



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
PO Box 500
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0500

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

DAVID C. HESPE
Commissioner

May 16, 2016

Dr. Michele Robinson
Chief School Administrator
Paramus Public Schools
145 Spring Valley Road
Paramus, NJ 07652

Dear Dr. Robinson:

The New Jersey Department of Education has completed a review of funds received and disbursed from one or more federal programs by the **Paramus Board of Education**. The funding sources reviewed include titled programs for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The review covered the period July 1, 2014 through February 29, 2016. The resulting report is enclosed. Please provide a copy of the report to each board member. All issued Consolidated Monitoring Reports will be posted on the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/compliance/monitor/>.

Utilizing the process outlined in the attached "Procedures for LEA/Agency Response, Corrective Action Plan and Appeal Process," the Paramus Board of Education is required, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6, to publicly review and discuss the findings in this report at a public board meeting no later than 30 days after receipt of the report. Within 30 days of the public meeting, the board must adopt a resolution certifying that the findings were discussed in a public meeting and approving a corrective action plan which addresses the issues raised in the undisputed findings and/or an appeal of any **monetary** findings in dispute (emphasis added). A copy of the resolution and the approved corrective action plan and/or appeal must be sent to this office within 10 days of adoption by the board. Direct your response to my attention.

Also, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.6(c), you must post the findings of the report and the board's corrective action plan on your district's website.

By copy of this report, your auditor is requested to comment on all areas of noncompliance and recommendations in the next certified audit submitted to the New Jersey Department of Education. If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hoffmann at (973) 621-2750.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Cicchino, Director
Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance

RJC/SH/dk:Paramus BOE CM Cover Letter
Enclosures

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**PARAMUS BOARD OF EDUCATION
145 SPRING VALLEY ROAD
PARAMUS, NJ 07652
PHONE: (201) 261-7800**



New Jersey K-12 Education

**CONSOLIDATED MONITORING REPORT
MAY 2016**

District: Paramus Public Schools
County: Bergen
Dates On-Site: March 29, 30 and 31, 2016
Case #: CM-009-15

FUNDING SOURCES

Program	Funding Award
Title I, Part A	\$ 319,058
IDEA Basic	1,476,852
IDEA Preschool	33,046
Title II, Part A	108,438
Title III	39,107
Title III Immigrant	36,823
Total Funds	<u><u>\$ 2,013,324</u></u>

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CONSOLIDATED MONITORING REPORT
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BACKGROUND

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and other federal laws require local education agencies (LEAs) to provide programs and services to their districts based on the requirements specified in each of the authorizing statutes (ESEA and IDEA). The laws further require that state education agencies such as the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitor the implementation of federal programs by sub recipients and determine whether the funds are being used by the district for their intended purpose and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

INTRODUCTION

The NJDOE visited the Paramus Public Schools to monitor the district's use of federal funds and the related program plans, where applicable, to determine whether the district's programs are meeting the intended purposes and objectives, as specified in the current year applications and authorizing statutes and to determine whether the funds were spent in accordance with the program requirements, federal and state laws, and applicable regulations. The on-site visit included staff interviews and documentation reviews related to the requirements of the following programs: Title I, Part A (Title I); Title II, Part A (Title II); Title III; Title III Immigrant and IDEA Basic and Preschool for the period July 1, 2014 through February 29, 2016.

The scope of work performed included the review of documentation including grant applications, program plans and needs assessments, grant awards, annual audits, board minutes, payroll records, accounting records, purchase orders, a review of student records, classroom visitations and interviews with instructional staff to verify implementation of Individualized Education Programs (IEP), a review of student class and related service schedules, interviews of child study team members and speech-language specialists and an interview of the program administrator regarding the IDEA grant, as well as current district policies and procedures. The monitoring team members also conducted interviews with district personnel, reviewed the supporting documentation for a sample of expenditures and conducted internal control reviews.

EXPENDITURES REVIEWED

The grants reviewed included Title I, Title II, Title III, Title III Immigrant and IDEA Basic and Preschool from July 1, 2014 through February 29, 2016. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries was taken from each program reviewed.

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GENERAL DISTRICT OVERVIEW OF USES OF TITLE I AND IDEA FUNDS

Title I Projects

The district uses its Title I funding to serve three of the eight schools in the district: Paramus High School, East Brook and West Brook Middle Schools. The district chose not to serve two Title I eligible schools: Midland and Memorial Elementary Schools. In the three Title I funded schools the district conducts targeted assistance programs. At the time of the on-site visit, the district budgeted its Title I funds for costs such as, but not limited to, instructional salaries and benefits, instructional materials/supplies, purchased professional services and instructional equipment.

IDEA Projects

The district utilized the FY 2014-2015 and FY 2015-2016 IDEA Basic and Preschool funds to reduce district tuition costs for students receiving special educational services in approved private schools for students with disabilities and for the provision of related services to students with disabilities in nonpublic settings. Additionally, the district utilized funds for instructional supplies, and professional services such as speech, occupational, and physical therapies and evaluations.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Title I

Finding 1: The Title I parental notification letters issued by the district's Title I schools were inconsistent with supporting data (i.e., grades) and did not include detailed entrance and exit criteria used for participating students. This information is necessary for parents to understand why their child was selected to participate in the Title I program, and what is needed for their child to exit the program.

Citation: ESEA §1115: *Targeted Assistance Schools*; ESEA §1118(c): *Parental Involvement (Policy Involvement)*.

Required Action: The district's Title I schools must revise their Title I participation letters to include the specific multiple, educationally related, objective criteria used to identify students for participation in and exit from the Title I program. The district must provide copies of the revised FY 2016-2017 Title I participation letters to the NJDOE for review.

Finding 2: The district's Title I schools did not have a parental involvement program that reflected the requirements of the Title I legislation. There was no evidence that the Title I parental involvement policies at the district-level and the school-level were developed with parental input and were board adopted. The parental input and current board adoption allows parents and other stakeholders to impact the parental involvement process. For FY 2016-2017,

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Title I parents and associated stakeholders must be included in the process to develop the district-level and school-level parental involvement policies.

Citation: ESEA §1118(a)(2): *Parental Involvement (Local Educational Agency Policy)*; ESEA §1118(b): *Parental Involvement (School Parental Involvement Policy)*.

Required Action: The district must have written parental involvement policies and its Title I schools must have written parental involvement policies that are developed in collaboration with parents and other stakeholders, and adopted by the board of education. Copies of the board approved district parental involvement policy and the school-level parental involvement policies must be submitted to the NJDOE for review. The district must submit evidence of parental input into the development process (e.g., invitational letters/flyers, meeting agendas, sign in sheets and minutes) to the NJDOE for review.

Finding 3: For FY 2015-2016, the district provided evidence of a school-parent compact policy for its Title I schools, but did not provide evidence of parental input in the process to develop the compact. The absence of parental participation in the development of the school-parent compact excluded parents from more active participation in their child's educational program.

Citation: ESEA §1118(d): *Parental Involvement (Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement)*.

Required Action: For FY 2016-2017, the district's Title I schools must include parents in the development of their school-parent compacts. The district must submit evidence of parental input in the development process (e.g., invitational letters/flyers, meeting agendas, sign in sheets and minutes) to the NJDOE for review.

Finding 4: For FY 2015-2016, the district's Title I schools did not convene an annual Title I parent meeting that met the legislative requirements. Not conducting an annual meeting at the beginning of the year to explain the Title I legislation and the Title I program precluded parents of participating student from fully understanding the Title I process.

Citation: ESEA §1118(c)(1): *Parental Involvement (Policy Involvement)*.

Required Action: The district's Title I schools must convene and sufficiently document their FY 2016-2017 annual Title I meetings for the parents/guardians of participating students no later than mid-October. The district must submit evidence of each school's meeting (e.g., invitational letter/flyer, agenda, meeting minutes, and sign in sheets) to the NJDOE for review.

Finding 5: The district provided documentation dated September 2015 that it initiated the nonpublic consultation process. However, the date of the planning letter and meeting with nonpublic schools occurred after the beginning of the project period.

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Citation: ESEA §1120(b)(1): *Participation of Children Enrolled In Private School(Consultation).*

Required Action: The nonpublic consultation process to identify eligible Title I students and develop a service delivery plan needs to occur in the spring of the prior school year. For FY 2016-2017, the district must send the NJDOE documentation of the consultation process (e.g., invitational letters/flyers, agendas, meeting notes, sign in sheets, etc.) for review.

Title II

A review of the expenditures charged to the Title II grant yielded no findings.

Title III

Finding 6: The district had a parental notification letter, but the letter did not outline all of the Title III parent notification requirements. The district must ensure the notification letter articulates the following:

- Why the child was identified as needing services;
- How the child's English level proficiency was assessed;
- Expected rate of transition into classroom not tailored for English Language Learner students;
- How the instructional program will meet the needs of children with a disability; and
- The parent's right to remove and/or choose another method of instruction for children identified as needing services.

Citation: ESEA §3302 *Parental Notification.*

Required Action: The district must revise its Title III parental notification letter to include all the required components. The district must submit the revised letter to the NJDOE for review and approval. The district may find guidance on developing the Title III parental notification at: <http://www.nj.gov/education/bilingual/title3/accountability/notification/notification.doc>.

Finding 7: The district's use of Title III funds for sign language and translation services totaling \$1,050.00 (PO# 603877 - \$375.00 and PO# 604340 - \$675.00) supplanted state and local funds. Expenditures for translations were for services that were necessary in the absence of federal funds.

Citation: ESEA §3115(g) *Subgrants to Eligible Entities* (Supplement, Not Supplant).

Required Action: The district must reverse the expenditure of Title III funds for translation services and submit documentation of the adjusting entry to the NJDOE for review.

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Title III Immigrant

A review of the expenditures charged to the Title III Immigrant grant yielded no findings.

IDEA (Special Education)

Finding 8: The district did not consistently conduct all required sections of the functional assessment as a component of initial evaluations for students referred for speech-language services.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(f)4(i –vi); 20 U.S.C. §1414(b)(4) and (5); and 34 CFR §300.306(c)(i).

Required Action: The district must ensure all components of the functional assessment are conducted as part of all initial evaluations. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. Monitors from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to interview staff, review initial evaluation reports for students whose eligibility meetings were held between September 2016 and December 2016, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 9: The district did not consistently conduct multidisciplinary initial evaluations for students referred for special education and related services by conducting evaluations by a minimum of two child study team members.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.5(b)6 and 3.4(g)3.

Required Action: A minimum of two child study team members must conduct assessments for students referred for special education and related services to ensure a multidisciplinary evaluation is conducted. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to interview staff, review initial evaluation reports for students referred for special education and related services whose eligibility meetings were held between September 2016 and December 2016, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 10: The district did not consistently obtain written parental consent or document efforts to obtain written parental consent to conduct assessments for students referred for speech-language services. Speech-language therapists are conducting screenings of individual students prior to referral.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(a)1; 20 U.S.C. §1414(a)(1)(D); and 34 CFR §300.300(a).

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Required Action: The district must ensure informed parental consent is obtained and maintained in student files prior to conducting any assessment. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to interview staff, review documentation of written parental consent to conduct assessments for initial evaluations conducted between September 2016 and December 2016, and to review the oversight procedures.

Finding 11: The district did not consistently include required considerations and statements in each IEP for students eligible for speech-language services. Specifically, IEPs did not contain:

- statement of participation in Statewide and district wide assessments; and
- statement of how progress towards annual goals will be measured.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(c)1-11, (e) 1-17, and (f) N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.10(a); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(3)(A)(B); and 34 CFR §300.324(a)(1)(2).

Required Action: The district must ensure each IEP contains the required considerations and statements. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for speech-language specialists and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. To demonstrate the district has corrected the individual instances of noncompliance, the district must conduct annual review meetings and revise IEPs for specific student's where the IEPs were identified as noncompliant. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to interview staff, review the revised IEPs along with a random sample of IEPs developed between September 2016 and December 2016, and to review the oversight procedures. The names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the district by the monitor.

Finding 12: The district did not consistently conduct the requirements related to transition at age 16. Specifically, IEPs did not contain:

- postsecondary goal(s) based on age appropriate transition assessment; and
- courses of study.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k)2(x), 5(2), 3.7(e)13, 3.7(e)11 and(h); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(1)(VIII); and 34 CFR §300.322.b(2).

Required Action: The district must ensure that beginning at age 16, all age 16 transition requirements are conducted and documented in the IEP. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. To demonstrate the district has corrected the individual instances of noncompliance, the district must conduct annual review meetings

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and revise IEPs for specific students with IEPs that were identified as noncompliant. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to interview staff, review the revised IEPs along with a random sample of IEPs developed between September 2016 and December 2016, and to review the oversight procedures. The names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the district by the monitor.

Finding 13: The district did not consistently document in the IEPs of students removed from the general education setting for more than 20 percent of the school day, including students placed in separate settings, consideration of placement in the least restrictive environment. Specifically, IEPs did not consistently include:

- supplementary aids and services considered and an explanation of why they are rejected;
- comparison of the benefits provided in the regular class and the benefits provided in the special education class;
- the potentially beneficial or harmful effects which a placement in general education may have on the students with disabilities or other students in the class; and
- for students in separate setting, activities to move the student to a less restrictive environment.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2 (a)4 and 8,(I and iii).

Required Action: The district must ensure that when determining the educational placement of a child with a disability, the IEP team considers the general education class first and that all required decisions regarding the placement are documented in the IEP for each student removed from general education for more than 20 percent of the school day. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. To demonstrate the district has corrected the individual instances of noncompliance, the district must conduct annual review meetings and revise the IEPs for specific students with IEPs that were identified as noncompliant. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to interview staff, review the revised IEPs along with a random sample of IEPs developed between September 2016 and December 2016, and to review the oversight procedures. The names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the district by the monitor.

Finding 14: The district does not have a policy for the provision of accommodations and modifications or, when appropriate, an alternate assessment for students with disabilities participating in district wide assessments.

Citation: 34 CFR §300.160.

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Required Action: The district must revise policies and procedures to ensure students with disabilities participate in district wide assessments and each IEP contains a statement of any individual modifications to be provided to the student in the administration of district wide assessments. The policy must include the provision of accommodations and modifications and the provision of alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in the regular assessment. If the district reports publicly on the district wide assessment, the district must also report with the same frequency and in the same detail as it reports on the assessment of nondisabled children. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members regarding the procedures for implementing the requirements in the citation listed above. A monitor from the NJDOE will conduct an on-site visit to review the policy.

Administrative

Finding 15: On several occasions, the district failed to issue a purchase order prior to goods being purchased or services being rendered (confirming order). District policy and state regulations require that a properly executed purchase order be issued prior to the purchase of goods or the rendering of services.

Citation: Uniform Grant Guidance 2 C.F.R. 200.302; N.J.S.A. 18A:18A(2)(v) Public School Contracts Law.

Required Action: Purchase orders should be issued to all vendors prior to goods or services being provided.

Recommendation 1: In the 2015-2016 ESEA-NCLB Consolidated Subgrant Application, the district incorrectly budgeted benefits (health, vision, and dental) totaling \$19,522 in 200-100 (support services). This cost should be budgeted in 200-200, (other benefits).

Citation: Uniform Grant Guidance 2 CFR 200.302, Financial management.

Recommended Action: The district needs to amend its 2015-2016 grant application and put the benefits in the proper line item.

The NJDOE thanks you for your time and cooperation during the monitoring visit and looks forward to a successful resolution of all findings and implementation of all recommendations contained in this report.

If you have any questions, please contact Steven Hoffmann via phone at (973) 621-2750 or via email at steven.hoffmann@doe.state.nj.us.