

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Warren County Technical School

County: Warren

Monitoring Dates: January 7, 8 and 9, 2002

Monitoring Team: Zola Mills, Jennifer DeSaye, and Gladys Miller

Background Information:

During the 2000 – 2001 school year, the Warren County Technical School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Warren County Technical 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 Warren County Technical School 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 NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the school on December 11, 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.

District Strengths

The district is commended for their commitment to staff development and training to forward their inclusion initiative. The district consistently includes their special education

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students in both academic and extracurricular/nonacademic activities. The district also offers after school tutoring and transportation for all students.

The district provides a free fifth year program for students within Warren County. This program allows a student to obtain a certification, an additional certification or licensure either within their field of study or in another field.

The district offers a wide variety of vocational and technical fields of study. Many of the vocational, technical and academic courses offered by the district are credited courses that are accepted by local colleges. The Holocaust/Genocide class has won various national awards for excellence.

Students participate in the Skills USA/VICA Organization, which is a national organization emphasizing organization at work, high ethical standards, superior work skills and life long education. Additionally, Skills USA/VICA offers national competitions that earned the district gold awards last year in electronics and cabinetry.

The district provides a Cooperative Industrial Education (CIE) program. This program permits students to exchange their senior level shops for an actual work experience. In addition to the CIE program, apprenticeships are available to high school graduates or CIE participants that allow them to further develop their skills in a trade area. Nearly 100% of the students in the CIE program have been placed upon graduation. In addition, 100% of the cosmetology strand students who have taken the NJ state licensing examination have passed.

The Broadcast Media Arts program has received over 20 special awards for its radio and video productions and a national video award in the Videonics "Thoughts and Dreams" contest.

The district has initiated a new character education program called "PEERamid". Students and a trained counselor discuss pertinent age related issues in a structured setting. The goal is to aid students in developing skills in substance and alcohol abuse avoidance.

Furthermore, all freshmen participate in a field trip experience that fosters cooperation, problem solving, leadership, equity, environmental issues and peer relations are addressed.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Discipline, Graduation, 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.

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I. General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures and parent development.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of professional development. The district's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks an administrative oversight component and a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the proposed training. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

II. F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of transfer/incoming students. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this concern because it lacks procedures, training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

III. Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of surrogate parents, meetings, native language and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parental/adult student consent before release of records, notices of meetings and provision of written notice within fifteen days. The district's improvement plan does not address these issues. The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.

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

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IV. Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings and identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the referral process. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to meet this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component. The district also identified a concern in the area of health summaries. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this concern.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding dissemination of information concerning direct referrals.

Areas of Need:

Direct Referrals - The district's parent/student and staff handbooks do not include information regarding pre-referral or referral processes to either the CORE Team (intervention and referral services team) or to the CST.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to review and revise their parent/student and staff handbooks to ensure it disseminates information regarding pre-referral and referral processes.**

V. Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessments, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations and acceptance or rejection of reports.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of written reports. The district's plan is sufficient to address this concern.

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

VII. Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meeting, participants and documentation of eligibility.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of the provision of copies of evaluation reports to parents. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this concern because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The district further identified an area of need regarding the criteria for specific learning disability. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this concern.

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

VIII. IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants at Warren County Technical IEP meetings and the teachers' access to and knowledge of the IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of alignment of goals and objectives with core curriculum content standards. Though the district has completed the alignment, the plan is insufficient because it lacks in-service and an administrative oversight component to bring about full implementation of the required changes. The district further identified a concern regarding provision of notice of the age of majority. Although the district's plan did not address this issue, the district has already developed a letter of notification and a procedure to address this area of need. The district also identified an area of need regarding the provision of the IEP to parents/adult students prior to implementation and timely implementation of the IEP. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these concerns.

An issue was identified during the on-site visit regarding eighth grade transition IEP participation. It is recommended the district establish procedures with its sending districts to ensure its participation in IEP meetings for those students who will be enrolling in the Warren County Technical School.

IX. Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process the district accurately identified themselves compliant regarding the individualized decision-making process, access to regular education, continuum, nonacademic/extracurricular activities and documentation of considerations utilized in individualized decision-making.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of use of supplemental aids and services. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight

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component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

X. Transition

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of agency invitation to the transition meeting, agency involvement, inclusion of transition needs at age 14 and transition services beginning at age 16.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding student invitation.

Area of Need:

Student Invitation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that although there is high student participation at transition meetings, these invitations are not documented in student files.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it maintains documentation of student invitations to meetings where transition will be discussed.**

XII. Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation in statewide assessment, providing approved accommodations and modifications and documentation in the IEP.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of alternate assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this concern.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding accommodations and modifications.

Area of Need:

Accommodations and Modifications – During the on-site it was determined that though IEPs identified specific accommodations/modifications regarding test locations, interviews indicated that because of the lack of additional staff and space, students are not receiving these accommodations/adaptations when tested in their career majors or in their various shop classes.

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- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure staff and space are available in the event a student requires specific accommodations/modifications during testing. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures.**

XIV. Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of sufficient staffing and teacher assignments. The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas 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 components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding common planning time.

Area of Need:

Common Planning Time - During the on-site visit it was determined through the interview process and record review that special education and general education teachers do not have common planning time.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure special education teachers and general education teachers have common planning time. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Warren County Technical School on January 7, 8 and 9, 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify nearly all 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 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. Many of the concerns expressed by the parents during the focus group meeting had already been identified by the district during the self-assessment process. Additional concerns voiced by parents at the focus group included issues regarding supplementary aids and services and modifications within career majors. Parents also indicated they would like to see additional vocational strands for students who are more involved.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included the areas of Parent Development, policies and procedures, extended school year, the provision of related services, length of school day and year, facilities, certification, surrogate parents, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, summer referrals, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting and participants; multi-disciplinary, standardized, and functional assessments; bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of reports, reevaluation processes; eligibility meetings, participants, and documentation; IEP participants, teacher access and knowledge of IEP, individualized decision making, regular education access including nonacademic and extracurricular participation, continuum, agency invitation and involvement, age fourteen and sixteen transition procedures, discipline standards, statewide assessment including participation, accommodation/modifications and documentation, graduation requirements, discipline, class size and age range, group size and home instruction and student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, incoming/transfer students, consent prior to release of records, notice of meeting and provision of written notice, referral process, health summaries, written reports, evaluation reports to parents, specific learning disability criteria, alignment of goals with core curriculum standards, age of majority, copy of IEP prior to implementation, timely implementation, the training and utilization of supplemental aids and services, alternate assessment and insufficient staffing.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding dissemination of IDEA information, direct referrals, provision of accommodations and modifications in shop areas, student invitation and common planning time.

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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 areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.