eligibility meetings, criteria, signatures of agreement and disagreement and statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to eligibility meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in 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 participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives

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aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines for students eligible for special education and related services and ninety-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of annual review timelines for students eligible for speech and language services and teacher access and responsibility for IEPs. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services and continuum.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of regular education access and nonacademic and extracurricular participation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section X: Transition

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of preschool transition planning conference, early intervention program to preschool disabled by age three, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests and agency involvement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age sixteen needed transition services and student and agency invitations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures and documentation to case manager. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section XIII: Graduation Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of choice of diploma, notice of graduation and out-of-district participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of IEP requirements. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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 class sizes waivers, age range waivers and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of group sizes for speech therapy. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Summary

The on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Secaucus Public School District on June 2 and 3, 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 one area 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 as well as for the implementation of activities to bring about correction in most areas identified during the self-assessment process.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents expressed their appreciation for the special and general education staff's dedication to their children.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, goals and objectives, frequency, duration, and location of related services, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find 3-21, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings for elementary through high school students, identification meetings participants, identification timelines for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines for students eligible for special education and related services, planning meetings, participants, reevaluation completed by June 30 of students' last year in preschool, eligibility meetings, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, IEP participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines for students eligible for special education and related services, ninety day timelines, individualized decision-making, Oberti LRE statement, considerations and required statements, supplementary aids and services, continuum, preschool transition, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, agency involvement, suspension tracking, functional behavior analysis, behavioral intervention plan, manifestation determinations, interim alternate educational setting, procedural safeguards, statewide assessment choice of diploma, notice of graduation, out of district participation, class size waiver, age range waiver, home instruction, access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional and parent development, transfer students, meetings, referral process and pre-referral interventions, vision and hearing screenings for preschool students, identification meeting timelines for students eligible for speech and language, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessments, reevaluation timelines for students eligible for speech and language services, copy of evaluation reports to parents, annual review timelines for students eligible for speech and language services, teacher access and responsibility, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, age sixteen needed transition services, student and agency invitation,

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discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, IEP requirements for graduation and group sizes for speech therapy.

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards regarding written reports.

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