

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

**Receiving School:** Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center

**County:** Middlesex

**Monitoring Dates:** December 10 & 11, 2002

**Monitoring Team:** Denise Wilkens, Paul Bilik, and Sandra Gogerty

### **Background Information**

During the 2001 – 2002 school year, the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center (DDDC) conducted a self-assessment of special education policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided DDDC with an opportunity to evaluate its strengths and areas of need with regard to:

- the provision of a free and appropriate public education for students with disabilities;
- 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 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. DDDC developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Department of Education conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress made in implementing the plan.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed school documents, including receiving school policies and procedures, classroom schedules, master student lists, class lists and school calendars, student count information, related services schedules, individual student schedules, teacher schedules and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records, criminal history checks, fire drill logs, and therapy logs. The monitoring team conducted on-site observations of the school's special education programs. Interviews were conducted with the DDDC Director, Interim Principal, all special education teachers, the school nurse, and speech-language therapists.

### **School Strengths:**

The DDDC's commitment to professional development is apparent and should be commended. A variety of required and optional training programs and opportunities to attend seminars and conferences are provided and subsidized. All teachers are required to become certified in Applied Behavioral Analysis which forms the basis for their behavior management program.

The DDDC collaborates with professionals and doctoral students from the Douglass Division of Research and Training who are trained in Applied Behavior Analysis and meet regularly with instructional staff and home/school consultants. A weekly team meeting for each class takes

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place consisting of the teacher, the home/school consultant, the speech/language therapist and the principal to discuss each student's progress and to problem solve issues as they arise. The entire school staff meets monthly. Home/school behavioral consultants also have access to staff of the Division of Research and Training to present difficult cases that require additional intervention strategies in order to promote student progress at home and in school.

Staff commitment to fostering opportunities for personal growth, nurturance and learning among students served by DDDC was evident during the on-site visit. A written journal documenting each student's progress and performance and eliciting parents' comments is exchanged daily between home and school. Parents that desire to observe their student in the classroom may do so through an observation window. Once every seven weeks, a meeting is convened that includes the parents, home/school consultant, classroom teacher, adaptive physical education teacher and a supervisor to review the student's progress toward his or her goals.

The school is commended for its commitment to promoting integration of students into the community through regular outings to the supermarket where students can practice budgeting through selection and purchase of items for use at school; to restaurants; to practice social skill development; and through recreational activities designed to reinforce all social and daily living skills. Internships have been arranged with local companies to help students build workplace readiness skills and some students have attained their post graduation goal of full-time employment with these companies.

### **Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**General Provisions, Staff Requirements, Discipline and Student Records** were determined to be areas of compliance by the school and by the Department of Education during the on-site visit.

## **SECTION II. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION (FAPE)**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of the length of the school day and school year, physical education, services provided at no cost to the parents, observation of programs, provision of programs and services in accordance with IEPs, and provision of related services.

During the self-assessment process, the DDDC identified a concern regarding the documentation of approval of their extended school year program from the county office of education. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need.

During the on-site visit, through staff interviews, it was determined that the school does not have procedures to ensure that students' hearing aids are functioning properly.

- **DDDC will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that hearing aids are functioning properly. The plan must also include a mechanism to communicate to sending districts when they are not functioning, in-service training, staff responsible and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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## **SECTION IV. FACILITY REQUIREMENTS**

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

During the on-site visit, through staff interviews, it was determined that the school does not conduct two fire drills per month.

- **DDDC will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the school conducts at least two fire drills per month. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

## **SECTION V. IEP/ANNUAL REVIEW**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, DDDC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEPs conducted with appropriate participants, signatures present on IEPs, current IEPs, accessibility to IEPs, informing teachers of IEP responsibilities including modifications and accommodations, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, implementation of IEP components, progress reports and areas related to participation in statewide assessments.

During the self-assessment process, the DDDC identified a concern regarding communication to sending districts for the participation of outside agencies at IEP meetings. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. Completion of this improvement activity was verified during the on-site visit.

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

## **SECTION VII. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

### **Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size, age range, exceptions, staff certifications, special classes implementing IEPs, implementing core curriculum content standards for students with severe disabilities, dispensing medications/nursing services and preschool programs.

During the self-assessment process, the DDDC identified a concern regarding the need to update their special class program description. Completion of this improvement activity was verified during the on-site visit.

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## **Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted at Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center on December 10 and 11, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the school's report of findings resulting from self-assessment and to review the school's improvement plan. The DDDC is commended for the many identified areas of programs and services that were verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

During parent interviews, many parents commented positively on the respective program attended by their student and the commitment to the students exhibited by school staff. Observations and interviews during the on-site visits confirmed parents' comments.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the school during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, annual reports, amendments, provision of programs in nonsectarian settings, length of the school day/year, physical education, services at no cost to the parents, extended school year programs, observation of programs, provision of services and related services as per IEP, certified/licensed staff, dual employment, job descriptions, criminal history verification, having an approved professional development plan, approved facility, certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meeting conducted at least annually, staff attendance at IEP meetings, current IEP, accessibility of IEPs, staff knowledge IEP including accommodations and modifications, timely implementation of IEPs, observation of proposed placement, areas related to statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, progress reports, removal of students, changes to program/placement, tracking of suspensions and interim alternative educational setting, termination of students, class sizes and age ranges, exceptions, home instruction, special classes implementing IEPs, and use of the core curriculum content standards for students with severe disabilities, nursing and medical services, pupil record code, return of records, access and location of records, daily attendance, and absences, written notice of attendance and health records.

During the self-assessment process, DDDC identified the areas of need regarding extended school year approval, communication to sending districts regarding agency attendance at IEP meetings and description of special class programs.

During the on-site visit, the Department of Education identified additional areas of need within the various standards concerning hearing aids and fire drills.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the school will revise and resubmit its improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and resubmit the plan to the Office of Special Education Programs.