

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Camden's Promise Charter School

County: Camden

Monitoring Dates: December 2, 3, 4, 2002

Monitoring Team: Jane Marano and Patricia Fair

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Camden's Promise Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Camden's Promise Charter 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 Camden's Promise Charter 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 Camden's Promise Charter School on November 13, 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 the charter school 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 charter school's special education administrators, building principal, general education and special education teachers and child study team members.

Charter School Strengths:

The curriculum at Camden's Promise is built around a math-science-technology focus. All thematic learning is based around these areas. The Living Classroom at Camden's Promise is taught in a theme-based environment. This helps the students transfer knowledge across the curricular areas. The living classroom learning experience occurs during the last hour and a half each day. Students receive instruction in a team-teaching

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8-day project-based environment. Over the past year some of the themes have included harvest festival, genetics, folklore, colonial history and exploring our world themes.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Statewide Assessments, Graduation Requirements 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 charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of professional development. 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 II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling services, length of day and year, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of documentation of the considerations for extended school year, goals and objectives for related services, transfer students and hearing aides. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. The charter school further identified concerns in the areas of provision of speech and language services. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan must be revised to include these components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year, related services and provision of programs and services.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews that extended school is not considered for all students with disabilities. As a result, those students who may require this program do not receive it.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year is considered for all students and provided when appropriate. The plan must include an administrative**

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oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

Provision of Programs – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that students are not receiving the special education programs identified in their IEPs.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure students receive the programs and services required by their IEPs. The plan must further ensure those students who have not received appropriate programs and services receive compensatory services for those services that were not provided. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of notice in native language and interpreters at meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notice of meetings and independent evaluation. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding consent, written notice, meetings and participants.

Area(s) of Need:

Consent - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that consent forms do not fully inform parents that they have 15 days to consider the proposed action. Additionally, a review of files and interviews indicated that staff are not making reasonable efforts to obtain consent for additional assessments during reevaluations.

- **The charter school will revise its consent notices to ensure they inform parents that they have 15 days to consider the proposed action. Additionally, the improvement plan must be revised to include procedures to ensure reasonable efforts are made to obtain consent for additional assessments during reevaluations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Written notice – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that written notice is not provided when a student is found not eligible for special education and related services following an initial evaluation or reevaluation.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notice is provided when a student is found not**

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eligible for special education and related services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

Parental Participation in Meetings – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that multiple attempts are not made to ensure parental participation in meetings.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that multiple attempts are made to afford parents the opportunity to participate in meetings. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that administrators are signing as regular education teachers at all meetings.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the student's regular education teacher, or, if a student is new to the school a regular education who is knowledgeable of the charter school's programs, attends the meeting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of child find, pre-referral interventions and direct referrals.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of identification meeting timelines. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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 the pre-referral process, health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

Area(s) of Need:

Pre-Referral Process – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through staff interviews that because PAC members are not providing teachers with recommended strategies and interventions discussed and agreed to by committee members, these strategies and interventions are not being implemented. As a result, students are not afforded the opportunity to receive intervention services within the general education environment before being referred to the child study team for an evaluation.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure PAC recommendations are communicated to the student's**

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teachers and their effectiveness is documented in the student's file. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

Health Summary and Vision/Hearing Screenings – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and staff interviews that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are not completed for every student referred for an evaluation.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that a health summary and a vision and hearing screening are completed for every student referred for an evaluation. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standardized assessments, written reports for students eligible for special education and related services and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of acceptance/rejection of reports. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. The charter school further identified concerns in the areas of speech language reports. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service 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 nature and scope of evaluations and functional assessments.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessments - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that functional assessments do not include structured observations in other than a testing setting nor do they include a parent interview.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments include all the required components identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d) 2. The plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Nature and Scope – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the nature and scope of the evaluation is not implemented. As a result, assessments that were agreed to by the participants at the identification meeting are not conducted.

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- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that assessments identified in the nature and scope of the evaluation are conducted. The 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 charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of criteria for special education and related services and statement of eligibility.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas criteria for speech and language eligibility. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area because it lacks procedures, in-services, 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 copy of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meeting.

Area(s) of Need:

Evaluation Reports to Parents - During the on-site visit it was determined through record review that evaluation reports are not sent to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meeting.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that evaluation reports are provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. The 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 charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, 90 day timelines and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of participants, considerations/required statements for speech and language eligible and goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. The charter school further identified concerns in the areas of present levels of educational performance and provision of related services from September to June. The charter school's

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improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks procedures, 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 elements.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding related services and required statements.

Area(s) of Need:

Related Services – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that beginning and ending dates for the provision of related services are not documented in the IEP.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that beginning and ending dates for the provision of related services are documented in the IEP. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Required Statements - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that IEPs for student's eligible for special education and related services do not consistently include all of the required components because pages are omitted.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs are completed appropriately and contain all required components. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of decision-making process, least restrictive environment documentation, consideration of supplemental aids and services, regular education access and nonacademic and extracurricular activities.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of continuum because it had to limit its in-class support program due to an increase in students and a lack of staff. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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.

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Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student agency invitation, courses of study and interests and preferences.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding age 14 transition service needs.

Area(s) of Need:

Age 14 Transition service needs – During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that transition services are not addressed for students who will turn 14 years of age during the time the IEP is in effect.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that transition services are address for those students who will be 14 during the time that IEP is in effect. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of documentation to case managers and suspension tracking. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of class size. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. The charter school further identified concerns in the areas of group size for speech

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therapy, consultation time and personnel. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address group size for speech therapy and consultation time 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.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at the Camden's Promise Charter School on December 2, 3, and 4, 2002. 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 charter school is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the charter school was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The charter school is further commended for the many areas determined by the charter school 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, one parent attended and expressed satisfaction with the charter school's programs and services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies, procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, reevaluation, statewide assessments, graduation requirements, students records, length of school day and year, facilities, certifications, notice in native language, interpreters, child find, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, eligibility, age of majority, implementation dates, annual reviews, 90 day timelines, teacher access/responsibility, decision-making process, supplemental aides and services, regular education access, nonacademic extracurricular activities, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings, procedural safeguards, age range/waiver and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified areas of need regarding professional development, extended school year, goals and objectives for related services, transfer students, surrogate parents, notice of meetings, independent evaluation, identification meeting timelines, accept/rejection of reports, written reports, multi-disciplinary assessment, criteria, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives/core curriculum content standards, related services, continuum, suspension tracking, class size, group size, consultation time and personnel.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, oversight of IEP implementation, related services, consent, written notice, meetings, referral process, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, participants, functional assessments, nature and scope, evaluation reports to parents, required statements and age 14 transition services.

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