

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

District: Teaneck Public School

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: December 10 and 11, 2002

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller, Damen Cooper, Jenifer Tucci and Janet Wright

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Teaneck Public School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Teaneck Public School 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 Teaneck Public School 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 Eugene Field School on December 3, 2002. 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 administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for the development of programs that address the needs of students with disabilities and serve to afford these students the opportunity to participate in these programs with their nondisabled peers. All of the programs identified in the **District Strengths** section of this report include students with disabilities.

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The district is commended for a Best Practices/Star Schools Program for the district's Early Literacy Initiative in the elementary schools. Elementary students are also provided with an Even Start Family Literacy Program that supports families in the community with outreach services, parent education and English language classes.

The district provides middle school students with expanded programs in Environmental Science and Astronomy. This hands-on program focuses on actively engaging students in the learning process and use of the Star Lab planetariums.

The SITE program for sixth grade students was designed to help students imagine, design and create inventions to solve identified problems facing society today.

The district also provides Soar to Success to heighten literacy levels of middle school age students through the research supported strategy of reciprocal teaching as well as providing the Wilson Reading Program to enhance reading skills so students can participate in general education to the maximum extent.

The district also provides high school students with the formation of arts academies with seven focus areas: dance, vocal music, instrumental music, acting, technical theatre, filmmaking and visual art. The Science and Technology Academy provides instruction in math, science and technology.

The district also provides an Alternative High School program as well as the Apollo/Twilight Program for students who are unable to achieve in a traditional high school setting. These programs afford students the opportunity to participate in work study programs and meet graduation requirements.

The district also employs a full-time transition coordinator who prepares students for life after high school. All freshmen participate in a seminar program designed to assist students in discovering and mastering the skills students need to become successful, independent, lifelong learners.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures. The district has submitted their policies and procedures to the county office. The district further identified concerns in the area of professional/parent development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified 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 length of school day/year, facilities and certifications.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of extended school year and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas. The district further identified concerns in the area of related services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, written notices and meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas. The district further identified concerns in the areas of native language and surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 health summary and identification meeting participants for students eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of referral process/pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, vision and hearing screenings, and participants at meetings for students eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas. The district further identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents and Child Find. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of surrogate parents. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of Child Find because it lacks procedures to include between the ages of three and twenty-one.** The plan needs to be revised to include these procedures.

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

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

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During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments, functional assessments, acceptance and rejection of outside evaluations and written reports. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants at planning meeting.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of timelines, planning meetings, conducting reevaluations without undue delay and reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, and the provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities 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 the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations/required statements, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety-day timelines, providing a copy of the IEP to parents/adult students prior to implementation and teacher access/responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address 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 the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation and the continuum. The district stated it needs to expand in-class support options because they don't have any at the elementary level. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, courses of study, preferences and interests, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement and student/agency invitations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting and procedural safeguards. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of participation, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation and alternative assessment. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of out-of-district participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of graduation requirements, choice of diploma and written notice of graduation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range waivers and group sizes.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of class size waivers, description of classes, common planning time and home instruction. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. **The district further identified concerns in the area of sufficient staff. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of concern because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.** The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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 area of access sheets.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of access/requests, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other locations. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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 Teaneck Public School District on December 9 and 10, 2002. 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 acknowledged for the outstanding accomplishment of identifying all areas of need and developing an improvement plan that with minor revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, many of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas that were determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as 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 and services. Parents expressed their desire for parent training, additional program options and expansion of related service programs. The parents identified many areas of concern similar to those identified by the district.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included dissemination of IDEA information, length of school day/year, facilities, certifications, independent evaluations, health summary, identification meeting participants, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, participants at reevaluation planning meetings, graduation participation, age range waivers, group sizes and access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, professional/parent development, extended school year, related services, transfer students, facilities, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, meetings, native language, Child Find, referral process/pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, ID meeting timelines, multi-disciplinary, functional assessments, written reports, accept/rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, participants, reevaluations completed by June 30th, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, consideration/required statements, goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, individualized decision making, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, courses and preferences, age sixteen needed transition services, agency involvement, student/agency invite, pre-school transition planning conference and transition from early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavior analysis, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternate educational setting, participation in statewide assessments, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, IEP

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graduation requirements, choice of diploma, written notice of graduation, class size waivers, home instruction, access to student records, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

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

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