

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

Charter school: East Orange Community Charter School **County:** Essex

Monitoring Dates: May 24, 2004

Monitoring Team: Michelle Davis Young

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the East Orange Community Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the East Orange Community 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 East Orange Community 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 East Orange Community Charter School on May 24, 2004. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed charter school documents, including charter school 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, special education teachers, and child study team members.

Charter School Strengths:

The charter school is commended for implementing an extended school day which exceeds the local public school hours by approximately 90 minutes to meet the many unique needs of their students and parents.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Data Summary:

The East Orange Community Charter School serves all of its special needs students in the general education setting for at least 80%.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Evaluation, Reevaluation, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of staff and parent training.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of policies and procedures. Although the charter school initially identified this as an area of need, the charter school was able to demonstrate that it has already obtained approval for its policies and procedures from the County Office of Education to bring about correction in this area.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of dissemination of IDEA information. **The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component. The inclusion of this component will ensure that administrators afford parents the opportunity to access all documentation regarding IDEA information. The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include this element.**

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 programs and related services, frequency, duration and location of related services, IEP documentation of goals/objectives for related services, length of school day/year, transfer student procedures, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of extended school year services. **The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training, identification of the individuals responsible for the activities and an administrative oversight component. The inclusion of these components will allow the charter school to determine whether staff members are implementing the procedure that was provided to them**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

regarding the consideration of extended school year services for all students with disabilities. The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include these elements.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent and content and provision of notices of meetings and written notice.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations. Although the charter school initially identified these as areas of need, the charter school was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process, direct referrals from parents/staff, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings and identification meeting timelines/participants.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of child find activities. **The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component. The inclusion of this component will allow the charter school to ensure the staff appropriately implement the new procedure. The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include this element.**

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings and participants, criteria for specific learning disability (SLD), statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD) and copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding signature of agreement/disagreement with a rationale.

Area(s) of Need:

Signature of Agreement/Disagreement with Eligibility Determinations – During a site visit it was determined through a review of records and interviews with staff that the charter school does not have a component in the eligibility document to secure IEP team members' signatures of agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations.

- **The charter school will revise the eligibility document to include a component which allows for a signature of agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations. The implementation of this activity will ensure that all IEP team members are able to document their agreement and/or disagreement with the determination of eligibility or ineligibility for special education and related services. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activity.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings and participants, consideration and required statements in IEPs, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs), annual review timelines, IEPs to parents and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of implementation dates and 90-day timelines. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School is not applicable because the charter school only services students from kindergarten through fourth grade.

Section X: Transition to Preschool is not applicable because the charter school only services students from kindergarten through fourth grade.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavior

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings, 45-day return and procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation to case manager.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation to Case Manager – During a site visit it was determined through a review of records and interviews with staff that although the charter school verbally informs the case manager of any disciplinary actions taken against a student with a disability, it does not provide the case manager with written documentation of the incident or action.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that case managers are provided with written notification regarding any disciplinary actions taken against students with disabilities. The implementation of these activities will allow the case manager to maintain documentation of the student’s disciplinary history and to conduct any required activities related to the provision of appropriate services during a removal. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the activity.**

Section XIII: Graduation Requirements are not applicable because the charter school only services students from kindergarten through fourth grade

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access/requests for records, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of student records in other locations.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Student Records in Other Locations – During a site visit it was determined through a review of records and interviews with staff that the charter school does not consistently identify the location of other student records in the central files.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include an activity to ensure that the central files document the location of other student records maintained by the charter school. The implementation of this activity will ensure that parents and/or adult students are made aware of the location of other records maintained by the charter school.**

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the East Orange Community Charter School on May 24, 2004. 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 East Orange Community Charter School is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of their review, the charter school was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision is sufficient to bring about systemic change. The charter school is further commended for the prompt implementation of the improvement plan activities to address some of the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

The East Orange Community Charter School currently serves 100% of its special needs students in the general education settings for at least 80%.

Evaluation, Reevaluation, Least restrictive Environment, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services were areas determined to be compliant with all of the standards.

Four parents attended a focus group meeting held on May 24, 2004. The parents expressed their satisfaction with the charter school's special education programs and services. The charter school involves parents in the decision-making process and welcomes parental input in the development of IEPs that sufficiently address student needs. Parents also commended the charter school administrators and teachers for their support of special education programs and students.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff and parent training, provision of programs and related services, frequency, duration and location of related services, IEP documentation of goals/objectives for related services, length of school day/year, transfer student procedures, facilities, certifications, consent, content and provision of notices of meetings and written notice, referral process, direct referrals from parents/staff, pre-referral interventions, health summaries, vision/hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines/participants, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria for specific learning disability (SLD), statement of eligibility for specific learning disability (SLD), copies of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to IEP meetings, IEP meetings and participants, consideration and required statements in IEPs, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, statements of Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEPs), annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, teacher access and responsibility, decision-making process, regular education access for charter school students, documentation of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), consideration of supplementary aides and services, continuum of programs and services, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determination meetings, interim alternative educational settings, 45-day return, procedural safeguards for potentially disabled students, access/requests for records, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year services, surrogate parents, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings,

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

independent evaluations, child find activities, implementation dates and 90-day timelines.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding signature of agreement/disagreement, documentation to case managers and documentation of student records in other locations.

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