

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

District: Springfield Township School District

County: Burlington

Monitoring Dates: January 29, 2004 and April 1, 2004

Monitoring Team: Jane Marano

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Springfield 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 Springfield 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 Springfield 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 Springfield Township Elementary School on January 29, 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, building vice-principal, general education and special education teachers, speech therapist, parents, and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The Springfield Township School District is commended for the large number of innovative programs at various grade levels. The district offers after school and weekend literacy tutoring services to all students through the "Access-Collaboration-Equity (ACE): After School Technology Literacy Center", that is funded by a technology grant

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from the New Jersey Department of Education. The goals of ACE are to advance literacy skills and competencies aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and to provide parents with information and resources to assist their children in developing effective study skills and test taking strategies, meaningful time-on-task skills and better study habits for school.

The district is commended for its "Peer Mediation" Program and "Leader's Club" which assists students in setting goals, making decisions, and improving self-management skills in a range of settings including school, home and community. Additionally, students participate in the Burlington County Freeholders Model Congress Program, the Burlington County Sheriffs Department Program, the D.A.R.E Program, and the Character Education John Templeton Laws of Life Essay Contest.

District personnel and parents reported that because of the many and varied programs sponsored by the Springfield Township School District, there is an inclusive atmosphere throughout the district and community.

Part One Data Summary:

The Springfield Township School District is commended for the number of classified students placed in general education settings over the last several years. Review of data indicates that in 2001 55.7% of classified students were placed in general education placements for more than 80% of the school day. This percentage increased to 61.4% in 2002. This is above the state's average of 41.6%.

The Springfield Township School District data indicated a classification rate at 14.7% (excluding speech-language services) in 2002, which is slightly higher than the state average of 13.9%. In response to these data, the district has taken action to reduce the classification rate through proactive services such as implementing an alternative reading program and extending the school day by one hour for kindergarten aged students who are experiencing difficulties. The district's improvement plan will be sufficient to address this concern.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Statewide Assessment, and Graduation 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of related services, 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 monitoring the implementation of IEPs and the provision of extended school year

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services for students classified as preschool disabled. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year (ESY) – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and a review of records that when extended school year services are warranted, the IEP lacks a description of the ESY program, type, duration and frequency of services and goals/objectives.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure IEPs contain a description of the ESY program, including type, frequency, and duration of services as well as goals and objectives. Implementation of these activities will ensure students receive extended school year services that support the educational program and address the issues related to regression/recoupment. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the plan.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures for locating and training surrogate parents, consent for initial evaluation/initial implementation of IEP/ reevaluation/release of student records, provision of notice of a meeting, conducting required meetings, provision of written notice, conducting independent evaluations, and native language.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of content of notice of a meeting, content of written notice, and documentation of attempts to secure parent participation at speech-language meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. 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 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/participants.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of date of receipt of referral from the Intervention and Referral Services Team, health summaries, and audiometric/hearing screenings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. 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 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, functional 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.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of development of written reports for students identified as eligible for speech/language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. 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 visit.

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals/objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines and teacher access.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of regular education teacher participation at meetings for out-of-district students and opportunity for parents to observe proposed placement. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues. 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 visit.

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Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision making, documentation of the Oberti considerations, provision of supplemental aids and services, access to regular education programs for in-district classified students, and continuum of program options.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notification and participation of out-of-district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School is not applicable for this kindergarten to grade six school district.

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of documentation of participation in the transition planning conference and early intervention to preschool disabled by age 3. 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.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of procedures, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations meetings, interim alternative educational settings, and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of notification of suspensions to the case managers. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consultation time and case management responsibility for speech-language specialist. 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.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access, access sheets, and maintenance/destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of documentation of other location of records. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this 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 this area.

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 Springfield Township School District on January 29, 2004. 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 nearly all areas 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 implementation of activities to bring about correction in some areas identified during the self-assessment process..

A review of data indicated the district is providing services to a significant number of students in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. Furthermore, the district has maintained a placement rate for classified students in the general education setting that has been consistently above the state average. The Springfield Township School District's classification rate is slightly above the state average. The district identified the need for an alternative reading program in the self-assessment and has begun to implement the program in an effort to decrease the classification rate.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, 6 parents attended. Parents reported their satisfaction with the district's programs and services, and the communication between themselves and the school staff. Some parents expressed concerns regarding transportation issues for preschool disabled students, availability of one to one aides, the need for a parent support group, and extended school year services. The district took action following the focus meeting to correct the transportation and aide issues. In addition, the parents have established a parent support group and several meetings have already been conducted this school year. The district had identified the need regarding extended school year during the self-assessment process.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included special education policies and procedures, parent/staff development, dissemination of public information, provision of related services, length of school day/year, procedures for transfer students, facilities, staff certification, procedures for locating and training surrogate parents, consent for initial evaluation/initial implementation of IEP/ reevaluation/release of student records, provision of notice of a meeting, conducting required meetings, provision of written notice, conducting independent evaluations, native language, Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals, identification meetings timelines/participants, multi-disciplinary assessments, standardized assessments, functional 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, reevaluation, eligibility, IEP meetings, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals/objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, implemented dates annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, teacher access to IEPs, individualized decision making, documentation of the Oberti considerations, provision of supplemental aids and services, access to regular education programs for in-district classified students, continuum of program options,

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procedures, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations meetings, interim alternative educational settings, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, statewide assessment, graduation (K-6 district), class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction, access to pupil records, access sheets, and maintenance/destruction of pupil records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding monitoring the implementation of IEPs, provision of extended school year services for students classified as preschool disabled, content of notice of a meeting, content of written notice, documentation of attempts to secure parent participation at speech-language meetings, documentation of date of receipt of referral from the Intervention and Referral Services Team, health summaries, audiometric/hearing screenings, development of written reports for students identified as eligible for speech/language services, regular education teacher participation at meetings for out of district students, opportunity for parents to observe proposed placement, notification and participation of out of district students in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, documentation of participation in the transition planning conference, early intervention program to preschool disabled program by age 3, notification of suspensions to the case managers, consultation time, case management responsibility for speech-language specialist, and documentation of other location of records.

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need within the various standards regarding documentation of extended school year services.

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