

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

**District:** Stone Harbor School District **County:** Cape May  
**Monitoring Dates:** October 1, 2004  
**Monitoring Team:** Michael Lee and Kenneth Richards

***Background Information:***

During the 2003– 2004 school year, the Stone Harbor School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Stone Harbor School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 Stone Harbor 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 Stone Harbor Elementary School, on September 23, 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principal, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

**District Strengths:**

The district is commended for recognizing the importance of the use of technology in the classroom. Staff members have been trained in technology, such as videoconference equipment, which is now being used in the classroom. IDEA funds have been utilized to purchase software that allows teachers to supplement their curriculum to meet the needs

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of their students and support the inclusion of students with disabilities in their general education classrooms.

The district provides opportunities for parent participation through the Parent Teacher Connection. This group has continued to provide funding for speakers to address parent issues at meetings after school. Issues relevant to parents of students with disabilities and students who are nondisabled are included. The school also reaches out to the community through a community visitation day each fall, author visits, "Adopt a Cop", and projects with the community senior citizens. These activities involve both students with disabilities and their nondisabled peers.

The district also provides small class sizes with a special education teacher who is also certified in elementary education and reading, which promotes an instructional environment to meet the individual needs of the students.

### **Data Summary**

The district indicated that it provides special education and related services to thirteen students eligible for special education and related services and eligible for speech and language services. Data provided by the district indicate that 100% of the students participate in general education at least 80% of the school day as compared to the state average of 43%. The district's classification rate is 11.2% as compared to the state average of 14.1%. The district data reflect a three year trend of being below the state classification average.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:***

**General Procedures, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individual Education Program (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment, Preschool and School Age Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and 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.

### ***Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)***

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of extended school year, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of related services. The district identified that verification of the provision of related services was not documented. As a result of on-site monitoring activities it was determined that documentation of the provision of related services is now maintained.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding related services.

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### Area of Need:

**Related Services** - Information obtained through record review indicated that related service goals and objectives are not consistently documented in IEPs for students eligible for special education and related services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure goals and objectives for related services are included in the IEPs of students who receive these services. Implementation of these activities will ensure that related services will address the individualized learning needs of each student. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.**

### *Section III: Procedural Safeguards*

#### Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations and meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks in-service training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.**

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 compliance in the areas of child find activities, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings, timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the areas of pre-referral interventions. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks adequate information regarding administrative oversight required to bring about corrective action. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.**

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

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**Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary reports, standardized assessments; written reports signed and dated, bilingual evaluations and acceptance or rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concern in the areas of written reports and functional assessments for speech and language. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks adequate administrative oversight activities to bring about the required change. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.**

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

**Section XIII: Graduation**

**Summary of Findings:**

The district is an elementary school district and high school graduation requirements are not required.

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## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Stone Harbor School on October 1, 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.

A review of the data indicated a classification rate below the state average. In addition, the data indicate that the district exceeds the state average in placing students in general education classes. One hundred percent of the students with disabilities receive instruction in general education classes, with appropriate supplemental aides and services, more than 80% of the school day.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, one parent attended and expressed her satisfaction with of the district's programs and services. In order to obtain a broader input sample, parents were randomly selected and interviewed by phone. Parents expressed overwhelming support for the programs and services provided by the district. Parents expressed satisfaction with regular education access and communication with their child's case manager. No concerns were identified by the parents.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during the self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individual Education Plan, Least Restrictive Environment, Preschool and School Age Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Programs and Services and Student Records.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included consent, notice of meetings, written notice, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, meetings, child find activities, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings, timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary reports, standardized assessments, functional assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, written reports for students eligible for special education and related services, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding related services, surrogate parents, pre-referral interventions and speech and language functional assessments and written reports.

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need within the various standards regarding related services.

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