

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

Charter School: Greater Newark Academy

County: Essex

Monitoring Date: January 7, 2005

Monitoring Team: Deborah Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2003-2004 school year, the **Greater Newark Academy** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Greater Newark Academy** 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 **Greater Newark Academy** identified substantial areas of need with regard to provision of special education programs and services and developed an improvement plan to address these concerns.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted parent telephone interviews, a comprehensive desk audit and interviewed the **Greater Newark Academy** director and social worker to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the charter school had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of need identified by the charter school's staff during the self-assessment process.

Introduction

At the time of the monitoring visit, 7 students with disabilities attended the **Greater Newark Academy**. None of these students are receiving special education programs or services. Parents of students classified as eligible for special education and related services indicated during interviews conducted prior to the monitoring that the charter school does not meet the needs of special education students, does not provide the programs and services as required in their children's IEPs, does not provide progress reports to parents for students receiving counseling as a related service, does not conduct transition planning or provide services, and fails to assist students who are transitioning from 8th grade into high school. The charter school staff members indicated that appropriately certified staff members are not available to provide needed services to students with disabilities. These areas of need have been addressed by the charter

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school during the self-assessment process and in the improvement plan. The charter school's improvement plan indicates that individual decision-making in the least restrictive environment will be afforded to all classified students, a continuum of programs and services will be established, and certified staff will be hired in sufficient numbers to be able to provide the programs and services required by students' IEPs.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of policies and procedures and the Statement of Assurances, and dissemination of public information.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of staff development and parent training. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

Additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring regarding staff development and parent training.

Areas of Need

Staff Development – During monitoring, it was determined through interviews with the social worker that the charter school does not provide sufficient professional development.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that it provides sufficient professional development that is based on identified staff needs and that is clearly connected to the provision of educational programs in the school. The plan must include an administrative oversight to bring about the required changes. As a result of these activities, the charter school will ensure that it has an effective procedure to identify staff training needs and a mechanism to evaluate the implementation of procedures discussed during the training.**

Parent Training- During monitoring, it was determined through interviews with the social worker and the parents that the charter school does not provide parent training.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that it provides training to parents of students with disabilities. The plan must include administrative oversight to bring about the required changes. As a result of these activities, the charter school will ensure that it has an effective procedure to identify parental needs and a mechanism to evaluate the implementation of procedures discussed at the training.**

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Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of facilities and length of school day and year.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of provision of programs and related services, goals and objectives for related services, extended school year, transfer students, the monitoring of the implementation of students' IEPs, and certifications. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the monitoring regarding progress reports for counseling.

Area of Need:

Provision of Progress Reports for Counseling - During monitoring it was determined through interviews with the social worker and parents that although the school provides academic progress reports to parents, the school does not provide parents progress reports for counseling.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that it provides progress reports to parents of students with disabilities for all related services, at least as often as for regular education students. Progress reports must be developed to reflect the student's development relating to the individual goals and objectives. The plan must include in-service training and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. As a result of these activities, parents will be made aware of their children's progress in meeting their goals and objectives for related services.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of required participants at meetings, obtaining parental consent to evaluate, content/provision of notices, notices in native language, independent evaluations, surrogate parents and interpreters at meetings. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

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Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of child find, the referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings, and the convening of identification meetings with required participants within the 20-day timeline. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the area of standardized assessments and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of development of written reports following completion of each initial and reevaluation assessment, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessment, and acceptance or rejection of outside reports. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of three-year reevaluation procedures. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of convening of eligibility determination meetings, provision of evaluation reports to

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parents at least 10 days prior to the eligibility conference, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, and agreement/disagreement with eligibility determinations. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the monitoring regarding the provision of parental notice of eligibility.

Area of Need:

Written Parental Notice of Eligibility - During monitoring it was determined through interviews with the social worker and parents that the school does not provide parental notice of eligibility following the determination conference.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that following the eligibility determination conference, Parental Notice of Eligibility is provided to parents following the determination conference. The plan must include administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes. As a result of these activities, the charter school will ensure that parents are aware of the decision-making process and are provided the opportunity to exercise their due process rights.**

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of implementation date on IEPs, provision of academic progress reports, and teacher access to IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of IEP implementation/ oversight, teacher responsibility in implementing students' IEPs, IEP considerations and required statements, convening annual review meetings within timelines with required participants, 90-day timelines to implement initial IEPs, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, present levels of educational performance statements, and revisions to IEPs. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the area of general education access within the charter school.

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During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of individual decision-making, supplementary aids/services, and continuum of programs. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of the determination of student interests/preferences, post-secondary transition planning process and documentation within the transition statement for students age 14, provision of invitation to students/agencies, and input from agencies when not in attendance. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the area of written notification to the case manager.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational setting(s), procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, and provision of services by the 11th day of removal. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of student participation in statewide assessment and IEP documentation.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of modifications/accommodations. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of documentation of graduation requirements in students' IEPs. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews, and parent interviews.

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of sufficient staff to provide special education programs and services, and consultation time. The charter school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. Furthermore, in Section II, the charter school indicated that it does not provide any special education programs or services. In anticipation of the implementation of the improvement plan to correct these areas, the school developed procedures to keep class and group sizes within the code requirement.

No additional areas of need were identified during the comprehensive desk audit, staff interviews and parent interviews.

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the area of parental access to student records.

An area of need was identified during the monitoring regarding the location of other student records.

Area(s) of Need:

Location of Other Student Records - During monitoring it was determined that the charter school does not identify the location of other records in the central file.

- The charter school will revise the improvement plan to ensure that it documents on each folder within the central file, the location of other student records maintained by the school. As a result of this activity, parent(s) will

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be made aware of the location of all their child's records maintained by the school and will be afforded the opportunity to access those records.

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Summary

The monitoring of the Greater Newark Academy was completed on January 7, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring was to verify the charter school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment.

The Greater Newark Academy had 7 students eligible for special education services at the time of monitoring, none of whom were receiving needed programs and services. The data included in the self-assessment indicates that none of their classified students are presently being provided any special education programs or services. This area of need has been addressed by the charter school during the self-assessment process and in its improvement plan. The charter school's improvement plan indicates that individual decision-making in the least restrictive environment will be afforded all classified students, a continuum of programs and services will be established, and staff will be hired in sufficient numbers to be able to provide the programs and services required by students' IEPs.

Parents of students classified as eligible for special education and related services, indicated during interviews conducted prior to the monitoring that the charter school does not meet the needs of special education students, does not provide the programs and services as required in their children's IEPs, does not provide progress reports to parents for students receiving counseling as a related service, does not conduct transition planning or provide services, and fails to assist students who are transitioning from 8th grade into high school. The charter school has addressed these areas during the self-assessment process and has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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 public information, length of school day/year, facilities, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, teacher access to IEPs, regular education access within the charter school, written notification of suspensions to the case manager, and parental access to student records.

Areas of need identified by the charter school during the self-assessment process included in-service training for staff, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of in-service training for school personnel, provision of programs and related services, goals and objectives for related services, extended school year, transfer students, the monitoring of the implementation of students' IEPs, certifications, required participants at meetings, obtaining parental consent to evaluate, content/provision of notices, notices in native language, independent evaluations, surrogate parents, interpreters at meetings, child find, the referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summaries and vision/hearing screenings, the convening of identification meetings with required participants within timelines the 20-day timeline, development of written reports, multi-disciplinary evaluations, functional assessment for students eligible for speech and language services and students eligible for special education and related services, reevaluation timelines, convening eligibility determination meetings, criteria used to determine eligibility for speech services, and/or special education and related services, statement of eligibility for specific learning disability, provision of evaluation reports to parents at least ten days prior to the eligibility determination meeting, agreement/disagreement with eligibility, IEP considerations and required statements, convening annual review meetings within required timelines, 90-day timelines to

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implement initial, implementation/oversight of implementation of IEPs, teacher responsibility to implement IEPs, goals and objectives aligned with the core curriculum content standards, present levels of educational performance statements, revisions to IEPs, individual decision-making, supplementary aids and services, continuum of programs, post-secondary transition process that includes students' interests/preferences, documentation of transition statement, student/agency invitations, input from agencies, discipline procedures that include suspension tracking, functional behavior assessments, behavior intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguard rights for potentially disabled students, provision of services by the 11th day of suspension, modifications/accommodation in statewide assessments, graduation requirements for student transitioning from 8th grade into high school, sufficient staff to provide programs and services, class/group size, and consultation time.

Areas of need identified during the monitoring process included staff development, parent training, progress reports for related services, and provision of Parental Notice of Eligibility and location of other student records.

Review of the provision of services by the Office of Charter Schools in April, 2005 indicated that the charter school continued to demonstrate pervasive noncompliance regarding the delivery of special education programs and services. As a result, the Department of Education moved to withhold special education funds. An appeal was filed by the charter school. A review of the current status of implementation of the improvement plan will take place in early July by staff members from the Office of Vocational-Technical, Career and Innovative Programs and the Office of Special Education Programs.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Greater Newark Academy will develop and submit a revised improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the additional areas of need identified during the monitoring process.