

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

District: Union Township Public School District

County: Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: October 7, 2002

Monitoring Team: Dorothenia Boyd-Jackson, Stephen Coplin, Debbie Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Union Township Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Union Township Public 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 Union Township Public 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 Union Township Public School District on September 25, 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 operating a **School Store Program**. Under the direction of the teacher of the self-contained class, special education students operate a school store known as the "Tiger Cart." The store is open once a week, and students are provided the opportunity to sell basic school supplies to fellow students and staff. This

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program provides students with real-life experiences in money matters, customer relations and inventory management.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies/procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional and parent training activities. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of programs/related services, length of school day/year, facilities and certification of staff.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of adaptive physical education. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. The district further identified concerns in the area of assistive technology devices. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements. Additionally, the district identified concerns in the area of transfer student procedures. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of location of related services for students eligible for special education/related services and extended school year for students eligible for speech/language services.

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Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Location of Related Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that although the district has a section in their IEP to document the location of related services this section is not completed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that it documents the location of related services in IEPs. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Extended School Year (ESY) - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with parents that although speech therapists indicated they discussed ESY services for all students who are eligible for speech and language services, only, this discussion is not taking place.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech therapist discuss and consider ESY services for those students who are eligible for speech/language services, only. The plan needs to include a mechanism to document that discussion in the IEP. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, provision of notices for students eligible for special education/related services, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of selection and training of surrogate parents. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding content of notice of a meeting and provision of Notice of Eligibility.

Area(s) of Need:

Content of Notice of a Meeting - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that although written notice following an IEP meeting contains all required components, the remaining district notices do not contain the required components.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure its notices of a meeting and written notices are amended to include all required components. It is recommended the district adopt the notice forms developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

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Provision of Parental Notice of Eligibility for Students Eligible for Speech/language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the district does not provide Notice of Eligibility for students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Notice of Eligibility is provided for students determined eligible for speech/language services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines/participants for students eligible for special education/related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of Child Find. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this element.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the identification meeting timeline/participants for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Identification Meeting Timeline/Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the district does not convene an identification meeting with the required participants within the 20-day timeline for students referred for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the speech/language therapists, upon receipt of a written referral, convene an identification meeting with the required participants within 20 days. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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/functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, and bilingual evaluations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of acceptance/rejection of reports. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding speech/language evaluation reports.

Area(s) of Need:

Speech/Language Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that speech/language evaluation reports do not contain the required components of a functional assessment nor do they include an educational impact statement from the classroom teacher.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech/language reports include all required components. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of convening planning meetings with required participants, 3-year reevaluation timelines for students eligible for special education/related services and reevaluations completed by June 30th of the student's last year in preschool.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding 3-year reevaluation timelines for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area(s) of Need:

3-Year Reevaluation Timeline - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that speech therapists do not complete reevaluations within the required three-year timeline.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure speech therapists conduct and complete reevaluations within required timelines. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD),

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signatures of agreement/disagreement with rationale when appropriate and provision of evaluation reports to parents of students eligible for special education/related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of convening eligibility meetings with required participants for students eligible for speech/language services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need 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.

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

Area(s) of Need:

Provision of Speech/language Evaluation Reports to Parents - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that the speech therapists do not provide evaluation reports to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting conference.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the provision of speech/language evaluation reports to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting conference. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of convening IEP meetings with required participants for students eligible for special education/related services, IEP considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education/related services, Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP), alignment of goals/objectives with the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines for students eligible for special education and related services, IEPs to parents prior to implementation, 90-day timeline and teacher access/responsibility for implementation of the IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of IEP considerations/required statements for students eligible for speech/language services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need 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.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding annual review timelines for students eligible for speech/language services and IEP meeting participants.

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Area(s) of Need:

Annual Review Timelines for Students Eligible for Speech/Language Services - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review that the district does not complete annual reviews within the required timeline for students eligible for speech/language services.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that annual reviews are completed within required timelines for students eligible for speech/language services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

IEP Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through record review and interviews with staff that regular and/or special education teachers do not consistently attend IEP meetings as required by Code.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure regular education and special education teachers attend IEP meetings. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of developing special class program descriptions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. The district further identified concerns in the area of consultation time for teachers. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need 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.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student record access/request, and access sheets.

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

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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 Union Township Public School District on October 7, 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 commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, several parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents are particularly pleased with the direction the district has moved in regarding the provision of programs/services to children, modification/supplementary aids and services and the continuum of program options available in-district. In addition, parents expressed their satisfaction with the promptness of responses from child study team members and the high quality of the standards set forth by the director of student services.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards are Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Graduation Requirements.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies/procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, provision of programs/related services, length of school day/year, facilities, certification of staff, consent, provision of notices for students eligible for special education/related services, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, convening identification meetings/timelines with required participants for students eligible for special education/related services, multidisciplinary/functional assessments for students eligible for special education/related services, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, convening reevaluation planning meetings with required participants, 3-year reevaluation timeline for students eligible for special education/related services, reevaluations completed by June 30th of a student's last year in preschool, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, agreement/disagreement with rationale when appropriate, provision of evaluation reports to parents of students eligible for special education/related services, IEP meeting/participants for students eligible for special education/related services, IEP considerations/required statements for students eligible for special education/related services, Present Levels of Educational Performance, alignment of goals/objectives with the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, annual review timelines for students eligible for special education/related services, provision of IEPs to parents prior to implementation, 90-day timeline, teacher access/responsibility for implementing the IEP, discipline procedures, class/group size, age range, home instruction, student record access/requests and access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional/parent training activities, adaptive physical education, assistive technology devices, transfer student procedures, selection and training of surrogate parents, Child Find activities, acceptance/rejection of reports, convening eligibility meetings with the required participants for students eligible for speech/language services, IEP

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considerations/required statements for students eligible for speech/language services, special class program descriptions, consultation time for teachers and location of student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding documentation of location of related services, extended school year for students eligible for speech/language services, content of notice of a meeting, provision of Notice of Eligibility for students eligible for speech/language services, convening an identification meeting/timeline with required participants for students eligible for speech/language services, speech/language reports, 3-year reevaluation timeline, provision of speech/language reports to parents, annual review timelines for students eligible for speech/language services, IEP meeting participants and discipline procedures.

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