

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

**Receiving School:** Katzenbach School for the Deaf

**County:** Mercer

**Monitoring Dates:** October 21-23, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Carmen Fanucci, Cecelia Downey, Elaine Lerner, Therese Sheehan, Margaret McDonald, David Alexander, Beverly Fox (interpreter)

### **Background Information:**

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, the Katzenbach School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Katzenbach 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 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 Katzenbach School 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 receiving school 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/related service personnel, and other relevant information. Interviews were conducted with the receiving school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers and related service personnel.

### **School Strengths:**

The Katzenbach School for the Deaf is commended for providing positive learning environments. The school revised all academic curricula in all content areas for students who are deaf/hard of hearing in order to ensure an integration of the standards with the specialized instructional needs for this population. Materials and strategies are adapted according to the students' individual needs.

The vocational curricula have also been revised to reflect the competencies used by the Department of Education to issue vocational certificates. A major focus of the vocational

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program has been to improve students' technology skills with personal computers and Macintosh systems and various software programs.

Technology is integrated throughout the instructional programs on campus and used by both students and staff. Students begin instruction with computers at the preschool level and up. Formal keyboarding skills are part of the curriculum at the middle school level. Students at the high school level have personal laptops. These are used consistently within all academic areas, for homework and for tutorial instruction. Staff was also observed using state of the art technology such as Smart Boards, instruction using PowerPoint presentations and the internet. Some staff utilize distance-learning equipment in the interactive television classroom to connect with other programs for the deaf in New Jersey and out of state.

The Katzenbach School is to be commended for the consistency it has achieved in maintaining its staff for a significant number of years. Rapport between staff and students was noteworthy. The direct access of communication between staff and students and the peer communication are also strengths of the Katzenbach programs.

The Katzenbach School provides opportunities for successful transition from school to work and school to postsecondary education. The transition coordinator has expertise in deafness as well as a knowledge of national and state resources, which fosters participation with other state agencies.

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

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

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of staff development, annual reports, and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding amendments.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Amendments-** During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that Katzenbach School does not obtain written approval from DOE through the county office prior to amending programs in accordance with New Jersey Administrative Code (NJAC) 6A:14-7.1 and 7.3.

- **The Katzenbach School will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that program amendments receive prior written approval from DOE through the county office. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day and year, provision of physical education, programs and services at no cost to the parent and observation of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified concerns in ensuring that hearing aids are functioning properly. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area 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 components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding the provision of related services.

**Provision of Services** – During the on-site visit, through a review of related service logs, related service provider schedules, IEPs, and the staff interview process, it was determined that related services are not being provided as per the IEPs.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that related services are provided in accordance with IEPs. The plan must include a mechanism to determine whether they employ sufficient staff to implement the IEPs. The plan must also include in-service training to ensure that new staff members are familiar with procedures and activities necessary to implement IEPs. The plan must further address how districts will be notified that the required related services have not been provided and the arrangements made to provide compensatory services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent provision of related services as required by student IEPs.**

**Section III: Staff Requirements**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of staff certification for staff employed by Katzenbach School and job descriptions for classroom aides.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified concerns in the areas of certification/license for contracted staff and having an approved professional development plan. The school must revise its improvement plan to ensure that all staff members are appropriately certified for the positions they hold within 45 days. **In addition, the school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that all staff holds appropriate certification/licensure and that the school has an approved professional development plan.** The plan needs to be revised to include these timelines. In addition, the improvement plan submitted by the school included timelines to address these areas that have not been met.

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An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding criminal history background checks for employees.

- **During the on-site visit, criminal history approval letters were not consistently available for review for all staff hired after October 8, 1986. The school must immediately ensure that all staff members have authorization for emergent hiring from the county superintendent prior to employment. In addition, the school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members who require them are fingerprinted. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section IV: Facility Requirements**

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

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of programs provided in approved facilities and maintaining valid certificates.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified concerns in the area of documentation of fire drill logs. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area 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 this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding the insufficient number of working strobe lights (visual alerting devices) for fire alarms.

#### **Area of Need:**

**Visual Alerting Devices:** Staff interviews indicate the need for additional strobe light units throughout the campus. Administration has communicated to the Department of Education that the additional strobe lights have been installed.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that sufficient strobe lights are installed in a timely manner. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

### **Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review**

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

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student participation at IEP meetings, consideration and implementation of transition services, observation of programs prior to placement, administration of statewide assessment, positive behavioral interventions, provision of Braille instruction, opportunities for direct communication with peers and staff in the student's language and communication mode, involvement and progress in the general education curriculum, participation in age-appropriate activities, goals and objectives

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related to core curriculum content standards, opportunities for participation with nondisabled students, graduation requirements and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified concerns in the areas of current IEPs, communication with sending districts when IEP components are missing, informing teacher of IEP responsibilities and tracking the frequency, location, duration and modification of services. **The school's improvement plan for the area of communication with sending districts when IEP components are missing must be revised to include extended school year consideration. In addition, the receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas because they lack 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 components. In addition, the improvement plan submitted by the school included timelines to address these areas that have not been met.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of teacher participation at IEP meetings, no delay in implementing IEPs and use of assistive technology.

### **Areas of Need:**

**Documentation of Teacher Participation at IEP Meetings-** Staff interviews indicated that while teachers attend IEP meetings, a review of records did not document their participation.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures, in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures**

**IEP Implementation** - During the on-site visit, staff interviews and record reviews indicated that staff develop IEP goals and objectives and immediately implement them without convening an IEP meeting.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEP goals and objectives are developed by an appropriately configured IEP team during the IEP meeting, prior to implementation. The plan must include procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Appropriate Use of Assistive Technology-** During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and classroom observations it was determined that staff were using more than one FM system which may result in failure in one or both systems. Appropriate staff members were not available to calibrate appropriate frequencies in each system to avoid system failures.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure correct use of assistive technology devices. The plan must include procedures, in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the**

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**training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Section VI: Discipline**

**Summary of Finding:**

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, changes to program or placement, removal of student and interim alternative educational settings.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified concerns in the areas of notification to sending districts of short term suspension. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient because it lacks procedures, in-service training, and an administrative component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.** The improvement plan must be revised to include these components.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding termination of placements.

**Area of Need:**

**Termination of Placement-** During the on-site visit, it was determined through phone interviews with sending districts and parents, that when considering termination of a student's placement prior to the end of the academic year, the school does not consistently contact the sending school district to request an IEP meeting.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that sending districts are notified when considering the termination of a student's placement prior to the end of the academic year. The plan must include in-service, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures**

**Section VII: Programs and Services**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of special class program descriptions, certification, home instruction, and preschool programs.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified concerns in the areas of collaboration with sending districts to obtain age waivers and policies and procedures regarding nursing and medical services. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient because they lack procedures, in-service training, 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 components. The improvement plan submitted by the school included timelines to address these areas that have not been met.

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An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding teachers' knowledge of the Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS).

### **Area of Need:**

**Teachers Knowledgeable in CCCS-** During the on-site visit, it was determined through teacher interviews that while the majority of teachers are familiar with and implement CCCS, new teachers are not consistently trained in CCCS.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that new teachers are trained and knowledgeable in providing instruction in the CCCSs. The plan must include in-service 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 VIII: Student Records**

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

During self-assessment, the Katzenbach School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of return of pupil records to sending districts, requests for access by authorized individuals, notation in central file as to where other records are maintained, daily attendance and habitual tardiness or absences.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding conformance to pupil record code including access to pupil records and security of pupil records and notification of placement forms.

#### **Areas of Need:**

**Conformance to Pupil Record Code** – Through record reviews, classroom observations and staff interviews it was determined that pupil records are not maintained in secured locations. In addition, access was not limited to only those certified staff with educational responsibilities.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that pupil records are maintained in secured locations and limit access to staff with educational responsibilities. The plan must include procedures, in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Notification of Placement Forms** – Through record reviews it was determined that notification of placement forms were not present in student records. In addition, written notification was not forwarded to the Department of Education through the county office of education within ten calendar days of the student's first day of attendance.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that notifications of placement forms are maintained in pupil records and forwarded to the county office in a timely manner. The plan**

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**must include an administrative component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

**Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at the Katzenbach School on October 21-23, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the school's improvement plan. As a result of the self-assessment, the school was able to identify some areas of need and develop an improvement plan. The plan will require substantial revisions in order to bring about systemic change.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Katzenbach School self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, programs and services at no cost to the parent, observation of programs, staff certification for Katzenbach employees, job descriptions for classroom aides, approved facilities, valid certificates, student participation at IEP meetings, transition services, observation of programs and services prior to placement, statewide assessment, positive behavioral interventions, provision of Braille instruction, opportunities for direct communication, progress in general education curriculum, participation in age-appropriate activities, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, participation with nondisabled students, graduation requirements, progress reports, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, removal of students, changes to program or placement, interim alternative educational settings, class size, special class program descriptions, core curriculum content standards, home instruction, preschool programs, return of pupil records to sending districts, access to records by authorized individuals, location of records, daily attendance, and tardiness or absences.

During the self-assessment process, the Katzenbach School identified areas of need regarding hearing aids, certification/licensure of contracted staff, approved professional development plan, fire drill logs, current IEPs, communication with sending districts regarding IEPs, informing teachers of IEP responsibilities, tracking frequency, location, duration, and modification of services, notification to sending districts of short term suspensions, collaboration with sending districts to obtain age waivers, and policies and procedures regarding nursing and medical services.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding amendments, extended school year consideration, provision of related services, criminal history background check, visual alerting devices, documentation of teacher participation at IEP meetings, IEP implementation, assistive technology, teachers knowledgeable in CCCS, conformance to pupil record code, and notification of placement forms.

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