

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

three legs of the instructional tripod—content, pedagogy, and relationships—with the aim of helping all students, particularly minority students. This project provides a forum for teachers to share strategies and receive support for trying innovative teaching techniques.

The district operates an Emergent Teacher Program which provides support for new teachers. Staff members new to the district come together on a monthly basis to review topics of interest and network with one another as a support system. This program also includes periodic one-on-one meetings with the superintendent as an additional support mechanism.

The district is in the second year of their Capacity Building Grant, which includes the provision of an inclusion facilitator at the high school. The facilitator provides support to regular education staff regarding accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities participating in regular education programs. In addition, there are teachers at the elementary level providing similar support to staff members.

At Evergreen Avenue School, the teachers are implementing a program called Schools Attuned. This nationally recognized program is designed to identify student learning attributes through a series of parent, teacher, and student surveys. Once analyzed, the results are used to suggest strategies for enhancing student achievement. A district analysis of test results indicates that this school has experienced a significant rise in achievement, which has been attributed in part to Schools Attuned. There are future plans to expand this program to other schools in the district.

The district provides a number of innovative programs designed to enhance student academic achievement, including a cross-district peer mentoring program, a grandparent volunteer tutoring program, the 25 book program (reading incentives), the Pyramid Project (which includes a supplemental tutoring program open to all seventh and eighth grade students), and several student recognition programs, including the Webster program at the elementary level and the Renaissance program at the Jr/Sr High School.

The district has also made a commitment of both time and resources to provide a number of highly individualized reading and math programs to students with disabilities. These programs are provided in addition to exposure to the Core Curriculum Content Standards and staff members report increased achievement as a result of these remedial programs.

At the Jr/Sr High School, students with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in the Bridges and Coin programs. A staff member works with each of the classified students to assess their career interests and develop a plan for transitioning to post-school activities. This information is then shared with the IEP team and utilized in developing student IEPs. The program is praised by teachers and parents. There have even been requests from regular education students to participate in this program.

The special education teachers have developed several innovative programs designed to enhance classroom instruction. At Evergreen Avenue School, the self-contained class operates “School Tools”, which is supported by funding through the Board of Education and Commerce Bank. This school store program is run by the students in the class and the store is open to the student body on a regular basis. The special education department also runs the “Hollywood Kids” program which gives students in the self-

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contained program the opportunity to write, direct, act in, and produce a film. The finished project is broadcast on local public access television.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Evaluation, Transition, 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of professional development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

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 extended school year, related services, transfer procedures, adaptive PE, length of school day/year, oversight of IEP implementation, facilities, and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of hearing aids. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

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 consent, notice timelines, meetings, surrogate parents, provision of interpreters at meetings, and independent evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding notice of a meeting, written notice, and native language.

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Area(s) of Need:

Notice of a Meeting - During on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with district personnel indicate that the district's invitation to an IEP meeting does not include the required components. Letters inviting parents to IEP meetings do not inform parents of their right to invite other persons to the meeting. In addition, for students aged fourteen and older, the invitation to an IEP meeting does not indicate that transition planning will be discussed.

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

Written Notice - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with district personnel indicate that when written notice is provided to parents, it does not consistently include the correct version of the short procedural safeguards statement. With the exception of written notice of an IEP, the short statement used by the district does not include all the required contact information.

- **The district will revise its short procedural safeguard statement to include all required components. It is recommended that the district adopt the statement developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

Native Language - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with personnel indicate that the district does not consistently provide written notice in the native language of the parent, even when feasible. Although the district does provide PRISE in other languages, written notice is not consistently translated.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure written notice is provided in the native language of the parent when feasible.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, referral process, direct referrals, summer referrals, and identification meeting timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of pre-referral interventions. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue. The district further identified concerns regarding the overrepresentation of minority students in special education. The district will continue to receive technical assistance from the Office of Special Education Programs and the Office for Civil Rights regarding improvement plan activities.

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Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding identification meeting participants and health summaries and vision/hearing screenings for preschoolers.

Area(s) of Need:

Identification Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews indicated that a regular education teacher is not in attendance at identification meetings for preschoolers.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure a regular education teacher attends identification meetings for preschoolers. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Health Summaries and Vision/Hearing Screenings - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews indicated that health summaries and vision/hearing screening are not conducted by the district when a preschool student is referred to the team.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that health summaries and vision/hearing screenings are conducted for preschoolers referred to the CST. The 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 reevaluation timelines, planning meetings and participants, and reevaluations for students turning age five for students classified as eligible for special education and related services.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding reevaluations for students classified as eligible for speech-language services.

Area(s) of Need:

Speech Reevaluations - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with speech-language specialists indicate that reevaluations are not conducted for students classified as eligible for speech language services prior to their declassification. Declassifications occur at the time of the annual review, without documenting a review of existing data, determining the need for additional assessments, requesting parental consent for those assessments, and if no additional assessments are required, notifying the parents of their right to request an assessment.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that reevaluations are conducted for students when**

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declassification is being considered. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings and participants, eligibility criteria, documentation of eligibility, and provision of child study team evaluation reports to parents.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding signatures of agreement/disagreement and provision of speech evaluation reports to parents.

Area(s) of Need:

Signatures of Agreement/Disagreement - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with district personnel indicated that teachers are not signing their agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure teachers document their agreement or disagreement with the eligibility determinations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Evaluation Reports - During the on-site monitoring, a review of records and interviews with speech-language specialists indicated that speech evaluation reports are not provided to parents prior to eligibility meetings.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech evaluation reports are provided to parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant 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 IEP components, IEP goals and objectives, IEP implementation dates, age of majority, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, and teacher knowledge/access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of procedures for revising IEPs and IEP meeting participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this issue.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Oberti considerations, participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, and access to regular education programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of individualized decision-making, continuum and supplemental aids and services. The district identified staff attitude and funding as barriers. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these issues.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking and procedures for placement in interim alternative education settings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of identification of students as potentially disabled, discipline procedures, functional behavioral assessments, behavior intervention plans, and manifestation determinations. **The district's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because the timelines identified for completion of activities have not been met. The district needs to identify new timelines and implement the identified activities by those newly identified dates.**

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 IEP requirements, diploma, and participation.

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

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 Woodbury School District on January 21, 22, and 23, 2003. 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 minor revisions 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. In addition, the district offers a substantial number of unique and innovative programs designed to support teacher instruction and enhance student achievement.

A focus group meeting was held prior to the monitoring visit. Although only a few parents attended, they expressed satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. A few concerns were raised regarding inclusion and parent/district communication.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included Evaluation, Transition, 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 special education policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, provision of related services, length of school day/year, transfer procedures, facilities, certification, consent, timelines for provision of written notice, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral procedures, reevaluation procedures for students classified as eligible for special education and related services, eligibility determination, IEP development, IEP documentation, age of majority, timelines for annual reviews, initial evaluations, and reevaluations, access to regular education, participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, and procedures for tracking suspensions.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding staff development, hearing aids, pre-referral interventions, overrepresentation of minority students in special education, participation of vocational personnel at IEP meetings, documentation of frequency, location, and duration of resource services, procedures for revising IEPs, individualized decision-making, supplemental aids and services, continuum of program options, discipline procedures, and written notice of graduation.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding components of notice of a meeting and written notice, native language, identification meeting participants and health summaries and vision/hearing screenings for preschool students, reevaluation procedures, documentation of agreement and/or disagreement, and provision of speech evaluation reports to parents prior to eligibility meetings.

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