



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

CHRIS CHRISTIE
Governor

KIM GUADAGNO
Lt. Governor

KIMBERLEY HARRINGTON
Acting Commissioner

January 10, 2017

Dr. Tova Ben-Dov, Superintendent
River Edge School District
410 Bogert Road
River Edge, NJ 07661

Dear Dr. Ben-Dov:

The New Jersey Department of Education has completed a review of funds received and disbursed from one or more federal programs by the **River Edge School District**. The funding source reviewed was the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. The review covered the period July 1, 2015 through November 30, 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 River Edge School District 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

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Enclosures

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RIVER EDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
410 BOGERT ROAD
RIVER EDGE, NJ 07661
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New Jersey K-12 Education

**CONSOLIDATED MONITORING REPORT
JANUARY 2017**

District: River Edge School District
County: Bergen
Dates On-Site: December 6 and 7, 2016
Case #: CM-005-16

FUNDING SOURCES

IDEA Basic		\$360,634
IDEA Preschool		16,270
	Total Funds	<u>\$376,904</u>

**RIVER EDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
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BACKGROUND

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and other federal laws require that districts provide programs and services based on the requirements specified in each of the authorizing statutes (i.e., ESEA, IDEA, and Carl D. Perkins). 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. Due to the impending implementation of new ESSA regulations, only IDEA and Special Education will be reviewed during consolidated monitoring.

INTRODUCTION

The NJDOE visited the River Edge School District 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: IDEA Basic and Preschool for the period July 1, 2015 through November 30, 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 IDEA Basic and Preschool from July 1, 2015 through November 30, 2016. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries was taken from each program reviewed.

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GENERAL OVERVIEW OF USES OF IDEA FUNDS

IDEA Projects

In FY 2017 the majority of the IDEA Basic Funds are being used to reduce district tuition cost for students receiving special education services in other public school districts and approved private schools for students with disabilities. Funds were also used to purchase instructional supplies, materials, and for contracting with related service providers for students attending nonpublic schools.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IDEA (Special Education)

IDEA Grant

Finding 1: Contracts entered into with Bergen County Region V Council for Special Education did not contain all required components, specifically, a per service rate.

Citation: EDGAR, PART 80-Uniform Administration Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments, Section 20, Standards for financial management systems.

Required Action: The district must ensure that moving forward, contracts must include a per service or hourly rate.

IDEA Program

Finding 2: 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:

- the supplementary aids and services considered;
- an explanation of why the supplementary aids and services were rejected;
- comparison of the benefits provided in general education 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 those students placed in separate settings, activities to transition the student to a less restrictive environment.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2 (a)8,(ii) and (iii) and 3.7(k).

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Required Action: The district must ensure 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. The district must also ensure that for students placed in separate settings, the IEP team identifies activities to transition the student to a less restrictive environment and document them in each IEP. In order to demonstrate correction of noncompliance, the district must conduct training for child study team members regarding the district's procedures and develop an oversight mechanism to ensure compliance with the requirements in the citations listed above. To demonstrate that 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 additional IEPs developed at meetings conducted between March 2017 and April 2017, and review to the oversight procedures. The names of the students whose IEPs were identified as noncompliant will be provided to the district by the monitor.

Finding 3: The district did not consistently document all required considerations and statements in the IEPs of students eligible for special education and related services.

IEPs did not consistently include:

- participation in district wide assessments; and
- approved accommodations and modifications on district wide assessments.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.7(e) 1-17, and (f); 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 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 the revised IEPs, along with a sample of IEPs for students whose annual review meetings were conducted between March 2017 and April 2017, and to review the oversight procedures. For assistance with correction of noncompliance, the district is referred to the state IEP sample forms which are located at: www.nj.gov/education/specialed/form.

Finding 4: The district did not consistently ensure that the required participants were in attendance at identification meetings for students referred for speech-language services.

Citation: N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.3(k); 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(B); and 34 CFR §300.321(a).

Required Action: The district must ensure that all meetings are conducted with required participants and that documentation of attendance and/or written parental consent to excuse

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a member of the team is maintained in student's records. 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 participants at meetings conducted between March 2017 and April 2017, and to review the oversight procedures.

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.