

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

District: Classical Academy Charter School

County: Passaic

Monitoring Dates: October 8, 2004

Monitoring Team: Tracey Pettiford-Bugg and Jenifer Spear

Background Information:

During the 2003– 2004 school year, the **Classical Academy Charter School** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Classical Academy 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 **Classical Academy 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) attempted to hold a focus group meeting for parents and community members on October 8, 2004 however no parents attended. Interviews via telephone were conducted.

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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. 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.

Data Summary:

The Classical Academy Charter School's data indicated that for the 2003-2004 school year, two students in the school received special education services. These students received special education services in the general education class for more than 80% of the school day.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation Requirements, 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 charter accurately identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures, staff training and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of parent training. No improvement plan was submitted for this area. The charter school must revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure the provision of parent training regarding aspects of the special education process relevant to parents needs.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education

Summary of Findings:

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site regarding extended school year and transfer students.

Area(s) of Need:

Extended School Year – During the on-site monitoring visit, interview and record review indicated that extended school year is not considered or documented for any student at IEP meetings.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure that ESY is considered for all students with disabilities and provided when needed. The implementation of these activities will ensure that each student who requires ESY services because of issues related to regression and recoupment as well, as any other factor that hinders the student's acquisition and retention of skills, receives those services.**

Transfer Students – During the on-site monitoring visit, interview and record review indicated that the charter school does not have appropriate procedures in place that address the needs of transfer students.

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- The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the child study team conducts an immediate review of both evaluation information and the IEP. The charter school must also make certain that students are placed in accordance with that IEP. In the event the team determines that a different program is more appropriate, an interim program must be provided pending revision to the IEP and the provision of notice. Administrative oversight is needed to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The inclusion of these activities will ensure that students are provided with a program in a timely manner.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of surrogate parents, content and provision of written notice, meetings, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter identified a concern in the area of notices in native language. The charter's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site regarding consent to evaluate and written notice.

Area(s) of Need:

Consent – During the on-site monitoring visit, interview and record review indicated that the team with which the charter school contracts for child study team services obtains only verbal consent to conduct an evaluation.

- The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure written parental consent is obtained prior to conducting any evaluation. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.

Content and Provision of Notices – During the on-site monitoring visit, interview and record review indicated that written notice is not provided when required nor do these notices contain all of the required components.

- The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure the child study team provides written notice when required. It is recommended that the charter adopts the notices developed by the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the plan.

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Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of child find, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings and summer referrals.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding identification meetings timelines and participants.

Area(s) of Need:

Referrals, Identification Meetings Timelines and Identification Meeting Participants

– During the on-site monitoring visit, interview and record review indicated that referrals were not maintained; therefore, identification meeting timelines were not able to be determined. Additionally, attendance of general education teachers is inconsistent at meetings.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure each referral for an evaluation is maintained in the student's file and contains the date it was submitted to school staff. Implementation of these activities will ensure referrals are addressed within the required twenty-day timeline and to further ensure determinations are made in a timely manner regarding the need to conduct an evaluation. The charter school will also ensure all required participants attend required meetings and their participation is documented. The 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 accurately identified compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary assessment, bilingual evaluations, standardized assessment, signed and dated written reports and acceptance and rejection of written reports.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding functional assessment.

Area(s) of Need:

Functional Assessment – During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that evaluations completed by the contracted child study team members do not include all of the necessary components of a functional assessment.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure that evaluations conducted by the child study team include the required components of a functional assessment. The improvement plan**

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must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the area of eligibility criteria.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding the areas of notice of eligibility, eligibility meetings, participants, statement of eligibility, signature of agreement and disagreement with rationale and copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings.

Area(s) of Need:

Invitation to Eligibility Meeting and Required Participants – During the on-site monitoring visit, record review and interviews indicated that parents are verbally invited to eligibility meetings; however, a notice of meeting is not sent. As a result, parents do not often attend eligibility meetings. In addition, general education teachers do not consistently participate.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure that child study team members invite parents to eligibility meetings through a notice of meeting and convene eligibility meetings with the required participants. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

Statement of Eligibility – During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that the statement of eligibility is not developed upon determination of eligibility.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the statement of eligibility is developed and maintained in the student's file for all initial evaluations and reevaluations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, implementation of the procedures.**

Signature of Agreement or Disagreement with Rationale – During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that the child study team does not express assenting or dissenting opinions regarding eligibility determinations.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure that child study team members have an opportunity to state in writing whether they agree or disagree with eligibility determinations. Further the charter will document the rationale for any disagreement. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities.**

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Evaluation Reports to Parents Ten Days Prior to IEP Meeting - During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that child study evaluation reports are not provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meetings.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure 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 implementation of the activities.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings and participants, present level of educational performance, considerations and required statements, age of majority and implementation dates.

During the self-assessment the charter school identified a concern in the area of teacher access and responsibility. The charter's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of concern. **The improvement plan must be revised to address this area of noncompliance. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activities.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the annual reviews, ninety-day timelines and provision of IEPs to parents.

Area(s) of Need:

Annual Review Timelines – During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that IEPs are not consistently reviewed on an annual basis.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that annually or more often if necessary, the IEP team shall meet to review and revise, as needed, the IEP. This plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

90-Day Timelines - During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that 90-day timelines are not being met.

- **The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that 90-day timelines are met to further ensure the timely provision of programs and services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Provision of IEPs to Parents - During the on-site monitoring visit, record review and interviews indicated that copies of IEPs are not provided to parents prior to the implementation of programs and services.

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- The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the case manager provides parents with a copy of the student's IEP prior to the implementation of the program and services and that the provision of the IEP is documented in the student's file. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities. These activities will ensure parents are fully informed of the details regarding the agreed upon program and services.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of considerations and documentation of supplementary aids and services, regular education access, nonacademic and extracurricular participation and continuum.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding least restrictive environment documentation.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of least restrictive environment- During the on-site monitoring visit, record review indicated that the child study team does not sufficiently discuss and document the least restrictive environment as part of the IEP process.

- The charter school will develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the IEP specifies: the considerations of appropriate supplementary aids and services and program modification; the explanation of why the supplementary aids and services and program modifications are not appropriate; and, the documentation of the comparison of the benefits in each setting. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these activities. Implementation of these activities will ensure the team has defined the rationale for a specific placement. Additionally, these activities will make certain that students are afforded the opportunity to be educated with their non-disabled peers as often as possible.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the **Classical Academy Charter School** on October 8, 2004. 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 Classical Academy Charter is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of the review the school district was able to identify some areas of need and develop an improvement plan that, with some revision, will bring about systemic change. The Classical Academy Charter is further commended for the many areas determined by the school and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs to be compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

At a parent focus group meeting held on October 8, 2004, no parents attended. However, via telephone interviews, parents indicated that they were satisfied with their children's progress at the Classical Charter Academy.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff training and dissemination of IDEA information, physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, counseling, length of day and year, facilities, certifications, meetings, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, summer referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, written reports signed and dated, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings and participants, eligibility criteria, IEP meeting and participants, present levels of education performance, age of majority, implementation dates, considerations and required statements, regular education access in district, notification and participation of extracurricular and nonacademic activities to out-of-district students, age 14 transition services, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative education setting, statewide assessment participation, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessments, class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes, consultation time, access and requests, access sheets, maintenance and destruction and documentation of other locations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, notices in native language, teacher access and responsibility for IEP's.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding extended school year, transfer students, consent, content and provision of notices, referrals, identification timelines and participants, functional assessment, eligibility meeting invitations, eligibility meeting participants, statement of eligibility, signatures of agreement or disagreement, evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, provision of IEPs to parents and documentation of least restrictive environment.

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Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Classical Academy Charter School will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.