

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

Receiving School: Mary A. Dobbins School

County: Burlington

Monitoring Dates: January 27, 28, and 29, 2004

Monitoring Team: Deborah Magee, Judyth Vazquez, and Catherine Thomas

Background Information:

During the 2002– 2003 school year, the Mary A. Dobbins School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Mary A. Dobbins 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 Mary A. Dobbins 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, 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, related service personnel and parents.

School Strengths:

The Mary A. Dobbins School is commended for its on-site full service library, containing age appropriate high interest reading and audio-visual materials. Students are instructed on the appropriate procedure for library usage, including material search and check-out. Transfer of these skills is encouraged during field trips to the county library.

The school is further commended for its SEE program, which instructs students about the community's responsibility to preserve the physical environment. Students are taught how to use individually operated photographic cameras to record observations. They are also encouraged to utilize this medium toward artistic expression in this area. Students participate in regional and state-wide competitions and gallery displays. These activities have led to increased knowledge in natural science, civics and art appreciation.

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Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Mary A. Dobbins School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Mary A. Dobbins School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, amendments and programs provided in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, Mary A. Dobbins School identified concerns in the areas of pupil record sign out sheets and staff in-service sign in sheets. 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.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Mary A. Dobbins School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs.

During the self-assessment process, the Mary A. Dobbins School identified concerns in the areas regarding observation of programs. 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 this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding provision of related services as per IEP.

Area of Need:

Provision of Related Services as per IEP- During the on-site visit, staff interviews and record review indicated related services are not being provided as per the IEP. Specifically, group counseling and the Adventure Trails Program are indicated in the IEPs, but these services are no longer provided due to changes in personnel. In addition, it was difficult to verify the services that were provided since there were no goals and objectives for the related services; the frequency and duration of services were not documented on service logs; and the teachers did not have related service schedules from all therapists.

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- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students receive the related services as indicated in their 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 in-service training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and 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 Mary A. Dobbins School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP meetings conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meetings conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEPs prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, and informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives.

During the self-assessment process, the Mary A. Dobbins School identified concerns in the area regarding implementation of IEP components. **The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because it lacks a mechanism to ensure that any goals and objectives that the school routinely submits to school districts are measurable. The improvement plan also lacks a mechanism to address student's progress relating to IEP goals and objectives. In addition, the school identified timelines relating to curriculum that have not been met. The plan must be revised to include these components. The plan also needs to be revised to adjust the timeline and to increase administrative oversight of the activities leading to compliance.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding communication with sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

Area of Need:

Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components- During the on-site visit, through staff interviews and record review, it was determined that the Mary A. Dobbins School does not communicate with sending school districts when IEP components are missing. Areas consistently missing include transition, goals and objectives, present levels of educational performance, measurable goals and objectives, including goals and objectives for related services.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components such as transition, present levels of educational performance, measurable goals and objectives including goals and objectives for related services are missing. The plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the Mary A. Dobbins School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives.

During the self-assessment process, the Mary A. Dobbins School identified concerns in the areas regarding removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions, and procedures for termination of students. 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 VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Mary A. Dobbins School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, special classes serving students with similar educational needs and collaboration for home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the Mary A. Dobbins School identified concerns in the areas regarding dispensing medication/nursing services, and medical exams for sport teams. 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.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit in the areas regarding teacher training and instruction in Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS).

Area of Need:

Teacher Training and Instruction in CCCS- During the on site visit, through record review, classroom observations and teacher interviews, it was determined that with the exception of math and reading, teachers are not providing instruction according to CCCS. Since there is no school wide curriculum in science, social studies and health, which is clearly articulated with the CCCS, it is difficult for the teachers to deliver appropriate instruction in these content areas.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all curricular areas are aligned with the CCCS. The plan must include staff training, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Mary A. Dobbins School on January 27, 28, and 29, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Mary A. Dobbins School report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the extremely comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify most 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.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Mary A. Dobbins School during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements and Student Records.

Additional areas of compliance include policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, length of school day and year, provision of physical education, maintenance of hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, extended school year programs and services provided in accordance with IEPs, IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP meetings conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP meeting conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEPs prior to service delivery, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, informing parents of progress toward goals and objectives, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time-out rooms, restraints and aversives, class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, special class programs serving students with similar educational needs and collaboration for home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the Mary A. Dobbins School identified areas of need regarding pupil record sign-out sheets and staff in-service sign-in sheets, observation of programs, implementation of IEP components, removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, notification to sending districts regarding suspensions, and procedures for termination of students, dispensing medication/ nursing services, and medical exams for sport teams.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding the provision of related services as per IEP, communication with sending district regarding missing IEP components, and teachers trained and instructing in CCCS.

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