

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

**District:** Robert Treat Academy Charter School

**County:** Essex

**Monitoring Date:** October 27, 2004

**Monitor:** Barbara J. Tucker

***Background Information:***

During the 2003–2004 school year, The Robert Treat 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 Robert Treat 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 Robert Treat Academy 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 Robert Treat Academy Charter School on October 27, 2004.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE monitor reviewed documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the charter school's building administrator, special education administrator and child study team member. Based on these sources, the OSEP monitor determined that the charter school had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan, which is sufficient to appropriately address all areas of identified need.

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### **Data Summary:**

A review of the data indicated that the charter school has a classification rate of 3.3% (15 of 450 students). The charter school's placement rate for students who spend more than 80% of their school day being educated with their non-disabled peers has ranged from 87% to 100% during the last three years. Data submitted by the charter school also indicated that the school had no suspensions during the three years reviewed. The charter school is commended for providing programs which result in the recruitment of nearly all of their non-disabled students and students with disabilities by some of the most prestigious high schools in the country.

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

**General Provisions, Free, Appropriate Public Education, Location, Referral and Identification, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Individualized Education Plan (IEP), Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Post-School, Discipline, Statewide Assessments, Graduation 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 III. Procedural Safeguards**

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of consent, notices of meetings, content/provision of notices, content/provision of written notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, 20-day timelines and provision of procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of selection and training of surrogate parent. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area.

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

### **Section V. Protection in the Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

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

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of multidisciplinary assessments, written reports dated and signed, and bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports from other professionals and documentation of nature and scope.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of missing components of a functional assessment for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area.

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

**Section XV: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the district accurately identified compliance in the areas of access sheets and documentation of the location of other records.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of maintenance, security access and destruction of student records. Although the district initially identified this as an area of need, the district was able to demonstrate that it has already begun to appropriately implement specific activities to bring about compliance in this area.

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

**Summary**

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

An on-site special education monitoring was conducted at The Robert Treat Academy Charter School on October 27, 2004. 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 Robert Treat Academy Charter School is highly commended for the outstanding accomplishment of identifying all areas of need during the self-assessment process and for developing an improvement plan that is sufficient to bring about systemic change. The charter school is further commended for the prompt implementation of improvement plan activities which it has already undertaken to bring about compliance.

A review of the data indicated that the charter school is to be commended for its classification rate of 3.3% which has consistently remained far below the state average during the past three years, and a placement rate which has averaged nearly 90% in terms of the number of students who spend more than 80% of their school day being educated with their non-disabled peers. The charter school also has a 0% suspension rate. The charter schools reported that nearly all of their students are recruited by some of the most prestigious high schools in the country.

General Provisions, Free Appropriate and Public Education, Location, Referral and Identification, Reevaluation, Eligibility, IEPs, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition to Post-School, Discipline, Statewide Assessments, Graduation and Programs and Services were all areas determined to be compliant with all of the standards.

At a focus group meeting on October 27, 2004, parents praised the staff, the services and the programs which the charter school makes available to students. Parents also expressed their satisfaction with the manner in which the school communicates information and accepts their input and participation. They also expressed their satisfaction with the level of collaboration between themselves and the child study team.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included consent, notices of meetings, content/provision of notices, content/provision of written notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, 20-day timelines, provision of procedural safeguards, multidisciplinary assessments, written reports dated and signed, and bilingual evaluations, acceptance/rejection of outside reports from other professionals, nature and scope, access sheets and documentation of the location of other records.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified areas of need including selection and training of surrogate parent, missing components of a functional assessment for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech/language services, maintenance, security access and destruction of student records.

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

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**Robert Treat Academy Charter School Information:**

Mr. Michael Ciallella-President Board of Trustees  
Mr. Michael Pallante-Principal and Director of Student Services  
Ms. Sharon L. Brennan-Board Secretary