

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: International Charter School of Trenton

County: Mercer County

Monitoring Date: April 26, 2006

Monitoring Team: Cheryl L. Merical and Caryl Carthew

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the International Charter School of Trenton conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the International Charter School of Trenton 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 International Charter School of Trenton 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.

During the on-site visit, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitoring team reviewed International Charter School's documents, including the charter school's policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the charter school's principal, general education and special education teachers and the speech-language specialist. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the charter school's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2005-2006 school year, the charter school had a classification rate of 16.87%. This is consistent with the state rate of 16.80% for the same year. The charter school educated 66.7% of students with disabilities, 6-21 years of age, in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. Although during the previous 2 years the charter school educated 100% of students with disabilities in the general education setting, the rate for 2005-2006 remained higher than the state average of 42.0%.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Sections Demonstrating Compliance

The self-assessment process required the charter school to review implementation of federal and state regulations categorized into 15 sections. Within each section, a number of areas were reviewed. The on-site monitoring visit involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the charter school in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. These sections were identified by the charter school during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant:

- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs & Services

Sections Not Reviewed

These sections were not reviewed by the New Jersey Department of Education because the charter school does not serve a population of students for whom these regulations apply:

- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Graduation

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, were identified by the charter school's self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. These areas were reviewed for students Eligible for Special Education and Related Services (ESERS) and Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services (ESLS). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation • Extended school year • Provision of programs • Provision of related services
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent (ESLS) • Implementation without undue delay • Meetings • Content of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreter at meetings • Independent evaluations

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral Process • Direct Referrals
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants (ESLS) • Eligibility Criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability) • Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the charter school's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The improvement plan submitted by the charter school was implemented in all areas prior to the onsite visit. As a result, in all areas of need identified during the self-assessment, the charter school was determined to be compliant during the monitoring visit, with an oversight mechanism in place to ensure ongoing compliance.

Section	Area of Need
General Provisions	Parent Training-The charter school identified the need for parent training regarding all aspects of special education and related services.
FAPE	Transfer Procedures-The charter school did not have a procedure to review the records of transfer students without undue delay.
Procedural Safeguards	Provision of notice of a meeting-Adequate notice of a meeting was not consistently provided to parents.
LRI	Pre-referral interventions-Documentation of pre-referral interventions in the general education setting was not maintained.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Additional Areas of Need

The following areas were originally identified by the charter school's self-assessment committee as compliant, but were found to be noncompliant by the New Jersey Department of Education during the on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Activity
Procedural Safeguards	Consent (ESERS) -Documentation of parental consent for initial evaluation/s and initial implementation of the IEP is not maintained.	The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that parental consent is obtained and documented prior to initial evaluations and initial implementation of the IEP. The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and on-going compliance.
	Content of notice of a meeting -Notice of a meeting does not accurately identify the purpose of the meeting or consistently contain all the required components.	The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that notice of a meeting accurately identifies the purpose of the meeting and includes all the required components. The charter school is directed to review the sample notice forms on the NJDOE web site at www.state.nj.us/education as a guide for revising notice forms. The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and on-going compliance.
	Provision of written notice -Written notice is not consistently provided to parents.	The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that written notice is provided as required. The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
LRI	Health summary and vision and hearing screenings -Health summaries and screenings are not completed consistently prior to the identification meeting.	The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are completed prior to identification meetings. Results must be forwarded to the child study team prior to the meetings to ensure that health information is considered when determining whether or not to evaluate and the nature of any evaluation. The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Identification meeting timelines -Documentation is not maintained regarding the initial	The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that documentation is maintained regarding the date of receipt of referrals for initial evaluations for special education and related services. The charter school must also ensure that

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

Section	Area	Activity
	<p>referral for special education and related services, thus, timelines could not be verified.</p> <p>Identification meeting participants -Documentation is not maintained regarding who is in attendance at identification meetings, thus, identification meeting participants could not be verified.</p>	<p>identification meetings are held within 20 days of the date of receipt of the initial referral. The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p> <p>The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that documentation is maintained regarding identification meeting participants (i.e., signature page). The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.</p>
Eligibility	<p>Meeting participants(ESERS) -Documentation is not maintained regarding who is in attendance at eligibility meetings, thus, eligibility meeting participants could not be verified.</p> <p>Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) -Parents do not consistently receive a copy of initial speech-language evaluation reports 10 days prior to an eligibility meeting.</p>	<p>The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that documentation is maintained regarding eligibility meeting participants (i.e., signature page). The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and on-going compliance.</p> <p>The charter school is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that copies of evaluation reports are provided to parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting. The charter school must implement an oversight component to ensure correction and on-going compliance.</p>

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at the International Charter School of Trenton on April 26, 2006. 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 acknowledged for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. The charter school is further acknowledged 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.

A review of the charter school's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2005-2006 school year, the charter school had a classification rate of 16.87%. This is consistent with the state rate of 16.80% for the same year. The charter school educated 66.7% of students with disabilities, 6-21 years of age, in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. Although during the previous 2 years the charter school educated 100% of students with disabilities in the general education setting, the rate for 2005-2006 remained higher than the state average of 42.0%.

During phone interviews conducted by the monitoring team with parents, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the charter school's programs and services and staff.

Sections identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included:

- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
- Discipline
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs & Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Extended school year
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Consent (ESLS)
- Implementation without undue delay
- Meetings
- Content of written notice
- Notices in native language
- Interpreter at meetings
- Independent evaluations
- Child find ages 3-21
- Referral process
- Direct referrals
- Eligibility meeting participants (ESLS)
- Eligibility criteria
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Areas of need originally identified by the charter school during self-assessment, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE, included:

- Parent training
- Transfer procedures
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Pre-referral interventions

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding:

- Consent (ESERS)
- Content of notice of a meeting
- Provision of written notice
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- Eligibility meeting participants(ESERS)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS)

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been approved and implemented. The charter school is expected to implement the activities described in the report to achieve compliance in the areas of need identified during the on-site visit within sixty days of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.