

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

Receiving School: Willowglen Academy

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: October 28-30, 2002

Monitoring Team: Jennifer DeSaye, Susan Smahl, Mitch Badiner

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Willowglen Academy conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Willowglen Academy 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 development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services to meet the needs of the students with disabilities.

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 Willowglen Academy developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) 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.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed Willowglen Academy documents such as policies and procedures, student records from sending districts, lesson plans, services as indicated in IEPs, staff evaluations, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, and related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the Willowglen Academy's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, related service personnel and parent interview.

School Strengths:

Willowglen Academy is commended for creating programs that are integrated with the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) and the Department of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) to provide developmental and therapeutic environments for students to learn and thrive. Willowglen has two campuses, one in Sparta and one in Newton. The Sparta Campus is affiliated with DDD and provides services for students with multiple disabilities and autism. Most of these students also exhibit emotional and/or behavioral problems and the majority live in group homes. The Newton Campus is affiliated with DYFS and provides services for students classified under the category emotionally disturbed. A portion of the students suffer from mental illnesses and many of the students reside either on-site or within group homes.

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Willowglen Academy provides students with a wide variety of community activities such as visits to the zoo, and theater performances. The students participate in community-based programs such as recycling, Meals on Wheels, and interpretive dance shows for seniors at the Homestead Nursing Home. They also provide specialized programs such as therapeutic horseback riding, Project USE (Urban Education), Career Day, Family Day, and Seasonal Language Trains. Willowglen also offers summer programs. The Newton Campus has a Summer Program, through DYFS, geared toward Career Development and the Sparta Campus Summer Program is geared toward Community and Environmental Awareness. Since the Sparta Campus is near the Special Children's School, both schools have started a Staff Development Collaboration program. They are pooling resources to invite outside speakers for training seminars and sharing information on trainings that each has received. This working relationship is also extended to sharing events and activities for the students in which the students visit the other school for special activities.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of Annual Reports.

During the self-assessment process, Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of policies and procedures, staff development, amendments, and providing programs in nonsectarian settings. The receiving school's improvement plan for staff development, amendments and nonsectarian programs is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of staff development and nonsectarian programs. Willowglen Academy's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of policies and procedures because it lacks in-service training, and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include these components.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of day/year, physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, and provision of services.

During the self-assessment process, Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of hearing aids, observation of programs, and the related services of occupational therapy and physical therapy. The receiving school's improvement plan for hearing aids and observation of programs is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has

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appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in the areas of hearing aids, observation of programs, and provision of the occupational therapy and physical therapy services.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding speech and counseling services.

Area of Need:

Related Services- During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that the Newton Campus students are not receiving speech services and the Sparta Campus students are not receiving counseling services as per their IEP. Although Willowglen Academy has informed the districts of the students who are not receiving related services as per their IEPs, and Willowglen Academy has attempted to hire professionals, the students are still not receiving the related services. Additional activities should be implemented to ensure that students receive all related services.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include additional activities and procedures to ensure it provides related services, in accordance with IEPs. The plan must further address how districts will be notified that arrangements made to provide compensatory services. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of use of physical therapy assistants/certified occupational therapy assistants, private school dual employment, employment/job descriptions for aides, and professional development.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding certified and licensed staff, criminal history, and full time non-teaching principal.

Area(s) of Need:

Certificated/Licensed Staff - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that there are individuals on both campuses who do not possess the appropriate certification/endorsement for the subject that they are teaching or they were teaching in the classroom prior to receiving their proper certification/endorsement.

- **Willowglen Academy will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that classrooms are instructed by appropriately certified staff.**

Criminal History - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that Willowglen Academy is allowing teachers and classroom aides to begin working with students prior to attaining clearance letters from Department of Education's Criminal History Review Unit and/or without obtaining authorization for emergent hiring

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from the County Superintendent. The receiving school indicated that they were not aware of the emergent hiring authorization procedures through the County Office.

- **Willowglen Academy will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all staff has appropriate criminal history clearance prior to employment at the school.**

Full Time Non-teaching Principal - Through staff interviews, it was determined that the administrator serves as principal of both the Sparta and Newton campuses.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that an appropriately certified full time principal is onsite at each campus during the school day. In the interim, the school must address this issue immediately by completing the attached Principal Certification Exception Application and submitting it to the county office of education for review approval.**

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of certificates of occupancy/inspections.

During the self-assessment process, the Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of programs provided in approved facilities, and fire drills. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meeting participants, IEP meeting signatures, and observation of proposed placement.

During the self-assessment process, the Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of IEP meetings held at least annually, current IEPs, communication to sending districts, IEP accessibility, notification of IEP responsibilities, no delay in implementation, statewide testing, IEP implementation, and progress reports. The receiving school's improvement plan for IEP meetings held at least annually, no delay in implementation, and progress reports is sufficient to address these areas of need. Willowglen Academy's improvement plan is insufficient to address the areas of current IEPs, IEP accessibility, notification of responsibilities, communication to sending districts, statewide testing, and IEP implementation, because it lacks an administrative oversight component

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to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

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Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of changes to program/placement, suspensions, and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints, and aversives, removal and termination of student. The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because they lack an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of special class programs, implementing IEPs and preschool programs.

During the self-assessment process, Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of class size/age range, exceptions, description of special class programs, certifications, core curriculum content standards including core curriculum content standards for students with severe disabilities (CCCS/CCCSSSD), home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services, and medical exams for sports. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment Willowglen Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of conformance to pupil record code, return of records, access to records, access sheets, and daily attendance.

During the self-assessment process, Willowglen Academy identified concerns in the areas of access to records, tardiness/absences, written notice of attendance, and student health records. The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures. The plan needs to be revised to include this component.

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An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding location of records.

Area of Need:

Location of Records - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that Willowglen Academy does not have on their cumulative files a notation of the location of other records for a student.

- **Willowglen Academy will revise its improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

Willowglen Academy is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further commended for the many areas determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at Willowglen Academy on October 28th, 29th, and 30th, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Willowglen Academy's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Willowglen Academy during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included annual reports, length of day/year, physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, provision of services, use of PTA/COTA, private school dual employment, employment/job descriptions for aides, professional development, certificate of occupancy/inspections, IEP meeting participants, IEP meeting signatures, observation of proposed placement, changes to program/placement, suspensions, interim alternative educational settings, IEP implementation, special class programs, preschool programs, conformance to pupil record code, return of records, access to records, access sheets, and daily attendance,.

During the self-assessment process, the Willowglen Academy identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, staff development, amendments, nonsectarian, hearing aids, observation of programs, provision of the related services of OT and PT, programs in approved facilities, fire drills, annual IEP meetings, current IEPs, communication to sending districts, IEP accessibility, notification of responsibilities, no delay in implementation, statewide testing, progress reports, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints, aversives, removal of student, termination of student, class size/age range exceptions, description of special class programs, CCCS/CCCSSSD, home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services, medical exams for sports, access to records, tardiness, absences, written notice of attendance, and student health records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding provision of the related services of speech and counseling, certified/licensed staff, criminal history, full time principal and location of records.

This report identifies an area of non-compliance regarding school oversight that requires immediate action by the school administration. Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Willowglen Academy will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.