

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

**District:** South Orange-Maplewood **County:** Essex

**Monitoring Dates:** January 8-12, 2001

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**Background Information**

During the 1999-2000 school year, the South Orange-Maplewood School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. As the first step in the self-assessment process, the district held a public focus group meeting for the parents and staff of the South Orange-Maplewood School District.

The self-assessment included the collection of data and information from various sources within the district to determine if the district's practices regarding the provision of special education programs and services meet federal and state requirements.

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. Based on the information collected by the district, a self-assessment document was developed citing strengths and areas of need. The South Orange-Maplewood School District developed an improvement plan to address the areas identified by the district as areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring visit to verify the issues identified and address the appropriateness of the improvement plan and the progress made in implementing the plan.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group public meeting for parents and community members at the Administration Building on December 14, 2000 prior to the on-site monitoring visit. From this focus group meeting, themes were identified that would later be verified during the on-site visit. In addition to these themes, information from previous monitoring activities was available to the team and helped to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the monitoring team reviewed district documentation, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, and related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's director of student services, building principals and vice-principals, and child study team members, including the speech-language specialists. Input was also received from parents of students with disabilities. In addition, all of the district's school buildings were visited and representative samples of general and special education teachers from each school were interviewed. District compliance with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the New

Jersey Administrative Code for Special Education (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) was assessed. Systemic areas of need are identified in the findings below.

## **Statement of Findings**

### **Section I: General Provisions**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the need for staff development regarding behavioral intervention strategies, statewide assessments, testing modifications and accommodations, core curriculum content standards, and instructional integration of the core curriculum content standards. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks a component to determine the effectiveness of the in-service.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

- The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures that ensure the district has the ability to determine the effectiveness of the staff training.

### **Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the length of the school day, the lack of consistent criteria for extended school year consideration, the provision of related services, and counseling goals and objectives. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address the length of the school day.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding placement by the student's third birthday, implementation of IEPs, delays in the provision of IEPs to teachers and parents, interim programs for transfer students, and the acceptance/rejection of reports.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Extended School Year** - The self-assessment document indicated the need to develop a consistent criteria for extended school year consideration. During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that extended school year is neither considered nor discussed for all students with disabilities during IEP meetings.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year is considered and documented in IEPs for all students with disabilities.

**Provision of Related Services** - The self-assessment document indicated the need to ensure the provision of related services to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities as specified in IEPs, including students who are suspended.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of related services to students with disabilities as required by their IEPs, including students who are suspended or removed to interim alternative educational settings. These procedures must ensure that decisions are based on individual student needs and are independent of program availability or staffing limitations. The district must also include a component to ensure the district can determine whether it has staff in sufficient numbers to provide these services.

**Goals and Objectives for Related Services** - The self-assessment document indicated the need to ensure the development of goals and objectives for counseling in IEPs. During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not consistently develop or document goals and objectives for any related service identified in IEPs.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives for all related services are individually determined and are documented in IEPs.

**Transfer Procedures** - The self-assessment document indicated the need to ensure that transfer students with disabilities are provided programs and services without delay in accordance with their IEPs. The improvement plan, however, does not include an oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures on a district-wide basis.

- The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the revised procedures.

**Placement by the Third Birthday** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not consistently place pre-school age students by their third birthday when it is determined that they are eligible for special education programs and services and for which parental consent has been obtained.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures that ensure placement for pre-school age students by their third birthday.

**IEP Implementation** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that after parental consent is granted, the district does not implement IEPs by the identified start date.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that IEPs are implemented without undue delay.

**Delayed Provision of IEPs** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that although IEPs are developed, these IEPs are not being provided to parents, teachers and related service providers in a timely manner.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that current IEPs are distributed to parents, teachers and related service providers without undue delay.

**Development of Interim IEPs** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined the district does not develop an interim IEP or provide an interim program for transfer students when educational records are not available at the time the student transfers into the district.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that interim IEPs are developed for transfer students when records are unavailable.

**Acceptance/ Rejection of Outside Reports** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not document the acceptance or rejection of reports, assessments, and/or IEPs.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures that ensure the documentation of the acceptance or rejection of reports, assessments and/or IEPs. It is recommended that the district provide in-service training to child study team members regarding these procedures.

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the need to revise its notice of a meeting, to provide written notice as required, the need to document attempts to secure the participation of parent(s), native language issues, and procedures for the selection and training of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan sufficiently addresses issues regarding native language and surrogate parents.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding regular education teacher participation at meetings, 15-day timelines, and procedural safeguard rights for students who are identified as potentially disabled.

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Notice(s) of a Meeting** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to revise its notice(s) of a meeting to include required components and statements and to send a notice of a meeting to a student with disabilities who is fourteen years or older. During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not consistently provide and/or document notice of an identification meeting.

- The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure its notices include all required statements and components. It is recommended that the district use the notices developed by the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs. The plan must also include a component to ensure parents are provided with written notice of a meeting and students who are fourteen years old are invited to meetings where transition will be discussed and that documentation is maintained in the file.

**Written Notice/15 Day Timeline** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to provide written notice to parents when necessary. The district also identified in the self-assessment document the need to revise its written notices to include required components.

- The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice contains all required components and is provided to parents within the required 15-day timeline. It is strongly recommended that the district consider the use of notices and forms developed by the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs. The improvement plan must include a component to ensure the provision of notice is documented in student records.

**Documentation of Parental Participation** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to provide consistent documentation of attempts to secure the participation of parent(s) at meetings. During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the *Non-attendance of Parents at an IEP Team Meeting* form that is placed in a student's file does not include a place to document attempts to secure parental participation in IEP meetings.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the consistent documentation of attempts to secure the participation of parent(s) at meetings. It is recommended that the district's *Non-attendance of Parents at an IEP Team Meeting* form be revised to include a place to document the district's attempts.

**Teacher Participation** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that regular education teachers do not consistently participate in IEP meetings as required.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that regular education teachers participate in IEP meetings as required.

**Procedural Safeguard Rights of Identified Students** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not afford procedural safeguard rights to students who have been identified as potentially disabled. When an identified student is suspended, the district does not notify the child study team, does not track the number of days the student is suspended, and does not provide educational services when required.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students who have been identified as potentially disabled are afforded their procedural safeguard rights when disciplinary actions are taken.

## **Section IV: Location, Referral & Identification**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified the need to revise pre-referral procedures, for regular education teachers to participate at identification meetings for pre-school age students, and to routinely conduct and document vision and hearing screenings for every student referred to the child study team for an evaluation. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding Child Find activities, referral procedures, 20-day timelines, and identification meetings. Documentation of notice of a meeting and written notice and participation of child study team members at meetings are addressed in Section III of this document. The district will address delays in completing summer referrals by hiring a summer team.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Pre-Referral Procedures** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to revise its pre-referral procedures emphasizing the distinction between LAT, their regular education intervention committee, and the child study team referral process.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to identify the revisions it will make to its pre-referral procedures and to provide in-service training for all staff regarding the revised procedures.

**Identification Meetings** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need for regular education teachers to participate at identification meetings for pre-school age students referred for evaluation. During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that LAT meetings were being substituted for identification meetings. As a result, parents are not being provided with appropriate notice of the meeting and the appropriate participants are not participating in the referral/evaluation decision-making process.

- The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that identification meetings are convened for students who are referred for evaluations, that the nature and scope of the evaluation is developed at the meeting when an evaluation is determined to be appropriate, and that a regular education teacher attends and participates in the meeting.

**Vision and Hearing Screenings** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to provide vision and audiometric screenings for all students who are referred to the child study team for evaluation, including pre-school students.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of vision and audiometric screenings for all students who are referred to the child study team for evaluation. The plan must also ensure documentation of these screenings is maintained in the student's file.

**Child Find Outreach Activities** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined the district disseminates Child Find information throughout the community during the school year. However, it does not continue its Child Find outreach activities during the summer to locate and refer students, including the homeless, who may be identified as potentially disabled.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan that include procedures to ensure that efforts continue throughout the year, including summer months, to locate and refer students, including the homeless, who may be identified as potentially disabled.

**Referral Procedures** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district's referral procedures do not allow direct referrals by teachers. Additionally, the use of the district's *Child Study Team/Speech Referral Determination and Consent to Evaluate* form requires the parent to sign consent before a referral is submitted to the district.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure district staff have the option to directly refer a student to the child study team and to participate in meetings to determine whether an evaluation is warranted. The district is further directed to cease its practice of requiring an additional consent since this requirement may delay the process to identify and evaluate potentially disabled students.

**20-day Timeline** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not consistently include the referral form in the student's file. When these forms are included, referral dates are not consistently documented on the form. Additionally, because current procedures do not distinguish between a referral to LAT and referrals to the child study team (addressed within this section), identification meetings are not being conducted within 20 days.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure identification meetings are conducted within the required 20-day timeline and to ensure that all referral forms are dated and maintained in student files. The improvement plan must include a component to ensure referrals to LAT and referrals to the child study team are clearly identified as such.

## **Section V. Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the provision of interpretations of evaluation results in the parent's native language, required components of reports, 90-day timelines, components of a speech report, instructional implications, functional assessment for speech evaluations, and district representatives at eligibility and IEP meetings for students identified as eligible for speech-language services. The district's improvement plan sufficiently addresses these issues.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring regarding functional assessments for students determined eligible for special education and related services, and acceptance and/or rejection of reports (addressed in Section II).

**Areas of Need:**

**Functional Assessments** – During the on-site monitoring, a review of reports indicated reports of child study team members do not consistently include an observation of the student in other than a testing situation. In addition, reports do not consistently include an interview with the child’s teacher.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure evaluations consistently include an observation of the student in other than a testing situation and an interview with the classroom teacher.

**Section VI. Reevaluation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding three-year timeline for reevaluations, conducting reevaluations for preschool students by June 30th, and consideration of the need to conduct additional assessments. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

**Section VII: Eligibility**

**Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the participation of regular education teacher and special education teacher at eligibility meetings, missing statements in speech reports, and the use of current testing instruments. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the documentation of the provision of evaluation reports to parents.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Provision of Evaluation Reports** – During the on-site, information obtained through interviews with the child study teams and through record reviews indicated the district does not provide copies of child study team and/or speech-language evaluation reports to parents.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to ensure that parents are provided with copies of evaluation reports in a timely manner and that this provision is documented in the student file.



## **Section VIII: IEP**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding the provision of the IEP to parents and informing instructional staff of the content of the IEPs, participants, annual reviews, revisions to the IEP, IEP components, implementation of the IEP, having an IEP in effect at the beginning of each school year, and the provision of related services. The improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

## **Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding in-class support at all grade levels, district programs for students with behavioral disabilities, classes for autistic and multiply disabled students at upper elementary and middle school grades, placement in regular education early childhood programs, and participation of out-of-district students in extracurricular activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

## **Section X: Transition**

### **Summary of Findings:**

#### **A. Transition from EIP to PSD**

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding a smooth transition from early intervention programs to preschool programs for students with disabilities, the receipt of referrals 120 days prior to the student attaining age three, and the coordination of transition services for students exiting early intervention programs to preschool settings. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address these areas of need.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Transition** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to develop a procedure to coordinate transition of students from Early Intervention Programs to pre-school disabled programs.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.

**Participation in Transition Planning Conference** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document the need for Child Study Team members to consistently participate in the transition planning conference from early intervention to preschool.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure Child Study Team members participate in preschool transition planning conferences arranged by the Department of Health and Senior Services.

**Requests for Initial Evaluations for Preschoolers** - The district identified in the self-assessment document the need to have requests for initial evaluations of preschoolers forwarded to them at least 120 days prior to attaining the age of three.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that requests for preschool evaluations are received at least 120 days prior to the child attaining age three. The plan must include a mechanism to ensure that those preschoolers identified less than 120 days prior to attaining age three are evaluated and placed before their third birthday.

## **B. Transition from School to Post-School**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process the district identified areas of need regarding student participation in community activities, transition services, community involvement, parent access to support agencies/organizations, community programs and organizations, community services, agency representation at IEP meetings, transition statements, employment objectives, annual goals and objectives for post secondary outcomes, identification of a liaison, student preparation and participation in IEP meetings, partnerships with community services and the need to develop procedures to monitor the transition services of outside agencies. The district's improvement plan sufficiently addresses some of these areas of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding student interests and preferences, statement of transition service needs, and procedures when agencies fail to provide transition services. Although the district is beginning to address transition concerns, systemic implementation has not been fully established. The district has begun to incorporate the recommended NJDOE IEP pages for both the Statement of Transition Services Needs and the Statement of Needed Transition Services into IEPs. However, not all team members complete the forms consistently or appropriately.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Increase Student Participation in Community Activities** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document, the need to increase student participation in community activities.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure increased student participation in community activities.

**Coordination of Transition Services** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document the need to enhance and coordinate transition services to support special education students with emphasis on services to the most severely impaired students.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to ensure appropriate transition services are provided to classified students, including those services to the most severely impaired students.

**Community Involvement** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document the need to develop community involvement opportunities for severely impaired students.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to ensure severely impaired students are afforded the opportunity to be involved in activities within their community.

**Agency Invitation** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document the need to invite representatives of agencies likely to provide or pay for transition services to IEP meetings when transition is going to be considered or discussed.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to ensure that if transition services are going to be considered or discussed at an IEP meeting, both the student and the agency(s) likely to provide and/or pay for transition services are invited to attend the meeting.

**Agency Failure to Provide Transition Services** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not have a procedure in place when an outside agency fails to provide agreed upon transition services to students.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEP meetings are reconvened when outside agencies fail to provide agreed upon transition services.

**Student Interests and Preferences** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that student interests and preferences are not always discussed at the beginning of the meeting and are not documented in the IEP.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students' desired post-outcomes and their preferences and interests are discussed at the beginning of the IEP meeting to ensure the IEP process is outcome-oriented. The plan must include a component to address how this information will be documented in the students' IEP.

**Statement of Transition Services Needs** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that students' post-school outcomes are not consistently reflected in the student's course of study and that these courses of study are not listed for the coming year as part of the student's Transition Services Needs. When there is a change to the student's course of study, the district does not consistently reconvene the IEP meeting to revise the IEP.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure post-school outcomes are consistently reflected in the student's courses of study and that courses of study are identified and included in the IEP for the coming year. It is recommended the IEP team includes other

courses as options in the event the student is unable to take the specific course listed in the IEP, the course is not offered, etc.

## **XI: Discipline**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding notification to the case manager, functional behavior assessment plans, provision of services during short-term removals, the provision of related services (addressed in Section II), and staff in-service. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address in-service needs.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the need to develop behavior plans, parental rights, and the need to document manifestation determination meetings.

### **Area of Need:**

**Notification of Removal to Case Managers** - The self-assessment document indicated that written notification is not provided to the case manager when a student is removed from his/her placement.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure written notifications of removals are provided to the case manager.

**Functional Behavioral Assessments** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document that functional behavioral assessments are not conducted for students manifesting behavioral difficulties and who were suspended for more than ten days.

- The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure functional behavioral assessments are conducted, when necessary.

**Provision of Services When Short-term Removals are Proposed** - The district has identified in the self-assessment document that when a short-term removal is proposed for a student with disabilities special education teachers need to be consulted to determine the extent of services that will be provided.

- The district is directed to revise their improvement plan to include procedures to ensure special education teachers and the case manager are consulted to determine the extent of services necessary to enable the student to progress in the regular education curriculum and to advance toward achieving the goals and objectives in the IEP.

**Behavior Intervention Plans** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined the district does not develop Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) for those students whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others.

- The district is directed to develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure BIPs are developed for students whose behavior impedes their learning or the learning of others.

**Parental Rights** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district does not inform parents of their rights to dispute a proposed alternative placement when a student is being removed beyond 10 days.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents are informed of their rights to dispute a proposed alternative program.

**Manifestation Determination Meetings** – During the on-site, a review of suspension records indicated notices of manifestation determination meetings and the decisions following the manifestation determination meetings were inconsistently documented in student records.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to develop procedures to ensure that notice of the manifestation meeting and documentation of the decision following the manifestation determination is maintained in the student record.

## **Section XII. Statewide Assessment:**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district identified areas of need regarding in-service workshops for team members on statewide assessment content and testing accommodations and modifications, the number of classified students who pass statewide assessments, in-service workshops on the Core Curriculum Content Standards, and the need to make staff and parents more aware of test modifications. In-service needs are addressed in Section I. Issues identified by the district in the self-assessment document that are improvement issues but not compliance issues are addressed in the district's improvement plan.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the identification of alternate assessments and documentation in IEPs of the title of the appropriate Statewide Assessments.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Identification of Alternate Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the district has not adopted an alternate assessment for those students determined to be exempted from participating in statewide assessments.

- The district is directed to adopt an alternate assessment until such time one is developed by the Department of Education.

**Documenting and/or Identifying Statewide Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring visit, it was determined that the name of the appropriate statewide assessment (ESPA, GEPA or HSPT) was not consistently identified in IEPs. Additionally, modifications and/or accommodations for those assessments are not consistently included in IEPs

- The district is directed to revise its improvement to include procedures to ensure that statewide assessments are documented in IEPs. The improvement plan must also include procedures to ensure that any necessary modifications and/or accommodations for students are included in the IEPs.

### **Section XIII. Graduation Requirements**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

The district's data indicates a high rate of graduation and very low dropout rate for special education students between 1997-1998 and 1998-1999.

During the self-assessment process the district identified an area of need regarding graduation data. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding graduation requirements and documentation of written notice.

#### **Area (s) of Need:**

**High School Graduation Requirements** - During the on-site monitoring visit, a review of IEPs indicated the district does not consistently identify high school graduation requirements in IEPs.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that beginning at age 14, IEPs specifically address the graduation requirements that would qualify them for the state endorsed diploma issued by the school district.

**Written Notice** - During the on-site monitoring visit, an area of need was identified regarding documentation of written notice to parents. In an interview with child study team members it was stated that sometimes graduation requirements are discussed with students and parents at IEP meetings held a year before graduation. However, review of student records failed to document whether the parent and/or student were provided with written notice of graduation.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the parent and/or adult student is provided with written notice of graduation. It is recommended that the district use the "Notices of Graduation" form developed by the NJDOE, Office of Special Education Programs.

## **Section XIV. Programs and Services**

### **Summary of Findings:**

The district identified in the self-assessment the need to fill vacancies in child study team positions in a timely manner, to provide separate periods of instruction for supplementary resource instruction and replacement resource instruction, group size for support resource instruction at the elementary level, and to develop written descriptions of each special class program. The district's improvement plan sufficiently addresses this area of need.

## **Section XV. Student Records**

### **Summary of Findings:**

The district identified in the self-assessment document an area of need regarding the location of additional student files and the rights of parents and/or adult students to inspect student records. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address the location of other files.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Rights of Parents/Adult Students to Inspect Student Records** - The district identified in the self-assessment document that it must develop a means to notify parents and/or adult students of their right to inspect/review student records in accordance with the legal requirements.

- The district is directed to revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents and/or adult students are notified regarding their rights to inspect and review student records.

## Summary

An on-site special education monitoring was conducted in the South Orange-Maplewood School District on January 8-12, 2001. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. As a result of the thorough and comprehensive review conducted by the district during the self-assessment process, the district was able to self-identify a number of areas that require improvement as well as develop an improvement plan that is sufficient to address most of identified areas.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed concerns with issues that had occurred prior to the hiring of a new director of special education. Many of the concerns stated by the parents during the focus group meeting had been identified by the district during the self-assessment process.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, related services, native language, notices of meeting, written notice, referral process, functional assessment for speech evaluations, provision of written evaluation reports to parents, reevaluation timelines, IEP participants/components/ goals and objectives/implementation, and annual reviews, LRE for preschool special education students, regular education access, transition, discipline procedures and documentation, accommodations and modifications for statewide assessments, class size, and access to student records.

The on-site monitoring visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding placement by the child's third birthday, implementation of the IEP, provision of IEP to parents and teachers prior to implementation, provision of interim IEP for transfer students, participation of regular education teachers at meetings, referral procedures, Child Find activities, timelines for identification meetings, completion of summer referrals, functional assessment, acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports and the provision of reports to parents, IEP documentation of student interests and preferences, discipline procedures, identification of statewide assessments, and the provision of written notice of graduation.

Any improvement plan activity that requires the development of procedures must include a component to ensure administrative oversight of the procedures on a district-wide basis.

Within forty-five (45) days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district is required to revise its improvement plan to address the additional areas of need and to resubmit the plan to the Office of Special Education Programs.