

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: South Harrison Township School District

County: Gloucester

Monitoring Dates: January 28, 2004 and April 14, 2004

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair and Jane Marano

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the South Harrison Township 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 Harrison Township 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 Harrison Township 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 South Harrison Township Elementary School on January 28, 2004. 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 administrator, general education and special education teachers, speech therapist, school nurse, parents, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The South Harrison Township School District is commended for its commitment to small class sizes, the average class size being 19 students. This ratio of students to teacher has allowed the district to more successfully include students with disabilities in science, social studies, and all special area subjects. The district has a variety of support services

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

and programs available to all students, such as, the homework club, the after school reading club for students in the 1st to 4th grades who are experiencing difficulty in reading, Reading Assist instruction, and basic skills aides for all grade levels for math and language.

Part One Data Summary:

The South Harrison Township School District data indicated 45.9% of their students with disabilities are placed in general education for more than 80% of the day. To address this issue, the district identified the need to expand the continuum of program options to include more in-class support classes and to improve the individualized decision-making process. The district's improvement plan will be sufficient to address this concern.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs/Services 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.

No findings could be made in the areas of **Transition to Post-School, and Graduation** because this is a kindergarten to six grade school district.

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, length of school day/year, procedures for transfer students, facilities, and staff certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of the provision of related services. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement the improvement plan to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals, and identification meetings timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of health summaries for preschool aged children, audiometric/hearing screenings prior to the identification meeting for preschool aged children, identification

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

meeting participants for preschool aged children, and documentation of receipt of referrals. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues.

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 assessments, standardized assessments, development of written reports for students identified as eligible for special education and related services, provision of bilingual evaluations when required, and documentation of acceptance and/or rejection of outside reports.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessment – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that all functional assessments do not consistently contain a structured observation of the student in a context other than a testing session.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that functional assessments contain a structured observation of the student in a context other than a testing session. Implementation of these activities will ensure eligibility determinations are based on assessment results obtained through a number of different sources.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings/participants, criteria, statement of severe learning discrepancy (SLD), and signatures of agreement/disagreement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district was able to demonstrate that it has appropriately implemented activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings/participates, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals/objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines IEPs to parents prior to implementation, and observation of proposed placement.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of present levels of educational performance, implementation dates, and documentation of teacher access/responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues.

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 documentation of the Oberti considerations, provision of supplemental aids and services and general education access for in-district classified students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of continuum of program options, individualized decision-making process, and notification and participation of out-of-district classified students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. 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.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the South Harrison Township School District on January 28, 2004 and April 14, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visits 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 and for the prompt implementation of activities that have resulted in the correction of some of those areas identified in the self-assessment document.

As a result of the district's analysis of its data, it determined it would provide more in-class support programs and improve the individualized decision-making process.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, 5 parents attended. Parents reported their satisfaction with the district's programs and services, communication between themselves and the school staff, and extended school year services.

General Provisions, Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs/Services and Student Records were areas determined to be compliant with all standards.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included extended school year, length of school day/year, procedures for transfer students, facilities, staff certification, Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals, identification meetings timelines, multi-disciplinary assessments, standardized assessments, development of written reports for students identified as eligible for special education and related services, provision of bilingual evaluations when required, documentation of acceptance and/or rejection of outside reports, eligibility meetings/participants, criteria, statement of severe learning discrepancy (SLD), signatures of agreement/disagreement, IEP meetings/participates, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals/objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines IEPs to parents prior to implementation, observation of proposed placement, documentation of the Oberti considerations, provision of supplemental aids and services, and general education access for in-district classified students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding documentation of the provision of related services, provision of health summaries for preschool aged children, audiometric/hearing screenings prior to the identification meeting for preschool aged children, identification meeting participants for preschool aged children, documentation of receipt of referrals, provision of copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting, present level of educational performance, implementation dates, documentation of teacher access/responsibility, continuum of program options, individualized decision-making process, and notification and participation of out of district classified students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

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

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need regarding functional assessments/ structured observation of the student in a context other than a testing session.

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