

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

District: Camden Academy Charter High School

County: Camden

Monitoring Dates: January 12 -13, 2005

Monitoring Team: Jane Marano and Kenneth Richards

Background Information:

During the 2003-2004 school year, the Camden Academy Charter High School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Camden Academy Charter High School with an opportunity to evaluate performance, 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 permit the charter school the opportunity to identify areas of strength and promising practices, as well as areas needing improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The Camden Academy Charter High 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 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 Camden Academy Charter High School on the evening of January 5, 2005 and one parent attended. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the subsequent monitoring activities.

During the on-site visit, the OSEP reviewed charter school documents, including policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the special education administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers and child study team members.

Charter School Strengths:

The charter school is commended for their partnership with the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated to provide a mentoring program, **Delta Teen Program**, for both general education and special education female students. The program gives the students an opportunity to interact with various professionals, college students from

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Rowan University and community leaders and to develop self-confidence, improve self-esteem and develop career awareness. The program addresses such topics as academic, social/personal, leadership, and technology development. The charter school also has a mentoring program for male students. Additionally, the charter school integrates the philosophy of peer mediation into daily activities. This process has proven to be especially helpful as a pre-referral intervention strategy for students with emotional and behavioral issues.

Data Summary:

The Camden Academy Charter High School is a new charter school. The first graduating class was in June, 2005. The classification rate for Camden Academy Charter School has been slightly below the state average for the last two years. The number of students with disabilities who are educated in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day increased from 40.4% in 2003 to 48.2% in 2004. The staff indicated that addressing the needs of students with disabilities in general education settings is a top priority.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation Eligibility, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the charter school during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification (LRI)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school indicated compliance in the areas of Child Find, referral process, parent/staff direct referrals and identification meeting timelines and participants.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of pre-referral documentation of interventions and effectiveness of interventions. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

Area(s) of Need:

Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings – During the on-site visit it was determined that at the time of the identification meeting, following referral by a parent, the health summary and results of the vision and hearing screenings are not available.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the nurse develops health summaries and conducts vision and hearing screenings for every child referred for an evaluation and provides the CST with the information prior to the identification meeting. Implementation of these activities will ensure**

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the identification team members have the necessary information to identify suspected areas of disability and to determine the assessments needed to make an appropriate eligibility determination. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school indicated compliance in the areas of standardized assessments, multi-disciplinary assessments, and written reports for students eligible for special education and related services, bilingual evaluations, and documentation of acceptance and rejection of reports.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding functional assessments.

Area(s) Need:

Components of Functional Assessments – During the on-site visit it was determined through record review and interviews that functional assessments do not consistently include structured observations in other than a testing setting.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that evaluators include all required components of functional assessments in their reports. Implementation of these activities will ensure eligibility determinations are based on all required data obtained through the assessment process. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school indicated compliance in the areas of decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, general education access and notification of nonacademic and extracurricular activities to students educated outside of the district.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of continuum because in-class support is not always available due to staffing and scheduling restrictions. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

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Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school indicated compliance in the area of procedures for the provision of diplomas, participation in graduation and written notice of graduation. The charter school's first graduating class was in June, 2005.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of documentation of IEP requirements for graduation. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section XIV: Program and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school indicated compliance in the areas of class size, age range waiver, group size for speech, home instruction and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of description of special class programs. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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 Camden Academy Charter High School on January 12 & 13, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the charter school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the charter school's improvement plan. The Camden Academy Charter High School is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the charter school was able to identify virtually all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. Additionally, the charter school is commended for the many areas that were determined by the charter school and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

One parent attended the focus group meeting held on January 5, 2005. This parent expressed a desire to have in-service training for parents on special education requirements and child development. Additionally, the parent expressed satisfaction with the charter school's programs and staff.

General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), Procedural Safeguards, Reevaluation Eligibility, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Student Records were areas demonstrating compliance with all standards.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Child Find, referral process, parent/staff direct referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, standardized assessments, multi-disciplinary assessments, written reports for students eligible for special education and related services, bilingual evaluations, documentation of acceptance/rejection of reports, decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular activities, procedures for the provision of diploma, participation in graduation, written notice of graduation, class size, age range waiver, group size for speech, home instruction, and consultation time.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of pre-referral documentation of interventions and effectiveness of intervention, decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access and nonacademic and extracurricular activities, continuum, and documentation of IEP requirements for graduation, and description of special class programs.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding health summary, vision and hearing screenings and functional assessments.

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