

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

Receiving School: Educational Partnership for Instructing Children (EPIC)

County: Bergen

Monitoring Date: October 18, 2004

Monitoring Team: Ann Marie Bruder and Diane Mari

Background Information:

During the 2003 – 2004 school year, the Educational Partnership for Instructing Children (EPIC) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided EPIC 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 EPIC 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, parents and related service personnel.

School Strengths:

The EPIC school is commended for its high level of training for staff. This training consists of learning theory, applied behavioral analysis (ABA) with on-going feedback, teaching techniques and ABA methods promoting independence. The EPIC school utilizes a one to one model for instruction.

The EPIC school provides a great deal of parental support. Home program visitations are conducted once a month to structure the students' time, and to reinforce skills and behaviors within the home environment. Teachers and staff also assist parents with

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challenging tasks for the children. These include activities such as going to the dentist or doctor and going for a hair cut. The parents' participation in the education of the child is critical for success and generalization of skills. Parents are encouraged to come to the school for observations and meetings with the teachers to review skills and progress on a bi-weekly basis.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE and **Discipline** were determined to be areas of compliance by EPIC school during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, EPIC school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office and having an approved professional development plan.

During the self-assessment process, EPIC school identified concerns in the areas regarding criminal history verification for all of its staff members. The improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, staff interviews and review of records indicated that the criminal history clearance has been completed for all current staff. The receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction to these areas.

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

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the EPIC 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 EPIC school identified concerns in the area regarding fire drills. The improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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 EPIC school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with required receiving school participants, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP prior to service

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delivery, communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components, 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.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding communication to sending district regarding missing IEP components.

Area of Need:

Communication with Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components-

During the on-site visit through record reviews and interviews it was determined that individualized behavior intervention plans are not included as part of the students' IEPs.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that they communicate with sending districts when IEP components, such as behavior intervention plans are missing. The plan must include staff training, and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent compliant implementation of the procedure.**

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, EPIC 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, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, collaboration for home instruction and policies and procedures relating to school functions and services.

During the self-assessment process, EPIC school identified concerns in the area of teacher training regarding the Core Curriculum Content Standards. **The receiving school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area 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.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on site visit in the area of certified school nurses.

Area of Need:

Certified School Nurse - During the on-site visit, staff interviews confirmed that the school does not employ a full time certified school nurse as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.1(e).

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include activities to ensure that the required full range of nursing services is provided by employing a full time certified school nurse.**

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Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, EPIC school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding conformance to pupil record code, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records is limited to authorized persons, access sheets, location of other records specified in central file, daily attendance available to LEAs, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences and maintenance of student health records.

During the self-assessment process, EPIC school identified concerns in the areas regarding written notice of placement to county office, and the students APA results being placed in their individual central folders. The school's improvement plan is 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 to bring about correction in these areas.

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 EPIC school on October 18, 2004. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the receiving school's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by EPIC school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included **General Provisions**, **FAPE**, and **Discipline**.

Additional areas of compliance included policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, private school dual employment, employment/job descriptions of paraprofessionals, professional development, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meeting conducted annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEP's, current IEP, IEP accessibility, inform teachers/providers of IEP responsibilities, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, progress reports, class size/age range exceptions, description of special class programs, certifications, special classes implementing IEP, home instruction, conformance to pupil record code, return of records, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance, communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences, written notice of attendance and student health records.

During the self-assessment process, EPIC school identified areas of need regarding criminal history, fire drills, Core Curriculum Content Standards, APA results in central files, and records sent to the county office of education.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding employment of a certified school nurse and behavior intervention plans placed in students' IEP.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, EPIC 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.