

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

District: Shrewsbury Borough School District

County: Monmouth

Monitoring Dates: February 4, 5, 2003

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky, Stephen A. Coplin

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Shrewsbury 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 Shrewsbury 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 Shrewsbury 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 Shrewsbury Elementary School on January 23, 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, speech therapists, general education and special education teachers, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for several unique programs that include both special education and regular education students.

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The Leaders Program is a service oriented program in which students volunteer their time to perform daily acts of leadership within the school and throughout the community. During the past year the Volunteers of Monmouth County honored these students for being the “Outstanding Youth Volunteer Group”.

Students in **the Paw Prints Program** produce literary writings and artwork for publication in a literary magazine. They are also responsible for publishing, designing and distributing the magazine.

During the district’s **Annual Theater Week** students are engaged in production activities and performances in a student presented musical.

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 staff/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 access to district policies/procedures. 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 length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of goals/objectives for related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, provision of speech/language services and counseling, extended school year for preschool disabled students and transfer students. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit a review of records and interviews determined that the district has begun to implement the improvement plan to correct these identified areas.

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

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Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, content/provision of notice of a meeting, notices in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of content/provision of written notice within timelines and surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit a review of records and interviews determined that the district has begun to implement the improvement plan to correct these identified areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries and vision and hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of 20-day timelines for convening an identification meeting, identification meeting participants and child find activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit a review of records and interviews determined that the district has begun to implement the improvement plan to correct these identified areas.

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

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, independent evaluations and signed and dated reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services and acceptance/rejection of all or parts of outside reports. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of planning meeting participants and reevaluations within three years or sooner if warranted,

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of reevaluations completed by June 30th of student's last year in preschool. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings and participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility and evaluation reports to parents for students eligible for special education/related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of copies of evaluation reports to parents for students eligible for speech/language services. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks appropriate procedures, in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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 annual review timelines for students eligible for special education/related services, 90-day timelines, teacher access/responsibility and implementation dates.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of the documentation of the consideration of modifications in extra curricular/nonacademic activities, present levels of educational performance statements, IEP meeting participants, subject goals and objectives, goals and objectives for preschool disabled students and provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit a review

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of records and interviews determined that the district has begun to implement the improvement plan to correct these identified areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding annual review timelines for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Annual Review Timelines - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not consistently conduct annual reviews within twelve months of the development of the previous IEP for students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure annual reviews are completed within require timelines. 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 the continuum for students 5-14 and regular education access for in-district students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consideration/documentation of supplementary aids/services in an early childhood program for preschool age students, the continuum for preschool disabled students, least restrictive environment documentation and in-district preschool student participation with non-disabled peers and out-of-district student notification/participation in nonacademic/extracurricular activities within district. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, it was verified that the district has established links with a number of community-based preschool settings and now has the ability to consider placement of preschool disabled students into these settings.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of provision of transition services, student/agency invitations, statement of "Transition Service Needs" for students beginning at age 14 or sooner.

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

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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 sufficient to address these areas.

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 written notification to the case manager, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of behavioral intervention plans. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit a review of records and interviews determined that the district has begun to implement the improvement plan to correct these identified areas. The district further identified a concern in the area of provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students. **The district has developed an improvement plan that is insufficient to address these areas 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 components.

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

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

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of documentation of graduation requirements in the IEP for students transitioning to high school. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 and group size and age range waivers.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of descriptions for each special education program, consultation time between regular and special education teachers and employment of sufficient staff to provide required programs and services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 Shrewsbury Borough School District on February 4, 5, 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 prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of those identified areas had been addressed prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is highly 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, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services and communication between themselves and staff. Some parents expressed concerns with scheduling difficulties for in-class support programs.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent/staff development, policies/procedures, dissemination of public information, length of school day/year, facilities, certification, consent, content/provision of notice of a meeting, notices in native language, interpreters, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, hearing/vision screenings, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education/related services, functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, independent evaluations, signed/dated reports, planning meetings/participants, reevaluation timelines, eligibility meetings/participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility, evaluation reports to parents for students eligible for special education/related services, annual reviews for students eligible for special education and related services, 90-day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, implementation dates on IEPs, regular education access for in-district students, student/agency invitations, statement of transition service needs, written notification to case manager, suspension tracking, manifestation determination meetings, functional behavioral assessments, interim alternative educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, alternate proficiency assessments, accommodation/modification in statewide assessments, IEP documentation of statewide assessment, age range/waivers, class/group size, staff knowledge of student records policies/procedures, access to student records and documentation of other locations of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding access to district policy/procedures, goals/objective for related services, documentation of frequency/duration/location for related services, provision of speech/language services/counseling, extended school year for preschool disabled students, transfer students, content/provision of written notice within timelines, surrogate parents, 20-day timelines for convening an identification meeting, identification meeting participants, child find activities, multidisciplinary evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services, acceptance/rejection of all or parts of outside reports, reevaluations completed by June

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30th of the student's last year in preschool programs, copies of evaluation reports to parents for students eligible for speech/language services, documentation of the consideration of modifications in extracurricular/non-academic activities, present levels of educational performance statements, IEP meeting participants, subject goals/objectives, goals/objectives for preschool disabled students, provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, consideration/documentation of supplementary aids/services in an early childhood program for preschool age students, the continuum for preschool disabled students, least restrictive environment documentation, in-district preschool student participation with non-disabled peers, out-of-district student notification/participation in non-academic/extracurricular activities within district, preschool transition planning conferences, IEPs of preschoolers implemented by age three, behavioral intervention plans, provision of procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, documentation of graduation requirements in the IEP for student transitioning to high school, descriptions for each special education program, consultation time between regular/special education teachers and employment of sufficient staff to provide required programs/services.

The on-site visit identified only one additional area of need within the various standards regarding annual reviews for students eligible for speech/language services.

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