

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

Receiving School: Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC)

County: Union

Monitoring Dates: April 27 and 29, May 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12, 2005

Monitoring Team: Heather Mills-Pevonis, Denise Wilkens, Paul Bilik, Elaine Lerner

Background Information:

During the 2003– 2004 school year, the Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC) consisting of Beadleston High School, Centennial High School (closed June 2005) Crossroads and Westlake School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the UCESC 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 receiving 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:

Crossroads School utilizes the Miller Method to support autistic learners with multi-sensory, action-oriented experiences to help students organize their behavior, develop concepts of time and space, solve problems and form relationships with people. The program is supported by weekly videoconferencing with Dr. Miller who can visually observe students and make recommendation to staff.

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Westlake School provides a variety of vocational opportunities which are developed along a continuum based on students' ages. For example, 13 year olds participate in classes in a work center that teaches work readiness skills, 14 year olds prepare for participating in on-site vocational work sites, 15 and 16 year olds attend off campus volunteer worksites for job sampling opportunities and student's between the ages of 16 to 18 work at various work sites. Particularly notable is their Food Services program where students can learn food production which leads to paid, supportive employment. The program offers experiences which include the production of two hundred and fifty daily lunches per school day.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions (all sites), FAPE (Beadleston), Staff Requirements (Westlake), Facility Requirements (all sites), Discipline (Crossroads) Programs and Services (Westlake) were determined to be areas of compliance by the UCESC during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the **UCESC** accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding length of school day and year, hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, program open to observation by LEA and DOE and provision of services as per IEP.

Crossroads School

During the self-assessment process, the **Crossroads School** identified concerns in the areas regarding physical education and extended school year programs (ESY). The school's improvement plan was sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, it was determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in the area of physical education.

Westlake School

During the self-assessment process, the **Westlake School** identified concerns in the areas regarding physical education and extended school year programs. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address the area of physical education. The school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in this area. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of extended school year program approval because the request to add an extended school year program submitted by the school to the county office was completed on an incorrect format and did not contain all the necessary components. The county office of education will communicate with the Westlake School to ensure that the school is provided the Request to Establish or Eliminate a Special Education Program or Service form needed to request an extended school year approval.**

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at **Crossroads School** and **Westlake School** in the area regarding procedures to make up missed sessions when the therapist is absent.

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Areas of Need

Missed Therapy Sessions- During the on-site visit, through a review of records and staff interviews it was determined that the schools do not consistently make up missed therapy sessions when the therapists are absent due to illness or attendance at professional conferences. In addition, through a review of related services schedules at Crossroads, it was determined that the school does not have sufficient time allotted in the schedules to make up missed sessions.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that staff members make up therapy session when the therapist is absent. The plan must include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the **UCESC** accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, criminal history verification and having an approved professional development plan.

Crossroads School

During the self-assessment process, the **Crossroads School** identified concerns in the areas regarding appropriate supervision of certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA). The school's improvement plan was 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.

Beadleston High School

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at **Beadleston High School** regarding certified staff.

Area of Need

Certified Staff- During the on-site visit, through staff interviews it was determined that the school contracts for counseling services; however, the counselors do not possess appropriate DOE certification.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members, including contracted staff members, are appropriately certified for the positions they hold. The plans must an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the **UCESC** accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, observation of proposed placement and statewide testing.

Beadleston High School

During the self-assessment process, the **Beadleston High School** identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP meetings conducted at least annually, receipt of current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the areas of IEP meetings conducted at least annually and receipt of current IEP prior to service delivery because they lack procedures and staff training to ensure that the tracking system developed by the school is used correctly. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.

The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components because it lacks a mechanism to ensure that the school communicates with the sending districts when goals and objectives provided by the district do not include criteria for mastery, are not measurable and observable, or when goals and objectives for related services are missing. The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of implementation of IEP components because it lacks a mechanism to ensure that modifications and accommodations included in student IEPs are implemented in the classroom. The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of progress reports because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure that the school's progress reports developed by the school are used by the staff and are sufficiently documented in students' records. The plan must be revised to include these components.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at **Beadleston High School**.

Crossroads School

During the self-assessment process, **Crossroads School** identified concerns in the areas regarding IEP meetings conducted with appropriate participants, receipt of current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending districts regarding missing components and implementation of IEP components. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

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No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at **Crossroads School**.

Westlake School

During the self-assessment process, **Westlake School** identified concerns in the areas regarding receipt of current IEP prior to service delivery and no delay in implementation. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at **Westlake School**.

Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, the **UCESC** accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, removal of a student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process and removal of student to interim alternative educational setting.

Beadleston High School

During the self-assessment process, the **Beadleston High School** identified concerns in the areas regarding notification to sending districts regarding short terms removals and procedures for termination of student placement. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address these areas of need because they lack procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure that communication to sending districts include a cumulative record of suspensions and that communication occurs in a timely manner. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

Westlake School

During the self-assessment process, the **Westlake School** identified concerns in the area regarding suspensions. The school's improvement plan was sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records 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 at UCESC.

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the **UCESC** 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, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication,

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nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the **Beadelston and Crossroads School** identified concerns in the areas regarding teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs. The **Crossroads School** identified concerns in the areas regarding special class programs serving students with similar educational needs. The schools' improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in these areas.

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

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the **UCESC** accurately identified themselves compliant in the area regarding daily attendance available to LEAs.

During the self-assessment process, the **UCESC** identified concerns in the areas regarding written notice of placement. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented specific activities for correction in this area.

Beadleston High School

During the self-assessment process, **Beadleston High School** identified concerns in the areas regarding return of records upon termination of student placement, limiting access to records to authorized persons, access sheets, written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences and maintenance of student health records. The school's improvement plan was sufficient to address the areas of return of records upon termination of student placement, limiting access to records to authorized persons, access sheets and maintenance of student health records. **The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences because it fails to identify who will be responsible to ensure that the receiving school communicates with sending districts when students are habitually tardy and/or absent. The plan must be revised to include these components.**

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at Beadleston High School in the area regarding location of records.

Location of Records- During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the students' records do not indicate all the locations in which records are maintained.

- **The school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the students' records identify all locations where student records are maintained. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

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Crossroads School

During the self-assessment process the **Crossroads School** identified concerns regarding written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness/absences. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records determined that the school has appropriately implemented activities for correction in this area.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit at **Crossroads School**.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the **Union County Educational Services Commission (UCESC)** on April 27 and 29, May 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the **UCESC** report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

General Provisions and **Facility Requirements** were determined to be areas of compliance by the UCESC during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

FAPE was determined to be an area of compliance by **Beadleston High School** during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Staff Requirements was determined to be an area of compliance by **Westlake School** during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Discipline was determined to be an area of compliance by **Crossroads School** during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Programs and Services was determined to be an area of compliance by **Westlake School** during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the **UCESC** during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included length of school day and year, maintenance of hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, observation of programs, provision of services as per IEP, job descriptions of paraprofessionals maintained at county office, criminal history verification, having an approved professional development plan, IEP conducted with students age 14 and older, as appropriate, signatures of participants present on IEPs, IEP accessibility to teachers and providers, informing teachers and providers of IEP responsibilities, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing, standard disciplinary procedures, procedures for time out rooms, restraints and aversives, removal of student pending mediation and due process, changes to program/placement pending mediation and due process, removal of student to interim alternative educational setting, class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, collaboration for home instruction, dispensing medication, nursing services, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, medical exams for sport teams conformance to pupil record code and daily attendance available to LEAs.

Beadleston High School

During the self-assessment process, the **Beadleston High School** identified areas of need regarding IEP meeting conducted at least annually, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, implementation of IEP components, progress reports, notification to sending districts regarding short terms removals and procedures for termination of student placement, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, return of records upon termination of student placement, access to records is limited to authorized persons, access sheets, written

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communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness /absences and maintenance of student health records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need at **Beadleston High School** in the areas regarding certified/licensed staff and location of records.

Crossroads School

During the self-assessment process, the **Crossroads School** identified areas of need regarding physical education and extended school year programs (ESY), appropriate supervision of certified occupational therapy assistants (COTA), regarding IEP conducted with appropriate participants, current IEP prior to service delivery, communication to sending districts regarding missing components, implementation of IEP components, teachers trained and instructing in CCCSs, special class programs serving students with similar educational needs and written communication to LEAs regarding five days of tardiness /absences .

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need at **Crossroads School** in the areas regarding provision of related services as per IEP, specifically regarding staff absences.

Westlake School

During the self-assessment process, the **Westlake School** identified areas of need regarding physical education, extended school year programs (ESY), regarding current IEP prior to service delivery, no delay in implementation and suspensions.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need at **Westlake School** in the areas regarding provision of services as per IEP relating to staff absences.

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