

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

District: South Bound Brook Public School District

County: Somerset

Monitoring Dates: June 4, 5, 2002

Monitoring Team: Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson, Barbara Tucker

Background Information

During the 2000-2001 school year, the South Bound Brook 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 South Bound Brook Public 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 South Bound Brook Public School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members on April 25, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, 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, child study team members, speech language therapist and parents.

District Strengths:

The district provides the following unique programs for special education students:

Cookie Program - This program has been established to teach students functional life skills to prepare them for the future. This program was implemented by having students in the self-contained class operate a cookie business.

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

Pre-School Disabled Swimming Program – This innovative eight-week swimming and language program is designed to help pre-school children develop and improve their skills. IEP goals and objectives address such skills as language, self-help and motor development during the sessions.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Eligibility and Statewide Assessments 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.

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and appropriate certification of staff.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding extended school year and adaptive physical education services for students. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of the provision of counseling services, documentation of frequency/duration/location of counseling services, counseling goals/objectives and implementation dates for counseling services.

Areas of Need:

Provision of Counseling Services – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that although counseling services are provided, the district does not consistently document the provision of services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents the provision of counseling services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Frequency, Duration and Location of Counseling Services – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the frequency, duration and location of counseling services are inconsistently documented in IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the frequency, duration and location of counseling services are consistently documented in IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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

Counseling Goals/Objectives - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that counseling goals/objectives are not consistently developed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that counseling goals/objectives are developed and incorporated into IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Implementation Dates for Counseling Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district inconsistently documents beginning and ending dates for counseling services in IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents beginning and ending dates for counseling services in the IEP. 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 area of independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding surrogate parents and written notice in the native language of the parent. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently 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.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding consent for initial evaluations, convening identification meetings for students eligible for speech/language and content of district notices.

Areas of Need:

Consent Prior to Conducting an Initial Evaluation – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district does not consistently obtain written consent prior to conducting initial speech/language evaluations.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written consent is obtained prior to conducting an initial evaluation. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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

20-Day Timeline - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the district does not convene an identification meeting within the 20-day timeline for students referred for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that identification meetings for students referred for speech /language services are convened within 20-days of receipt of the referral and that all required participants attend these meetings. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Content of District Notices - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that district notices do not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all district notices contain the required components. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the district adopt the notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.**

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, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding summer referrals/timelines/meeting participants because the district does not employ teachers, child study team personnel or a department secretary. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently 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.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding child find and direct referrals from staff.

Areas of Need:

Child Find – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district’s Child Find activities do not include migrant and homeless students who are potentially disabled.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that child find activities include migrant and homeless students who are potentially disabled. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

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

Direct Referrals From Staff – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interviews with staff that the district does not have a procedure in place for staff to make direct referrals.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that staff is provided the opportunity to directly refer a student to the child study team when it is believed that the nature of the student’s problem is such that an evaluation is warranted without delay. The improvement plan must also include a mechanism to establish criteria that identifies the type of documentation that would support a staff request for a direct referral. Furthermore, the improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments, written reports and acceptance/rejection of outside reports.

Areas of Need:

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

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments contain all the required components. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Written Reports – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that although reports are signed, they are not dated.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports are dated. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Acceptance/Rejection of Outside Reports - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the IEP team does not document acceptance or rejection of all or part(s) of reports nor does the IEP team provide a written rationale to the parent when a report or parts of a report are rejected.

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

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the IEP team documents the acceptance/rejection of all or part(s) of reports and provides a written rationale to the parent when a report or parts of a report are rejected. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

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

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding reevaluation timelines.

Area of Need:

Reevaluation Timelines - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not conduct reevaluations within three years of the previous classification for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that reevaluations are conducted every three years or sooner if conditions warrant. The improvement plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP participants, considerations/required statements, alignment of goals/objectives with the Core Curriculum Content Standards and 90-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding age of majority, and teacher access/responsibility for implementing the IEP. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need. The district further identified concerns regarding parental opportunity to observe a proposed placement prior to implementation of the IEP. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required change. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding annual review timelines, development of IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services, and revisions to students' programs.

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

Areas of Need:

Annual Review Timelines – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interviews with staff and record review that the district does not consistently conduct annual reviews within a twelve-month period of time.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that annual review timelines are met. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.**

Revisions to Students' Programs – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interviews with staff and record review that the district does not consistently convene an IEP meeting prior to revising a student's program.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district convenes an IEP meeting prior to any revisions to a student's program and provides appropriate written notice of the proposed changes. The improvement plan must include and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

IEPs for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the speech/language specialist does not consistently determine eligibility and develop IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the speech/language specialist determines eligibility and develops IEPs for students eligible for speech/language services. The plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making process, regular education access, non-academic and extra-curricular participation and continuum of program options.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding supplementary aids/services.

Area of Need:

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

Supplementary Aids/Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the IEP team does not document the supplementary aids and services that were considered and rejected or the reason they were not appropriate to meet the student's needs in the general education setting prior to removal from general education.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents the supplementary aids/services that were considered and rejected and why they were not appropriate to meet the student's needs in the general education setting. The improvement plan must include in-service 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 self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of transition service needs, courses of study, preferences/interests and agency invitation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding student invitations and ensuring agency participation in IEP/transition planning conferences. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required change. 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 Pre-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of attendance at preschool transition planning conferences.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding early intervention programs to preschool disabilities programs by age 3. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently 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.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

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

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of discipline procedures, suspension tracking, IAES/ 45-day return, and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding written notification to the case manager. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently 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 component. The district further identified concerns regarding functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings and the provision of disciplinary and special education records to appropriate authorities when a student with a disability commits a crime. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas 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.

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

Section XIII: Graduation is not applicable in this K-8 district.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding consultation time for teachers and record keeping of students on home instruction. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently 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.

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 student records access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

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

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

Area of Need:

Documentation of Records in Other Locations – During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that central files do not document the location of all student records maintained by the district.

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

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

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the South Bound Brook Public School District on June 4, 5, 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 this review the district was able to identify many areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas that were 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. Parents indicated that they were very pleased with the efforts made by the student services department in making positive changes in its practices over the last year. Many of the concerns raised by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included General Provisions, Eligibility and Statewide Assessments.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities, appropriate certification of staff, independent evaluations, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, planning meetings/participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th of a students' last year in preschool, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility for Specific Learning Disability, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, considerations/required statements, alignment of goals/objectives with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, 90-day timelines, individualized decision-making process/documentation, considerations/required statements, regular education access/non-academic and extra-curricular participation, continuum of program options available in district, transition service needs, courses, preferences/interests, agency invitation, attendance at preschool transition planning conferences, discipline procedures, suspension tracking, IAES/45 day return, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, class sizes, age range, group sizes for speech therapy waivers, student records access/requests, access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding extended school year, adaptive physical education, surrogate parents, notice in the native language of the parent, 20-day timeline/meeting participants during summer months, age of majority, teacher access/responsibility for implementing the IEP, parents opportunity to observe the proposed placement, student invitation, agency participation in IEP/transition planning conferences, early intervention programs to preschool disabilities programs by age 3, written notification to the case manager regarding removal of a student from placement, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, provision of special education

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

and disciplinary records to appropriate authorities, collaborative consultation time for teachers and record keeping of students on home instruction.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding a variety of counseling issues, consent, 20-day timelines, content of district notices, child find, direct referrals, functional assessments, written reports, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, annual reviews, revisions to students' programs, supplementary aids/services, and documentation of records in other locations.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.