



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Governor

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Lt. Governor

CHRISTOPHER D. CERF
Acting Commissioner

August 12, 2011

Dr. Kathleen Semergieff, Superintendent
Alpine School District
500 Hillside Avenue
Alpine, NJ 07620

Dear Dr. Semergieff:

Subject: Special Education Monitoring Report – Alpine School District

This correspondence has been sent to inform you of the results of the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education's onsite monitoring regarding the Alpine School District's implementation of federal and state special education requirements. The New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education (NJOSE), conducted onsite monitoring visits, verification visits and desk audits in the Alpine School District to determine compliance with federal and state special education requirements. The members of the monitoring team were Linda Chavez and Samuel Jordan.

The special education monitoring system is data driven and aligned with the federally required State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators, including the federal monitoring priorities established by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004). Specifically, the NJOSE monitoring process is focused on improving educational results and functional outcomes for students with disabilities and ensuring compliance with those special education requirements related to positive student outcomes. **The Alpine School District was selected for the self-assessment/monitoring process through random selection.**

The special education self-assessment and monitoring process focused on requirements related to the following areas:

- **Transition to Adult Life**
- **State Assessment**
- **Placement in the Least Restrictive Environment**
- **Parent Involvement**
- **Disproportionate Representation of Specific Racial-Ethnic Groups in Special Education**
- **Evaluation and Reevaluation**
- **Individualized Education Program**
- **Programs and Services**

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Monitoring Results

The enclosed Table of Findings details the findings of noncompliance resulting from the monitoring. Of the 46 requirements in the district's self-assessment that were reviewed by NJOSE, ten findings of noncompliance were identified. All findings must be corrected within one year of the date of this report. Corrective action should include, as necessary: development and/or revision of policies and procedures, staff training, implementation of the identified IDEA and N.J.A.C. requirements and implementation of an oversight mechanism to ensure ongoing compliance. A special education monitor, Ms. Tracey Bugg, will contact Ms. Barbara Battaglia to discuss procedures for verification of correction of the findings of noncompliance listed in the Table of Findings. *For any finding of noncompliance related to the development of implementation of IEPs or the delivery of programs and services, corrective action activities have been directed by NJOSE.*

The results of the special education monitoring must be reviewed at the next meeting of the district's board of education. A copy of the minutes from the board of education meeting documenting the review by the board and all documentation required to demonstrate completion of corrective action activities must be submitted to the following address:

Ms. Tracey Pettiford-Bugg
New Jersey Department of Education
Office of Special Education
501 River Street
Paterson, NJ 07524

The district is expected to provide and sustain administrative oversight, as well as provide ongoing training and technical assistance as needed to ensure identification and correction of any noncompliance with IDEA 2004 and positive educational outcomes for students with disabilities. Please contact me at (609) 292-7605 if you have questions regarding special education monitoring. The NJOSE appreciates the cooperation of district staff members during the self-assessment/monitoring and verification process.

Sincerely,



Peggy McDonald, Interim Director
Office of Special Education

PM/dm
Enclosure

c: Barbara Gantwerk
Tracey Bugg
Robert Gilmartin
Steven Pasternack
Barbara Battaglia

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Noncompliance with requirements was not identified in the following sections of the self-assessment:

Section I: TRANSITION TO ADULT LIFE

Section II: STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT

Section V: DISPROPORTIONATE REPRESENTATION

Section VIII: PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Section III: LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Citation	Findings of Noncompliance
5) IEPs shall include the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a placement (general education) may have on the student with disabilities or the other students in the class. [20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(5); 34 CFR §300.116(d)]	A review of records indicated that IEPs did not include a statement of the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a placement in general education may have on the student with disabilities or the other students in the class due to lack of district procedures.

Corrective Action for Citation 5 above: The district is required develop compliant procedures and conduct training with child study team members regarding the procedures for documenting in the student's IEP, the potentially beneficial or harmful effects that placement may have on the student with disabilities or other students in the class.

The district is required to conduct a meeting of the IEP team for each student whose IEP was identified as noncompliant by the NJOSE monitors, and ensure that each IEP is revised to include documentation within the required components. Names of students whose IEPs were found to be noncompliant by the monitors will be provided to the director of Special Education by NJOSE.

The district must review the IEPs of all students with disabilities removed from general education settings for greater than 20% of the school day. For any IEP that does not contain documentation within the required components, a meeting of the IEP team must be convened to review and revise the IEP.

Section IV: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Citation	Findings of Noncompliance
1) Parents shall be given written notice of a meeting containing all the required components, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)3,5; 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(1); and 34 CFR §300.304(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that written notices of meetings were not consistently provided to parents due to lack of implementation of district procedures.

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3) Eligibility meetings shall include required participants in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)1 (i-vii); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B); and 34 CFR §300.321(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that eligibility meetings did not consistently include the required participants due to lack of implementation of district procedures.
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Section VI: EVALUATIONS AND REEVALUATION

Citation	Findings of Noncompliance
2) Interventions in the general education setting shall be provided to students exhibiting academic difficulties and shall be utilized, as appropriate, prior to referring a student for an evaluation, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3(b); 20 U.S.C. §1413(f)(2); and 34 CFR §300.226(b).	A review of records and interviews with staff indicated that the district staff did not provide interventions in the general education setting to students exhibiting academic difficulties, prior to referring a student for an evaluation due to lack of implementation of district procedures.
3) The staff of the general education program shall maintain written documentation regarding type, frequency, duration and effectiveness of each intervention used, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.3(c).	A review of records indicated that the district staff did not maintain written documentation of type, frequency, duration and effectiveness of each intervention implemented in the general education classroom due to lack of implementation of district procedures.
5) A vision and audiometric screening shall be conducted for every student referred to the child study team for evaluation. The school nurse shall review and summarize available health and medical information and transmit the summary to the child study team, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(j).	A review of records indicated that the district did not ensure that vision and audiometric screening was conducted for every student referred to the child study team for evaluation due to lack of implementation of district procedures.
9) Each evaluation of a student shall include functional assessment, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(f)4(i-vi); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(4) and (5); and 34 CFR §300.306(c)(i).	A review of records indicated that all sections of the functional assessment were not conducted as part of the initial evaluation of students referred for special education and related services, and for students referred for speech and language services due to lack of implementation of district procedures.
15) A copy of the evaluation report(s) and documentation and information that will be used for a determination of eligibility shall be given to the parent or adult student not less than 10 calendar days prior to the eligibility meeting, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.5(a); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(4); and 34 CFR §300.306(a).	A review of records indicated that copies of evaluation reports for students evaluated for special education and related services, as well as for students evaluated for speech and language services were not provided to parents and/or adult students at least 10 calendar days prior to the eligibility determination meeting due to lack of implementation of district procedures.

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Section VII: IEP

Citation	Findings of Noncompliance
1) IEP meetings shall be held with an appropriately configured IEP team, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)2(i-x)1; 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B); and 34 CFR §300.321(a).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEP meetings did not consistently include required participants due to lack of implementation of district procedures.
3) IEP meetings shall be conducted annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP and determine placement, in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(i); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d); and 34 CFR §300.324(b)(1).	A review of records and interviews with staff members indicated that IEP meetings were not consistently conducted annually or more often if necessary due to lack of implementation of district procedures.

Corrective Action for Citation 3 above: The district is required to conduct training with child study team members and speech and language specialists regarding procedures for conducting IEP meetings annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP and determine program and/or placement.

The district is required to immediately convene an appropriately configured IEP team meeting to review and/or revise the IEP for each student whose IEP was not reviewed within one year of the implementation date. Names of students with IEPs that were found to be noncompliant (expired) that were identified by the monitors will be provided to the director of Special Education by NJOSE.

Additionally, the district must review current implementation dates of the IEPs of all students eligible for special education and related services and those eligible for speech and language services. For any student with an IEP that was not reviewed within one year of the date of implementation, a meeting of the IEP team must be convened to review and revise the IEP.