

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Receiving School: East Mountain School

County: Somerset

Monitoring Dates: May 16-17, 2006

Monitoring Team: Heather Mills-Pevonis, Elaine Lerner, Denise Wilkins and Dolores Walther

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the East Mountain School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the East Mountain 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 East Mountain 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 the receiving school's 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, parents and related service personnel.

Noncompliant items reflected in this report may result in nonallowable costs imposed by the Division of Finance in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-4.1 through 4.16.

School Strengths:

The school's Guidance Department provides assistance with all aspects of the college application process including the writing of essays and letters of recommendation, and, at times, visits to college programs. Both PSAT and SAT testing are offered on campus with special accommodations. In addition, the school provides career testing and helps students to identify particular career interests and then assists with applications to vocational programs or jobs that match students' individual needs. The school also

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provides vocational programs, such as the “Bike Assembly Project,” that allow students to explore their interests on-campus before assisting students in locating employment near their homes. The school works with families to contact the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, so that students may avail themselves of financial support for post high school programs.

The school provides a community service program in which students participate in fund-raising activities for worthy causes. In addition, students volunteer to work at shelters serving food and assist with senior citizens activities. The students have completed numerous projects that have benefited various social groups within the community.

The school’s music arts program offers students the opportunity to learn to play an instrument. The music teacher has created a chorus/band and organized several concerts and music activities for students and staff at the Carrier Clinic.

The school also offers parents the opportunity to participate in statewide conferences and professional workshops on special education issues.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding staff development and policies and procedures. The receiving school’s improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of staff development. 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 area of staff development. **The school’s improvement plan is insufficient to address the area regarding policies and procedures because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure that the required policies and procedures are submitted to the county office of education. The school must immediately submit the required policies and procedures to the county office for review and approval.**

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, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, physical education, services at no cost to parents and extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding maintenance of hearing aids, observation of programs, provision of services as per IEP and the related service of counseling. The receiving school’s improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a

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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 III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff, private school dual employment, employment/job descriptions of paraprofessionals and having an approved professional development plan.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit in the area regarding criminal history verification.

Area of Need:

Criminal History Verification - During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school does not have documentation that newly hired staff have completed the criminal history verification process prior to employment.

- **The school will immediately process criminal history review verification for all newly hired staff members. The school will also request written permission for emergent hiring from the county superintendent pending completion of the criminal history review. Documentation of criminal history verification for all staff members must be provided within 45 days to the county office of education. The plan must include procedures to ensure that written documentation of compliance with criminal history review requirements is maintained at the school. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding programs provided in approved facilities and certificates of occupancy and inspections.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding fire drills. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in this area.

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

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Section V: Individualized Education Program/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEPs, IEP accessibility, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing and implementation of IEP components.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP meetings for transition services, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, review of IEPs relating to behavioral intervention plans, related services, supplemental aids and services and transition services, informing teachers/providers of IEP responsibilities and progress reports. The school's improvement plan was sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

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

Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding removal of student, changes to program/placement and interim alternative educational setting.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms and restraints, suspensions and termination of student placement. The school's improvement plan was 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 for correction in these areas.

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

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding description of special class programs, special classes implementing IEPs, teachers trained and instructing in core curriculum content standards (CCCS) and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range and dispensing medication/nursing services. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need.

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

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the East Mountain School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified concerns in the areas regarding conformance to regulations regarding student records, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records limited to authorized individuals, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences and written notice of placement to county office. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address the areas regarding return of records, location of records, written notice of attendance, written notice to LEAs regarding excessive tardiness/absences. During the on-site visit, through a review of records and staff interviews it was determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the areas regarding conformance to student records code relating to access and security of records and access sheets. The school's improvement plan must be revised to include procedures to ensure that students' records are secured so that only those individuals who have educational responsibility have access to student records. In addition, the school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of access sheets because it lacks procedures and administrative oversight to ensure that staff members clearly indicate when they have accessed student records. During the on-site visit, the school revised their access sheets and their procedures to ensure that all access sheets clearly indicate the names of those individuals who have reviewed records. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the East Mountain School on May 16-17, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the East Mountain School's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the receiving school was able to identify all but one area of need and develop an improvement plan that, with some revision, is sufficient to correct the areas of need. The receiving school is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result most identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, 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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the East Mountain School during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, certified/licensed staff, private school dual employment, job descriptions for paraprofessionals maintained at county office, having an approved professional development plan, approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEPs, accessibility to teachers and providers, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, interim alternative educational settings, description of special class programs, special classes implementing IEPs, daily attendance and student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the East Mountain School identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, staff development, maintenance of hearing aids, observation of programs, provision of services as per IEP, related services of counseling, fire drills, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, progress reports, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out room and restraints, notification of suspensions, termination of student placement, class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, teachers trained and instructing in CCCS, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services, conformance to student records code, return of records, access to records, access sheets, location of records, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences and written notice of attendance.

The report identifies two areas of need relating to policies and procedures and criminal history verification that require immediate action by the school administration.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Eastern Mountain School will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs and to the county office of education to address those remaining areas that require revisions.