

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

**District:** Teaneck Community Charter School      **County:** Bergen  
**Monitoring Dates:** September 27, 2004  
**Monitor:** Susan Wilson, Gladys Miller

***Background Information:***

During the 2003-2004 school year, the **Teaneck Community Charter School** conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the **Teaneck Community Charter School** with an opportunity to evaluate performance, 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 permit the district the opportunity to identify areas of strength and promising practices, as well as areas needing improvement and areas that may be noncompliant with state and federal requirements. The **Teaneck Community Charter School** developed an improvement plan to address these identified areas of need.

As the first step to verifying the self-assessment findings, to assessing the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determining any progress in implementing this plan, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members, at the Teaneck Community Charter on the evening of September 20, 2004. Information obtained from this meeting was used to direct the focus of the subsequent monitoring activities. Additionally, the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) completed a comprehensive desk audit, including review of a representative sample of student records, as well as reviews of district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related services personnel, and other relevant information. Parent interviews were conducted by telephone. Based on these sources, OSEP staff determined that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and had developed a plan, warranting only minor revision, which will appropriately address all areas of identified need.

***District Strengths:***

The Teaneck Community Charter School delivers instruction using 3 primary strategies: centered learning; teaching children in accordance with their development and interests rather than age groupings; and expeditionary learning beyond the school walls.

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Partnerships with community-based organizations help the school to provide students with access to mentors, career education, and experiential “extended classroom” activities.

Teaneck Community Charter School is commended for their Teacher Advocate Program. Each classified student is assigned to a faculty member assists students with developing self-advocacy skills, completing homework and class projects, and assists in fostering peer relationships. The faculty member also maintains regular contact with parents.

### ***Section I: General Provisions***

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the charter schools identified concerns in the area of in-service training for professional and paraprofessional staff and parents. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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

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

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

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of oversight of IEP implementation, provision of programs and related services, counseling, transfer students and facilities. The district’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

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

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of, surrogate parents, consent, notice of meetings, written notice, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the area of meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

An additional area of need was identified during the onsite monitoring visit regarding surrogate parents.

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

**Surrogate Parent-** During the on-site visit, interviews with the supervisor and director indicated that the charter school does not have a procedure to select and train surrogate parents in the event one is required (6A: 14-2.2).

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to develop procedures to select and train surrogate parents in the event one is needed.**

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

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of referral process, health summary, vision and hearing screening.

During the self-assessment process the charter school identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals and identification meetings timelines and participants. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the charter school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction the areas of Child Find, pre-referral interventions and direct referrals.

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

### **Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures**

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of standardized assessment, written reports, bilingual evaluations acceptance and rejection of reports.

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During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of multidisciplinary and functional assessments. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the charter school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction the areas of functional assessment and multi-disciplinary evaluations.

An additional area of need was identified during the onsite monitoring visit regarding the acceptance or rejection of reports.

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

**Acceptance or Rejection of Reports** – During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the charter school does not document the acceptance or rejection of outside reports,

- **The charter school will revise its improvement plan to include activities that will ensure that reports written by personnel not employed by the charter school are accepted or rejected by the Teaneck Community Charter School child study team. This acceptance or rejection will be documented in the student file. Implementation of these activities will ensure that relevant and necessary information is considered for each student and becomes part of the report(s) of the school. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the activities.**

### ***Section VI: Reevaluation***

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of reevaluation timelines and planning meeting participants

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

### ***Section VII: Eligibility***

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of meetings, criteria, participants, statement of eligibility and the provision of evaluation reports to parents 10 days prior to the meeting.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of signatures of agreement or disagreement rationale. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the charter school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction these areas.

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

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

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of meeting participants, present levels of educational performance, age of majority, annual timelines, copies of IEPs to parents and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the charter school identified concerns in the areas of considerations/required components, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates and 90-day timelines. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the charter school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction the areas of 90-day timelines, IEP timelines, considerations and required statements.

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

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

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of the decision making process regarding the least restrictive environment, consideration of supplemental aids and services, general education access, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, and continuum of programs.

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

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

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

Although the Teaneck Community Charter School services students from Kindergarten to eighth grade, during the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, preferences and interests, survey and assessments, and student invitation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the charter school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction the area of transition activities.

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

### ***Section XI: Discipline***

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, convening an IEP team meeting for removals of ten or more school days, behavioral intervention plans, functional behavioral assessments, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational settings, and procedural safeguards.

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

### ***Section XII: Statewide Assessment***

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of participation, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternative assessment, and the process for exemption from passing.

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

### ***Section XIII: Graduation***

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

The Teaneck Community Charter School is an elementary school; therefore graduation requirements are not applicable.

### ***Section XIV: Programs and Services***

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

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers, and group sizes for speech therapy, home instruction consultation time and common planning time.

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

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**Section XV: Student Records**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the charter school accurately identified compliance in the areas of parent and adult-student access to records, maintenance of records, and documentation of locations of additional records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of access sheets. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the charter school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction the area of access sheets.

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

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### Summary

Special education monitoring was completed in the **Teaneck Community Charter School** on September 27, 2004. The purpose of this phase of the monitoring process was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is commended for its exceptionally comprehensive review conducted as part of the self-assessment activities. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and to develop an improvement plan that, with some revision, will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas identified as compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs.

A review of data indicated that Teaneck Community Charter School has maintained a rate of classification significantly lower than the state average for the past four years. Staff members indicated that an improvement in the Intervention and Referral Service as well as expanded general educational resources have helped to maintain a low classification rate. Additionally, data show an equitable distribution of students across various instructional settings, based on category of eligibility and racial-gender groupings.

At a public focus group meeting, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the school's programs and services. In general, the district was praised for its academically challenging courses and instruction, the professionalism and high quality of staff, the availability of training opportunities for teachers, paraprofessionals and parents and the access students have to technology throughout school day. Parents noted that special education timelines are maintained, meetings are conducted when necessary, IEP documents are kept current and the range of programming options is appropriate. Parents indicated that general education teachers attend IEP team meetings and are active participants in the development of their children's programs.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the charter school during self-assessment and verified during the focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, length of school day, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, notices in native language, independent interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, referral process, summer referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screening, standardized assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance or rejections of reports, three year timelines, planning meeting participants, eligibility meetings and participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to meeting, meetings participants, present level of educational performance, age of majority, annual review timelines, teacher access and responsibility, decision-making process regarding least restrictive environment, consideration of supplemental aids and services, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities, general education access, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, and access sheets.



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During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding in-service training for parents, professional and paraprofessional staff, provision of programs and related services, counseling, transfer students, meetings, Child Find 3-21, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, identification meeting timelines and participants, multi-disciplinary evaluation, functional assessments, agreement or disagreement rationale, considerations/required components, goals and objectives aligned with Core Curriculum Content Standards, implementation dates, age fourteen transition service needs, preferences and interests, survey and assessments, student transition invitation and pupil record access sheets.

The focus group meeting, additional parent interviews and comprehensive desk audit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding surrogate parent, provision of N.J.A.C. 6A: 14-2.2 and acceptance or rejection of reports.

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