

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

Receiving School: Matheny School

County: Somerset County

Monitoring Dates: October 17-18, 2005

Monitoring Team: Paul Bilik, Judyth Vazquez, Elaine Lerner

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Matheny School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Matheny 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 Matheny School developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need. Due to recent administrative changes, the Matheny School submitted a revised self-assessment document that was received on October 14, 2005. Current administrators communicated to DOE staff that the revised self-assessment reflected the current areas of need at the school. The following report addresses the revised submission.

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 Individualized Education Plans (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 in accordance with N.J.A.C. 6A:23-4.1 through 4.16.

School Strengths:

The Matheny School should be commended for their extensive technology capabilities. Matheny School collaborates with other private schools for the disabled to offer a

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distance learning program which offers students alternative methods of instruction through its use of technology.

The school has an elaborate arts program in which students participate in visual and performing arts including instruction in theater, dance and various musical instruments.

The school should be commended for their community outreach which includes a newsletter for parents and the community. Students participate in the development and printing of the newsletter. The school also outreaches the community through their food and clothing drive and provides students with the opportunity to attend various educational trips throughout the school year.

The Matheny School should be commended for their on-site medical/dental services. The Matheny School, in collaboration with Matheny Hospital, offers medical and dental clinical services for both students and their families. The clinic offers these services to all people with disabilities. In addition, medical and dental students gain experience in treating people with disabilities through their rotation at the clinic.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE), Discipline, Programs and Services and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Matheny School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the Matheny School identified concerns in the areas regarding policies and procedures. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need however the revised policies and procedures have not yet been submitted to the county office for review and approval.

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

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff, criminal history verification and annual approval of job descriptions for classroom aides.

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Areas of Need

Certified/Licensed Staff- During the on-site visit, through a review of staff lists and certifications, it was determined that the school employs individuals who are also employed at Matheny Hospital. While the staff members possess appropriate licensure for their discipline they lack documentation of school certification issued by the DOE.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members employed by Matheny School possess appropriate certification. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Criminal History Verification- During the on-site visit, a review of staff lists and criminal history documentation, it was determined that the school employs staff members who are also employed by the Matheny Hospital. Some of these individuals may have completed criminal history verification by other state agencies but do not have documentation of DOE criminal history process.

- **The school will immediately submit requests for emergent hiring through the County Superintendent's Office for all staff members in noncompliance and follow up with the criminal history review office for staff whose fingerprint data have not been returned in a timely manner. In addition, the school must revise their improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Job Descriptions for Classroom Aides- During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school does not obtain approval for job descriptions for classroom aides on an annual basis.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that job descriptions for classroom aides are submitted to the county office on an annual basis for review and approval. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Facility Requirements

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

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit in the areas regarding fire drills and private rest area.

Areas of Need

Fire Drills – During the on-site visit through interviews and a review of fire drill logs, it was determined that Matheny School does not conduct a minimum of two fire drills per month. In addition, a review of fire drill logs determined that the school staff members do not implement the appropriate full evacuation procedures. For example, fire drill logs provided by the school describe staff cars parked in fire zone. In a letter from the fire

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official for the Borough of Peapack and Gladstone, it was determined the school has approval to conduct both “defend in place” and total evacuation procedures. However, according to the fire official, this approval does not negate the requirement for the school to conduct these drills at least two times each month.

- **The school must immediately contact their local fire official to obtain written approval for the required frequency for these procedures. The approval must be submitted to the county office of education for review. In addition, the school must train all staff members on fire drill evacuation procedures to ensure that students’ safety is not compromised. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure completion of the activities and implementation of the procedures.**

Private Rest Area- During the on-site visit, during staff interviews it was determined that the school uses a residential area as a private rest area when students require one.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students have a designated rest area to be exclusively by the nurse. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Matheny School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meetings conducted with appropriate participants, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP 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 implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

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

Area of Need:

Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components- During the on-site visit, through a review of records and staff interviews, it was determined that the Matheny School did not document communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school communicates with sending districts when IEP components are missing. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Matheny School on October 17-18, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Matheny 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 most areas of need. Additionally, the receiving school is further commended for the many areas determined by the receiving school and verified by the DOE as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by Matheny School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit included **Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE), Discipline, Programs and Services** and **Student Records**.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Matheny School during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, annual reports, amendments, programs provided in nonsectarian settings, use of PTA/COTA, private school dual employment, supervision of paraprofessionals, having an approved professional development plan, programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, IEP meeting conducted with appropriate participants, signatures of participants present on IEPs, current IEP 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, implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, the Matheny School identified one area of need regarding policies and procedures.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need in the area regarding certified licensed staff, criminal history verification, job descriptions for classroom aides, nursing facilities, fire drills and communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Matheny 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.