

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

**District:** Summit City School District

**County:** Union

**Monitoring Dates:** December 4, 5, 2001

**Monitoring Team:** Deborah Masarsky, Stephen A. Coplin, Barbara J. Tucker,  
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**Background Information**

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Summit City School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Summit City 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 Summit City 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 New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members on November 26, 2001. 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, and child study team members.

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

**District Strengths:**

The district is commended for providing the following unique programs for special education students:

The **Speakers' Bureau** program is comprised of high school special education students who support middle and elementary school students in developing their self-advocacy skills. These activities assist students in building self-confidence and preparing them to transition to their next grade level.

The **After School Homework Program** was developed by the district to oversee the completion of homework assignments and provide instructional assistance to special education students in grades 3-5. A special education teacher and a regular education teacher staff the program.

The **Parents as Teachers (P.A.T) Program** for preschool age students is offered to at-risk students and their parents. It provides instruction through demonstration, behavior modeling, as well as strategies and material that parents may use at home to prepare students for a successful school experience. The P. A. T. trainer visits the home once a month to meet with parents, discuss parenting strategies and help connect parents to the schools.

The district has created the **Preschool Disabled Website** to allow parents to communicate with staff of the preschool disabled program via the internet.

The **Home School Advocate** program provides a liaison between the home and the school who, in turn, services at-risk and special education students. The liaison acts as an educational advocate, enhances the ability of parents to become more effectively involved in their child's education, increases parental involvement in the schools and helps students develop a sense of personal growth and worth. The home advocate is frequently involved in crisis situations to speak with students, work with families and provide an after school homework program.

**Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**General Provisions, Location/Referral/Identification (LRI), Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements, 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. The district is commended for its successful efforts to maintain compliant policies and procedures in the majority of federal and state statutes and regulations contained in these standards.

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

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

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP documentation of frequency/ duration/ location of related services, goals/objectives for related services, length of school day/year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern regarding documentation of the provision of related services. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

**Area of Need:**

**Documentation of Extended School Year (ESY)** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff and parent interviews that although the district considers the need for ESY program for all students, IEPs do not contain documentation of the consideration except for those students who are determined eligible to receive this service.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the district documents its consideration of ESY services in IEPs. The improvement plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

**Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, consent, content/provision of notices of a meeting/ written notices, meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding meetings in the native language of the parent(s) and the use of translators at meetings or for translating written notice. The district has developed an improvement plan that 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**

**Section V: Evaluation**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multidisciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations and acceptance/rejection of outside reports.

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

**Section X: Transition to Post-School**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in all areas of student interests and preferences, statement of Transition Service Needs, Needed Transition Services statement, student invitations, post-secondary liaison and community linkages/resources.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns regarding invitations to agencies and documentation of agency participation in the statement of technical consultation within IEPs. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

**Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Summit City School District on December 4, 5, 2001. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify 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 its successful efforts in providing special education programs and services in a manner that is consistently 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/services especially in-class/team teaching programs and the Speakers' Bureau program.

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

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Location/Referral/Identification (LRI), Reevaluation, Eligibility, IEP, LRE, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements, Programs and Services and Student Records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding documentation of the provision of related services, conducting meetings in native language, use of translators, translation of notices, invitations to agencies and documentation of agency participation in the statement of technical consultation within IEPs.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the Evaluation standard regarding functional assessments and within the FAPE standard regarding the documentation of extended school year.

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 two areas of need identified during the on-site visit.