

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Englewood on the Palisades Charter School District **County:** Bergen

Monitoring Dates: December 6, 2004

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller and Susan Wilson

Background Information:

During the 2003-2004 school year, the Englewood on the Palisades Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Englewood on the Palisades Charter School with an opportunity to evaluate 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 Englewood on the Palisades Charter School District 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 on November 29, 2004 at the Englewood on the Palisades Charter School. 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. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the Charter School's special education administrators, building principal, general education and special education teachers and speech therapist.

Part One Data Summary:

The Charter School educates all students eligible for special education and related services in the general education setting. Of the sixteen students reported in 2004 as eligible for special education, 14 participated in general education for more than 80% of the day, while 2 students were in general education for 40-80%.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Reevaluation, 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.

Areas Determined Not Applicable:

The Englewood on the Palisades Charter School is a kindergarten through grade six school. Therefore, Transition and Graduation Requirements do not apply.

Section 1: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the area of dissemination of IDEA.

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

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding policies and procedures.

Area(s) of Need:

Policies and Procedures- During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interview and report from the county office that the Charter School has not submitted the required policies and procedures for approval.

- **The Charter School will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the required policies and procedures are submitted to the county office for approval. Implementation of these activities will ensure that free appropriate public education is available to all students with disabilities.**

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of extended school year, length of school day and year, transfer students and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the Charter School identified concerns in the areas of provision of related services of speech therapy and counseling and facilities. The Charter School's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, meetings, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the Charter School identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents and notices of meetings. 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 IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of direct referrals, identification meeting timelines, health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

During the self-assessment process, the Charter School identified concerns in the areas of referral process and pre-referral interventions. The Charter School's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding identification meeting participants.

Area(s) of Need:

Identification Meeting Participants- During the on-site visit record review and interviews indicated that all required child study team members do not participate in identification meetings.

- **The Charter School will revise its improvement plan to include activities that ensure that all required participants attend identification meetings. Implementation of these activities will ensure that parents can obtain the necessary information prior to student evaluations with the appropriate evaluator as well as ensure that the assessments are in the suspected areas of disability and include the appropriate components to make appropriate eligibility determinations. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these activities.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments and bilingual evaluations.

No additional areas of need were identified.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings, participants, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to meetings and statement of eligibility.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding signatures of agreement and or disagreement.

Area(s) of Need:

Signatures of Agreement and or Disagreement- During the onsite visit, record review indicated that there was no documentation that the general education teacher or appropriate child study team participants are in agreement or disagree with eligibility.

- **The Charter School will revise its improvement plan it include activities to ensure that the participants at eligibility meetings document whether they agree or disagree with the eligibility decision. Implementation of these activities will ensure that the IEP team has considered and documented either agreement or disagreement with the determination of eligibility and that parents are aware of the rationale for the decision. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these 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, considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines, teacher access and responsibility and ninety day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the Charter School identified concerns regarding transitioning a student from grade six to the local school district's middle school. The Charter School's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

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

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of the decision making process, general education access in district and continuum.

No additional areas of need were identified.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Charter School accurately identified compliance in the areas of age ranges and waivers, class sizes and waivers and home instruction notification.

During the self-assessment process, the Charter School identified concerns in the areas of case managers and sufficient staff. 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.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Englewood on the Palisades Charter School District on December 6, 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 Charter School is commended for their comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the Charter School was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with minor revision, will be sufficient to 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the parent who attended expressed satisfaction with many of the Charter School's programs and services. Parents contacted by telephone also indicated that their children were receiving a high quality education and that the staff was attentive to their needs and that of their children.

A review of Charter School data indicated that the Charter School is providing services to all students in the general education setting for more than 40% of the school day.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Charter School during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included dissemination of IDEA, extended school year, length of school day and year, transfer students, certifications, consent, meetings, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings and participants, eligibility meetings, participants, criteria, copy of evaluation reports to parents, statement of eligibility, IEP meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, present level of educational performance, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, annual review timelines, teacher access and responsibility, ninety day timelines, decision making process, general education access in district, continuum, discipline, statewide assessment, class size and age range waivers, group sizes for speech therapy, consultation time and student records.

During the self-assessment process, the Charter School identified areas of need including professional development, provision of programs of related services of speech therapy and counseling, facilities, surrogate parents, notices of meetings, referral process, pre-referral interventions, transition from Charter School to local middle school, case management and sufficient staff.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding policies and procedures, identification meeting participants, and signatures of agreement or disagreement with eligibility.

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

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