

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

**Charter school:** Golden Door Charter School      **County:** Hudson

**Monitoring Date:** May 12, 2003

**Monitoring Team:** Damen Cooper and Janet Wright

***Background Information:***

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Golden Door Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Golden Door 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 Golden Door 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 Golden Door Charter School on May 5, 2003. 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 principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

**Charter School Strengths:**

The charter school is commended for its after school tutoring program. The program offers academic support for all students.

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The charter school provides a summer enrichment program for all students. The program operates five days a week for four weeks. Two days of each week are reserved for academic field trips, while the other three days are used for basic instruction.

The charter school also provides a school wide comprehensive behavior intervention plan. The program focuses on enabling each student to develop self-management behavioral skills.

### ***Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:***

**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 areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding professional development.

##### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Staff Development** – During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that although they are allowed to participate in out of district trainings, there is a need for the administration to provide in district training to general and special education staff.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the charter school identifies training needs and provides staff development in those areas. The plan must include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training.**

#### ***Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)***

##### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day and year, transfer students, facilities and certifications.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of extended school year and related services. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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## **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of surrogate parents. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Consent** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that consent is not consistently obtained as required by N.J.A.C.6A:14-2.3(a).

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that consent is obtained and documented for all activities identified in N.J.A.C.6A:14-2.3(a). The plan must include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Written notice** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that notice of a meeting is inconsistently sent to parents. As a result, parents are precluded from participation at meetings.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include a procedure to ensure parents have the opportunity to participate in meetings. The plan must include a mechanism to provide notice of a meeting in a timely manner as well as documentation of all attempts made by the charter school staff to ensure parents have this opportunity. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Meetings Participants** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that eligibility meetings and identification meetings are inconsistently conducted. When these meetings are conducted, only the special education teacher and the referring teacher participate.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure identification meetings and eligibility meetings are conducted with all required participants. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Case Management Responsibilities** - During the on-site monitoring, interviews and record review indicated that because the child study team members are part-time

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contracted employees, they are not case managers. Instead, the special education teacher takes on those responsibilities.

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that case management responsibilities are conducted by a member of the child study team as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.2(a).**

### **Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of direct referrals.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of Child Find. The charter school did not submit improvement plan activities to address this area of need. **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure Child Find information is developed and disseminated to parents and students.** The charter school further identified a concern in the area of the referral process. **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 and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding health summaries, vision and hearing screenings, and identification meeting participants (see section III).

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated the nurse is not summarizing health information nor are vision and hearing screenings conducted when a student is referred for an evaluation.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are completed by the nurse and provided to the child study team whenever a student is referred for an initial 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 multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments and bilingual evaluations.

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Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding written reports and acceptance and rejection of reports.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Written Reports** – During the on-site monitoring, interviews and record review indicated that eligibility determinations are included in individual assessment reports.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure eligibility determinations are not included in individual assessment reports since these determinations may only be made by an appropriately configured team. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Acceptance and Rejection of Reports** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that although the charter school considers the findings of outside evaluations the team does not document the acceptance and or rejection of these assessments.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the team appropriately documents the acceptance and or rejection of assessments conducted by individuals other than those staff members employed by the charter school. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section VI: Reevaluation**

#### **Summary of Finding:**

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of reevaluation timelines. **The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient 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.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding reevaluation planning meetings.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Planning Meeting and Participants** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that reevaluation planning meetings are not consistently conducted. When they are conducted, required participants were not in attendance.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that reevaluation planning meetings are conducted and that appropriate participants are in attendance. The plan must include an**

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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 area of criteria and documentation of eligibility.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding meetings, participants (see section III and IV), the failure to provide a copy of evaluation reports to parents and signatures of agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations.

**Area(s) of Need:**

**Signatures of Agreement or Disagreement** – During the on-site monitoring, interviews and record review indicated IEP team members are not documenting their agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEP team members document their agreement or disagreement with eligibility determinations. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Copy of Evaluation Reports to Parents** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that evaluation reports are inconsistently sent to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that evaluation reports are provided to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting and that the provision is documented in the files. 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 considerations and required statements and teacher knowledge and access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of annual review timelines. The charter school did not submit improvement plan activities to address this area of need. **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding meeting participants (see section IV), goals and objectives aligned to the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates and ninety day timelines.

### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Goals and Objectives** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that goals and objectives are not aligned to the core curriculum content standards.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that goals and objectives are aligned to the core curriculum content standards. The plan must include in-service training, a mechanism for determining the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Implementation Dates** – During the on-site monitoring, interviews and record review indicated that when parents do not attend IEP meetings or participate by phone, IEPs are implemented immediately without providing notice and without affording parents the right to consider the IEP for a period of 15-days.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure parents are provided with written notice and are afforded the right to review the IEP for a period of 15-days before implementing that IEP. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Ninety-Day Timelines** – During the on-site monitoring, it was not possible to determine whether ninety-day timelines were being met because files did not include documentation of the date consent to evaluate was obtained.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that dates of consent are clearly documented. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the school adopt the notice forms developed by the Office of Special Education Programs.**

### ***Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)***

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of regular education access and nonacademic and extra curricular participation, individualized decision-making, Oberti and considerations and required statements.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding supplementary aids and services and continuum.

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### Area(s) of Need:

**Supplementary Aids and Services** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that although IEPs indicate the benefits of the special education program, they do not include the supplementary aids and services that were considered and why those aids and services were not appropriate to meet the needs of the student in the general education program. Additionally, the only supplementary aids and services that are considered are those that are currently available even though a student may require different supports.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure any supplementary aid and/or service is considered when available supports and services are not sufficient to address the needs of students. The plan must also include a mechanism to document these considerations in the IEPs. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Continuum** – During the on-site monitoring, parent and staff interviews indicated that when a child requires more than pull out resource support they are automatically placed in an out-of-district placement because the charter school's curriculum is not adapted/modified by teachers to allow differentiated instruction within the regular education classroom setting.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure placement decisions are based on the needs of students and not on the availability of programs. The plan must include a mechanism to ensure instructional staff are trained to provide instruction to students with different ability levels and to provide needed supports and services in an effort to maintain these students in a general education environment. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section X: Transition to Post-School**

#### Summary of Findings:

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding age fourteen transition service needs including the identification of courses of study and preferences and interests.

### Area(s) of Need:

**Age Fourteen Transition Services Needs** – During the on-site monitoring, record review and interviews indicated that the charter school is not developing transition plans for students who will turn age fourteen during the period of time that IEP is in effect.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that age fourteen transition services needs are considered and documented in the IEP for those students who will turn fourteen during the period of time the IEP is in effect. The plan must include an administrative**



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oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.

### **Section X: Discipline**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

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

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of documentation to case manager. The charter school did not submit improvement plan activities to address this area of need. **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

### **Section XV: Student Records**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parent and adult student access to records and access sheets.

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

#### **Area(s) of Need:**

**Documentation of Locations** – During the on-site visit, a review of records and interviews indicated that the central files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the charter school.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that central files identify the locations of other student records maintained by the charter school.**

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### **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Jersey City Golden Door Charter School on May 12, 2003. 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. As a result of the self-assessment review conducted by the charter school, some areas of need were identified and an improvement plan was developed.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, the one parent in attendance did not express any concerns with special education.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, length of day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, notices of meetings, native language, independent evaluations, direct referrals, multi-disciplinary, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, criteria, documentation of eligibility, considerations and required statements, teacher knowledge and access, regular education access, nonacademic and extra curricular participation, individualized decision-making, Oberti, consideration and required statements, procedures, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment/behavioral intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguards, statewide assessment, programs and services, parent and adult access to student records and access sheets.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified areas of need regarding extended school year, related services, surrogate parents, Child Find, referral process, reevaluation timelines, annual review timelines and documentation to case manager.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding staff and parent development, consent, written notice, meeting participants, case management responsibilities, health summary and vision and hearing screenings, written reports, acceptance and rejection of reports, planning meeting and participants, signatures of agreement or disagreement, copy of evaluation reports to parents, alignment of goal and objectives to the core curriculum content standards, implementation dates, ninety-day timelines, supplementary aids and services, continuum, age fourteen transition service needs, and documentation of other location of records.

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