

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

Charter school: The Together Everyone Achieves More
(TEAM) Academy Charter School

County: Essex

Monitoring Dates: November 15, 2005

Monitor: Barbara J. Tucker

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the TEAM Academy Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the TEAM Academy 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 TEAM Academy Charter School developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted phone interviews with a sampling of parents of special education students, conducted a comprehensive review of student files and the charter school's policies and procedures and interviewed the director of special services, child study team members and speech-language specialists. The purpose of the interviews was to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan and to determine the charter school's progress in implementing the plan.

Data Summary:

A three-year review of the charter school's data shows that during the 2002-2003 school year, TEAM Academy Charter School had an enrollment of 80 students. A year later, school year 2003-2004, the enrollment nearly doubled (144) students, with 2.82% (4) students being identified as students with disabilities. During 2004-2005, the enrollment again increased to 236. During that year, the school had a reported classification rate of 4.24% (10 students out of 236 students). When the classification rates for school years 2002 through 2005 school are compared to state classification rates, data shows that TEAM Academy Charter School's classification rates are significantly below the state averages for those years.

With regard to educational placement, during both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years, all of the students identified as students with disabilities were placed in general education settings with their nondisabled peers for at least 80% of the school day. The charter school identified a need in the self-assessment to provide in-class support services as a program option. During the onsite visit, it was determined that the school had implemented programs to address this need.

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Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

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 process involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the school in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. **General Provisions, Reevaluations, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Programs and Services** were identified by the charter school during self-assessment and the OSEP during the monitoring process as compliant.

Areas not Applicable

Bilingual evaluations, transition to preschool, statement of needed transition services and identification of post secondary liaison were areas not reviewed during monitoring because the charter school does not currently serve a population of students for which the NJDOE would require these services.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the charter school’s self-assessment committee and by the NJDOE as compliant. The areas were reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech-language services (ESLS). The table indicates those areas where the area was compliant for only one group of students.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
II. Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended school year • Provision of programs
III. Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Provision of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meeting • Independent evaluations
IV. Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health summary • Direct referrals • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
V. Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations (ESERS) • Standardized assessments • Written reports prepared by evaluators • Written reports signed and dated
VII. Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with required participants
VIII. IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation dates • IEP required considerations and components • IEP provided to parent prior to implementation • Meetings held annually or more often if necessary to review and/or revise the IEP

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reviews completed by June 30th • 90-day timelines
IX. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of LRE decisions • Notification and participation in nonacademic and extra-curricular activities • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs • Placement decisions based on students' individual needs

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were originally identified by the charter school's self-assessment committee as noncompliant but were found to be compliant by the NJDOE during the on-site monitoring:

Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
II. FAPE	<p>Provision of Related Services-the charter school did not have an individual to provide adaptive physical education for students who required these services as per their IEPs.</p> <p>Transfer Procedures-the charter identified that school personnel did not know to provide services for transfer students with disabilities without undue delay.</p>	The charter school has demonstrated compliance in these areas with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
IV. LRI	<p>Pre-referral Interventions-the instructional staff at the charter school did not maintain written documentation of the implementation and effectiveness of attempted interventions.</p> <p>Referral Process-the charter school reported that the referral process did not include a procedure to ensure that for students who are referred, there is documentation of attempted interventions by the classroom teacher.</p>	The charter school has demonstrated compliance in these areas with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

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Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
	<p>Vision & Hearing Screenings- the charter school identified that staff members did not review or conduct vision and hearing screening for students referred to the child study team.</p> <p>Child Find- the charter school identified that it did not have procedures, timelines or a mechanism for disseminating child find information through the school.</p>	
V. Evaluation	<p>Educational Impact Statement (ESLS)- the charter school identified that the evaluation reports of the speech-language specialist did not contain the educational impact statement for students evaluated for speech or language difficulties.</p>	<p>The charter school has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.</p>
VII. Eligibility	<p>Copies of Evaluation Reports to Parents- the charter school did not consistently provide copies of evaluation reports to parents at least ten days prior to the eligibility determination conference.</p> <p>Signatures of Agreement or Disagreement and Rationale- the charter school did not document the signatures of agreement or disagreement and rationale with a student's eligibility.</p>	<p>The charter school has demonstrated compliance in these areas with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.</p>
VIII. IEP	<p>Teacher Responsibility- instructional staff members at the charter school were not aware of their responsibility in implementing the accommodations and modifications in students' IEPs.</p> <p>IEP Meeting Participants- the charter school identified that required meeting participants were not consistently in attendance at IEP meetings.</p>	<p>The charter school has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.</p>

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Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
IX. LRE	Continuum of Programs -the charter school identified a need to provide in-class support for students with disabilities.	The charter school has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
X. Transition to Post School	Statement of Transition Service Needs -the charter school identified that the transition section in students' IEPs who turn age 14 during the timeframe of their IEPs was not always completed appropriately.	The charter school has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
X. Transition to Adult Life	Student Invitation to IEP Meeting - the charter school did not invite students to the IEP meeting when transition was to be discussed.	The charter school has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

Additional Areas of Need

The following areas were originally identified by the charter school as compliant, but were found to be noncompliant by the NJDOE during the onsite monitoring process:

Section	Area	Activity
II. FAPE	Oversight of Individualized Education Program implementation (IEP) -the charter school does not have sufficient staff to monitor and provide appropriate oversight of the implementation of IEPs.	The charter school must revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that there is appropriate oversight of implementation of the programs and services in IEPs.
III. Procedural Safeguards	Content of a notice of meeting - the notice of meeting does not contain all of the required components.	The charter school must revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the notice of meeting includes all of the required components. The school's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.

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Section	Area	Activity
V. Evaluation	Functional Assessments the required components of the functional assessment are not consistently included in evaluation reports for students who are potentially eligible for special education and related services or speech and language services.	The charter school must revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the components of the functional assessment required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d)2 are included in evaluation reports (ESERS and ESLS). The school's plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.
VII. Eligibility	Statement of Eligibility - for a student who is determined to have a Specific Learning Disability, the charter school does not develop an eligibility statement in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(c)11(ii).	The charter school must revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that, for a student who is determined to have a Specific Learning Disability, the statement of eligibility is included in the eligibility report. The school's plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure.
VII. Eligibility	Criteria for Specific Learning Disability - the charter school does not use a statistical formula and criteria to determine whether a student has a learning disability.	The charter school must revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that a statistical formula and criteria are used to determine whether a student has a learning disability. This will ensure consistency in the identification of students with learning disabilities.

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Summary

Special education monitoring was conducted at the TEAM Academy Charter School on November 15, 2005. 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 areas that were determined by the charter school and verified by the OSEP to be compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A three-year review of the charter school's data shows that during the 2002-2003 school year, TEAM Academy Charter School had an enrollment of 80 students. A year later, school year 2003-2004, the enrollment nearly doubled (144) students, with 2.82% (4) students being identified as students with disabilities. During 2004-2005, the enrollment again increased to 236. During that year, the school had a reported classification rate of 4.24% (10 students out of 236 students). When the classification rates for school years 2002 through 2005 school are compared to state classification rates, data shows that TEAM Academy Charter School's classification rates are significantly below the state averages for those years.

With regard to educational placement, during both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school years, all of the students identified as students with disabilities were placed in general education settings with their nondisabled peers for at least 80% of the school day. The charter school identified a need in the self-assessment to provide in-class support services as a program option. During the onsite visit, it was determined that the school had implemented programs to address this need.

Of the parents who were interviewed, most were either satisfied or very satisfied with the charter school's programs and services and felt that the charter school was doing a great job in providing challenging and high quality instruction to their children. The vast majority of the parents stated that they participate in IEP meetings for their children and are informed in sufficient time to attend the meetings.

Sections identified as consistently compliant and verified during the monitoring visit included General Provisions, Reevaluations, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the monitoring visit included: extended school year, provision of programs, consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, meetings, provision of written notice, content of written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meeting, independent evaluations, health summary, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations for students eligible for special education and related services, standardized assessments, written reports prepared by evaluators, written reports signed and dated, eligibility meetings with required participants, IEP implementation dates, considerations and components in IEPs, copies of IEP to parents, meetings held annually or more often if necessary to review and/or revise the IEP, annual review timelines, 90-day timelines, documentation of LRE decisions, notification of and participation in non-academic and extra-curricular activities, opportunity to access all general education programs and placement decisions based on students' individual needs.

Areas of need originally identified by the charter school as noncompliant, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the New Jersey Department of Education were: provision of related services, transfer procedures,

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pre-referral interventions, referral process, vision and hearing screenings, child find, educational impact statement (ESLS), copies of evaluation reports to parents, signatures of agreement or disagreement and rationale, teacher responsibility, IEP meeting participants, continuum of programs, statement of transition service needs and student invitation to IEP meetings. The charter school has demonstrated compliance in these areas with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

The onsite visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding: oversight of IEP implementation, content of notice of meeting, functional assessments, statements of eligibility in the eligibility conference report and criteria for specific learning disability.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the charter school will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address the areas that require revision.