

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

**Charter School:** Red Bank Charter School

**County:** Monmouth

**Monitoring Dates:** September 18, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Barbara J. Tucker, Michelle Davis, Georgianna Pilesky

### **Background Information:**

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Red Bank Charter School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Red Bank 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 Red Bank 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 Red Bank Charter School on September 9, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed the charter school documents, including policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the charter school's special education administrator, building principal, general education and special education teachers, child study team members and speech/language therapists.

### **Charter School Strengths:**

The charter school is commended for the following unique programs which include students with disabilities:

**Red Bank Charter School's Learner Individualized Program (L.I.P.)** - Grounded in a thorough assessment of each child's primary and secondary learning and working styles, the school has crafted a format for structuring an individualized plan for each child.

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

These individualized plans address the three focus areas of the charter school: academics, social development and service learning. The plans support student learning styles and the enrichment opportunities specific for each child in accordance with the core curriculum content standards.

**Charter Chats** - The charter school provides open and frequent dialogue with parents/guardians that influence a child's performance in school. This two-way communication program is called "Charter Chats." The intent of this program is to establish weekly contact with each family. Additionally, the goal of the program is to decrease misunderstandings and to develop trusting relationships between teachers, parents and child.

**Mentos Program** - The Mentos program affords students the opportunity to connect with caring adults. Throughout the year, each adult in the school is responsible for mentoring a group of eight children from different grade levels.

**Service Learning Program** - The Service Learning Program is designed to provide tutorial services on a daily basis with assignments that support each child's academic efforts.

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

**General Provisions, LRE, Statewide Assessments 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 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, speech goals/objectives/frequency/duration/location, facilities and certification.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of transfer procedures. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedure. The plan must be revised to include this component.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of related services.

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

**Provision of Related Services** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff and review of records that the implementation dates for related services did not accurately reflect that dates the services actually started.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all required related services are provided in a timely manner**

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

**as identified by the IEP. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section III: Procedural Safeguards**

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

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, content and provision of notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of selection and training of surrogate parents. 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 IV: Location, Referral and Identification**

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

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of identification meeting participants and pre-referral interventions.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of referral procedures for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services, review and summary of health and medical information by the school nurse, and audiometric screenings. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need 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 elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the 20-day timeline and direct referrals from staff.

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

**20-Day Timeline** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the charter school does not document the date of referral and therefore is unable to track the required 20-day timeline.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure referrals are date stamped to further ensure identification meetings are convened within 20-days of receipt of the referral. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

**Direct Referral from Teachers** - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that although child study team members stated that teachers can make direct referrals, interviews with instructional staff indicated that they do not have the opportunity to directly refer a student to the team.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that teachers have the opportunity to make direct referrals to the child study team and to participate in a meeting when they believe the nature of the student's problem is such that an evaluation is warranted. The school personnel and the parent will then make a determination as to whether an evaluation is needed. The improvement plan must include a mechanism to establish criteria that identifies the type of documentation that would support a staff request for a direct referral. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant 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 standardized assessments, signed and dated reports for students eligible for special education and related services and bilingual evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of evaluating students eligible for speech/language services, written reports and information to determine nature and scope of evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports, functional assessments for students eligible for speech/language services and students eligible for special education and related services and dated speech/language reports.

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

**Acceptance/Rejection of Evaluation Reports** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews and record review that the school does not follow appropriate procedures to accept or reject outside reports.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the acceptance/rejection of evaluation reports. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the required procedures.**

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

**Functional Assessments** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with child study team members and record review that evaluation reports do not include all of the required components of a functional assessment.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that functional assessments contain the required components identified in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(d)2. The improvement plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Dated Speech/Language Reports** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with speech therapists and record review that speech evaluation reports are not dated.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to to ensure that speech/language reports are dated. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section VI:   Reevaluation**

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

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the reevaluation planning meeting and meeting participants.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified a concern in the area of reevaluation timelines. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

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

### **Section VII:   Eligibility**

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of meeting participants, evaluation reports to parents, documentation of eligibility, speech/language assessments, signatures of agreement/disagreement, rationale for disagreement and documentation of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings. The charter school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the in-service and an oversight component to bring about the required changes. The plan needs to be revised to include these elements.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

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

### **Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

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

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines, implementation dates, IEPs to parents, teacher access/responsibility and the 90-day timeline.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding present levels of educational performance statements.

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

**Present Levels of Educational Performance** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through review of IEPs that the Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP) statements do not consistently contain information regarding the student's current performance/progress or how the student's disability impacts his/her involvement in the general education curriculum.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the PLEP statements contain sufficient information to determine the student's current performance/progress or how the student's disability impacts his/her involvement in the general education curriculum. The improvement plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the charter school identified themselves compliant in all areas of transition. However, an area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the Statement of Transition Service Needs and student/agency invitation.

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

**Statement of Transition Service Needs** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review that the charter school does not complete the Statement of Transition Service Needs in its entirety.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the Statement of Transition Service Needs is completed in its entirety. The plan must include in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight**

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

**Student/Agency Invitation** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined through record review and interviews that the charter school does not invite the student and/or agency to the IEP meeting when transition services will be discussed.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the student and/or agency is provided with a written invitation to the IEP meeting when transition services will be discussed and that this provision is documented in the student file. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

### Section XI: Discipline

#### Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of identification of an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES) and procedural safeguards.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation to the case manager.

#### Area(s) of Need:

**Documentation to Case Manager-** During the on-site monitoring it was determined through interviews with staff that case managers are not notified when classified students are suspended.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written notification is provided to case managers whenever any removal from program is being considered. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### Section XIII: Graduation

#### Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the charter school identified themselves compliant in all areas of graduation. However, an area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding graduation requirements in students IEPs.

#### Area(s) of Need:

**Graduation Requirements** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that graduation requirements for 14-year-old students are not addressed in the IEP.

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that graduation requirements are documented for students who will turn age 14 during the course of that IEP. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### Section XV: Student Records

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

During self-assessment the charter school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets and maintenance/destruction of records.

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

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

**Documentation of Other Location of Student Records** - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the charter school does not identify in the central files other locations of records maintained by the district.

- **The charter school will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the central file identifies the location of other student records maintained by the district.**



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

### **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at the Red Bank Charter School on September 18, 2002. 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 the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the charter school was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will be sufficient to bring about the required changes. The charter school is further commended 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed concern about the provision of special education programs and related services, implementation of the IEP, notification to parents regarding changes in student IEPs and placements, development of IEPs without parental participation, meeting participants, IEP implementation dates, extended school year, communication between case managers and parents and the provision of programs based on availability of teachers.

Areas demonstrating compliance with all standards included General Provisions, LRE, Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included parent training, dissemination of IDEA information, length of school day, speech goals/objectives, frequency, duration, location, facilities, certification, consent, independent evaluations and content, provision of notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, identification meeting participants, pre-referral interventions, standardized assessments, signed and dated reports for students eligible for special education and related services, bilingual evaluations, the reevaluation planning meeting, meeting participants, eligibility criteria, considerations/required statements in IEPs, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, annual review timelines, implementation dates, IEPs to parents, teacher access/responsibility, the 90-day timeline, decision-making-process, LRE documentation, regular education access, identification of an Interim Alternative Educational Setting, procedural safeguards, class sizes, age range waivers, group sizes for speech/language, collaboration time for instructional staff, access sheets and maintenance /destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified areas of need regarding transfer procedures, selection and training of surrogate parents, referral procedures for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services, review and summary of health and medical information by the school nurse, audiometric screening, evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, written reports, information to determine nature and scope of evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, reevaluation timelines for students eligible for speech/language services and students eligible for special education and related services, meeting participants, evaluation reports to parents, documentation of eligibility, speech/language assessments, signatures of

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

agreement/disagreement, rationale for disagreement and documentation of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meeting.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding policies and procedures, provision of related services, referral procedures for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services, review and summary of health and medical information by school nurse, audiometric screenings, evaluating students eligible for speech/language services, written reports, information to determine nature and scope of evaluations for students eligible for speech/language services, reevaluation timelines for students eligible for speech/language services, students eligible for special education and related services, meeting participants, evaluation reports to parents, and documentation of eligibility and speech/language assessments, signatures of agreement/disagreement, rationale for disagreement, documentation of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to meetings, present levels of educational performance, the statement of Transition Service Needs, student/agency invitation, documentation to the case manager, graduation requirements, and documentation of other location of student records.

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