

**State of New Jersey
Department of Education
PO Box 500
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0500**

Kearny School District

172 Midland Avenue
Kearny, New Jersey 07032
Phone: (201) 955-5000



New Jersey K to 12 Education

Collaborative Monitoring Report
June 2024

District: Kearny School District
County: Hudson
Dates Monitored: April 23, 24, 25 and 26, 2024
Case Number: CM-10-24

Funding Sources:

Program	Funding Award
Title I, Part A	2,378,975
Title I SIA	40,076
Title II, Part A	335,657
Title III	197,301
Title III Immigrant	54,693
Title IV, Part A	217,332
IDEA Part B, Basic and Preschool	1,545,750
ARP ESSER (includes all subgrants)	11,197,103
Perkins V	0
Total Funds	15,966,887

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Background

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other Federal education laws require local education agencies (LEAs - school districts and charter schools) to provide programs and services to schools within their local jurisdiction. The provision of these programs and services is based on the pertinent authorizing statutes specified in each of the Federal education laws.

The laws further require that state education agencies, in this case, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to monitor the implementation and execution of Federal programs by the subrecipients. The monitors thereby determine whether the funds are being properly used by the district for their intended purposes and achieving the overall objectives of the funding initiatives.

Introduction

The NJDOE visited the Kearny School District (KSD or district) virtually, except where noted, to monitor the district's use of Federal funds. The NJDOE also examined related program plans, as applicable, to determine whether the district's programs are meeting the intended purposes and objectives, as specified in the current year's applications and authorizing statutes.

The goal of the monitoring is to determine whether the funds were spent in accordance with the requirements of each program, Federal and state laws, and applicable regulations. The monitoring of KSD included staff interviews, as well as the review of documents and records related to the requirements of these programs:

- Title I, Part A (Title I);
- Title I SIA;
- Title II, Part A (Title II-A);
- Title III, Part A (Title III);
- Title III Immigrant;
- Title IV, Part A (Title IV-A);
- IDEA Part B - Basic and Preschool; and
- American Rescue Plan (ARP) ESSER and applicable subgrants.

The scope of work performed included the review of records and documentation which included:

- accounting records
- annual audits
- board of education (board) meeting minutes
- grant applications program plans and needs assessments
- grant awards

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- payroll records
- purchase orders

The scope of work also included interviews with appropriate district staff regarding the administration of the aforementioned programs/grants.

An inspection of a sampling of computing devices and equipment purchased with Federal funds covered by the Collaborative Federal Monitoring process has commenced as well. The district expended ARP ESSER funds to purchase educational technology, Chromebooks and Promethean boards. In regard to the Chromebooks, an inspection of a sampling of the devices disclosed the majority are currently unused pending assignment in the fall of 2024. The district expects delivery of the Promethean boards in July 2024. The department will inspect, among other items, a sampling of the Chromebooks and Promethean Boards following distribution to users and installation in the 2024-2025 school year, respectively. This report of examination will be revised thereafter if the inspection yields a finding.

The grants and programs reviewed included Title I, Title I SIA, Title II-A, Title III, Title III Immigrant, Title IV-A, IDEA Basic and IDEA Preschool from July 1, 2023 through March 28, 2024. In addition, ARP ESSER and all applicable subgrants were reviewed from commencement of the related project periods through March 28, 2024. A sampling of purchase orders and/or salaries and wages was selected from each program and reviewed for examination.

General Overview of Uses of Federal Funds

Title I, Part A Projects

The purpose of Title I is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.

KSD is utilizing its allocation of FY 2024 Title I funds in the following areas:

1. instructional staff in-class support programs;
2. instructional staff pull-out programs;
3. instructional materials and supplies;
4. extended day/year programs;
5. parent and family engagement;
6. college and career readiness;
7. social-emotional learning
8. STEM/STEAM¹; and
9. transition programs.

¹ The acronym “STEM” stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. “STEAM” encompasses “STEM”, plus an “A” for the Arts.

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Title I SIA Projects

The School Improvement Award (SIA) is allocated to districts with schools designated as comprehensive support and improvement (CSI), additional targeted support and improvement (ATSI) or targeted support and improvement (TSI). The SIA exclusively supports evidence-based practices, as defined by ESSA, that demonstrate a statistically significant effect on improving student outcomes, as reflected in studies with strong, moderate, or promising evidence of effectiveness.

KSD receives SIA for Kearny H.S., designated as TSI. Additionally, Lincoln M. S. exited TSI status at the end of the 2022-2023 school year and is using SIA carryover during the 2023-2024 school year. These funds are budgeted for resources to address the needs of struggling students including an extended day/year program, an academic intervention program, and adaptive on-line learning programs in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics. SIA funds are also budgeted for stipends to allow the data analysis team to work beyond the contractual workday and for professional resource center materials.

Title II-A Projects

The purpose of Title II-A is to:

1. increase student achievement consistent with the challenging State academic standards;
2. improve the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals and other school leaders;
3. increase the number of teachers, principals and other school leaders who are effective in improving student academic achievement in schools; and
4. provide low-income and minority students greater access to effective teachers, principals and other school leaders.

KSD uses its Title II-A funds for high quality professional development, and programs to teach students with disabilities and English learners. Instructional coaches for grades 6-8 are also implemented with Title II-A funding.

Title III Projects

The purposes of the Title III, Part A and Title III, Immigrant program include the following:

1. help ensure that multilingual learners (MLs), including immigrant children and youth, attain English proficiency and develop high levels of academic achievement in English;
2. assist all English learners, including immigrant children and youth, to achieve high levels in academic subjects so that all MLs can meet the same challenging, State academic standards that all children are expected to meet;

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3. assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and schools in establishing, implementing, and sustaining effective language instruction educational programs designed to assist in teaching MLs, including immigrant children and youth;
4. assist teachers (including preschool teachers), principals and other school leaders, State educational agencies, and local educational agencies to develop and enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional programs designed to prepare MLs, including immigrant children and youth, to enter all English instructional settings; and
5. promote parental, family, and community participation in language instruction educational programs for the parents, families, and communities of MLs.

Note: The term multilingual learner is synonymous with “English learner” or “English language learner.” Sources which are cited from the United States Department of Education may still reference the use of the term English learner or EL. The NJDOE recognizes that multilingual learners may enter New Jersey’s schools with a level of proficiency in a world language other than English. The NJDOE will use “Multilingual Learner” and “ML,” respectively, to shift to asset-based language and honor a student’s primary language.

In FY 2024, KSD uses its Title III funds for afterschool programs, supplies and materials.

Title III Immigrant Projects

The purposes of the Title III Immigrant program include:

1. family literacy, parent and family outreach, and training activities designed to assist parents and families to become active participants in the education of their children;
2. recruitment of, and support for, personnel, including teachers and paraprofessionals who have been specifically trained, or are being trained, to provide services to immigrant children and youth;
3. provision of tutorials, mentoring, and academic or career counseling for immigrant children and youth;
4. identification, development, and acquisition of curricular materials, educational software, and technologies to be used in the program carried out with awarded funds;
5. basic instructional services that are directly attributable to the presence of immigrant children and youth in the local educational agency involved, including the payment of costs of providing additional classroom supplies, costs of transportation, or such other costs as are directly attributable to such additional basic instructional services;
6. other instructional services that are designed to assist immigrant children and youth to achieve in elementary schools and secondary schools in the United States, such as programs of introduction to the educational system and civics education; and

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7. activities, coordinated with community-based organizations, institutions of higher education, private sector entities, or other entities with expertise in working with immigrants, to assist parents and families of immigrant children and youth by offering comprehensive community services.

KSD uses its Title III Immigrant funds for supplemental programming to support family and community engagement workshops and activities.

Title IV-A Projects

The purpose of Title IV-A is to improve students' academic achievement by increasing the capacity of LEAs to:

1. provide all students with access to a well-rounded education;
2. improve school conditions for student learning; and
3. improve the use of technology in order to improve the academic achievement and digital literacy of all students.

KSD uses its Title IV-A funds primarily for accelerated learning programs where students earn college credits through articulation programs with local universities. Pay for success initiatives, including the Lunch Lab program at the Kearny H.S., are also implemented with Title IV-A funds. Lunch Lab provides students with additional support in English Language Arts and Mathematics.

IDEA

The purpose of the IDEA grant is to provide federal entitlement funds to assist with the excess costs of providing special education and related services to students with disabilities. The FY 2024 IDEA Basic and Preschool funds are being used to reduce district tuition costs for students receiving special educational services in approved private schools for students with disabilities. Additional IDEA funds are being used to purchase instructional supplies for students in nonpublic settings.

ARP ESSER

The purpose of ARP ESSER funding is to assist LEAs in preparing for and responding to the impact of COVID-19 on educators, students, and families. Additional uses of funds include, but are not limited to:

1. hiring new staff and avoiding layoffs; and
2. addressing learning loss through summer learning or summer enrichment, extended day, comprehensive afterschool programs, or extended school year programs.

KSD uses its ARP ESSER funds mainly for

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1. heating, ventilation and air conditioning upgrades at Roosevelt E.S. and Garfield E.S.;
2. hiring a social worker and an additional Academic Support Instruction teacher;
3. stipends for extended day and year programs;
4. professional development for teachers;
5. instructional supplies and materials; and
6. educational technology, such as Promethean Boards and Chromebooks.

ARP ESSER subgrant funds are being used for coaches to work with teachers to address the academic needs of multilingual learners, professional development of staff, the salary of a multilingual counselor, stipends to pay teachers for work on afterschool and summer programs and Mathematics intervention supplies.

Detailed Findings and Recommendations

The Detailed Findings and Recommendations are disaggregated into the following sections:

1. Multiple Grants Section – findings necessitating correction, or the reversal of charges due to the lack of adequate supporting documentation, for multiple grants.
2. Grant Specific Programmatic and Fiscal Section – findings directly attributable to the Federal awards covered during the monitoring. The programmatic findings precede the fiscal findings unless otherwise denoted by an asterisk (*).
3. Administrative Section – crosscutting administrative findings may be found in this section.

Multiple Grants Section

There are no findings which warrant mention in this section.

Grant Specific Programmatic and Fiscal Section

Title I

The review of the district's 2023-2024 Title I programs yielded the following programmatic findings and no fiscal findings:

Finding 1:

The district did not provide documented evidence that it conducted a comprehensive needs assessment (CNA) to include the active participation of all representative stakeholder groups (e.g., administrators, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, support personnel, parents, outside community members). The CNA did not identify target populations, specific causes of needs based on data analysis, specific school performance targets, or prior year outcomes. Rather, the CNA seemed to repeat many of the same elements that had appeared in the CNAs in the district's ESEA Applications from the last several years, with no direct connection to data analysis. Since the CNA is an ongoing process, not a one-time event, the district must institute

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processes and/or procedures to ensure its annual CNA includes a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data that results in the identification of specific needs for students, staff, and/or parents and families.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1112(c)(6) Local Educational Agency Plans: Assurances

Required Action(s):

Since the CNA is an ongoing process, the district must institute processes and/or procedures to ensure its annual CNA includes a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data that results in the identification of specific needs for students, staff, and/or parents and families. As part of the submission of its corrective action plan (CAP), the district must submit evidence of established processes and/or procedures to ensure:

1. the CNA includes a thorough analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data to identify specific needs for students, staff, and/or parents and families; and
2. the CNA process involves all relevant stakeholders, including administrators, instructional staff, non-instructional staff, support personnel, parents and families, and outside community members.

Recommended Action(s):

It is important to note that the CNA serves as the basis for which all budgeted costs are determined to be necessary, reasonable, and allocable to the Title I, Part A grant program (as well as to all other ESEA title programs). Consequently, it is recommended the LEA institute the following steps for the development of a more robust annual CNA that clearly articulates the identified needs not only for the FY 2025 ESEA project period, but also for all subsequent ESEA project periods:

1. assign specific staff to coordinate the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of the CNA;
2. include more specific and quantifiable details for each identified need. This may be accomplished by providing more exact and specific information regarding each identified need (e.g., target populations, grade levels, performance targets, academic and non-academic outcomes, root causes of the needs, evaluation of prior year outcomes, etc.);
3. ensure the active engagement of parents and families, as well as outside community members in the development, implementation, and ongoing monitoring of the CNA; and
4. incorporate a formal evaluation process as part of the CNA to strengthen the required progress monitoring elements (evaluation) as articulated in ESEA.

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Finding 2:

In reviewing the Annual School Plan (ASP) for Lincoln M.S., the following items were noted:

- The district did not certify that the school met the ESEA stakeholder engagement group requirements. In the “ASP Development Team Members” tab, the district should have checked the corresponding box.
- The ASP listed only one development team meeting during the year (6/8/2023), and no supporting documentation (e.g., agenda, minutes, etc.) was uploaded.
- The district did not upload the required evidence in the “Evaluation of Prior Year Interventions” section of the ASP.
- The budget totals do not align to the school-level allocation as listed on the Eligibility Step 4 subtab in the ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1114(b) Schoolwide Programs: Components of a Schoolwide Program

Required Action(s):

As part of the submission of its CAP, the district must upload a copy of the processes and/or procedures established to ensure that for the 2024-2025 school year:

1. The district properly certifies that the school met the ESEA stakeholder engagement group requirements.
2. The district holds more frequent development team meetings. While ESEA does not stipulate a required number of attendees or number of meetings, the NJDOE strongly encourage districts to hold at least quarterly, if not more frequent, stakeholder meetings and make an effort to ensure that all stakeholder team members attend.
3. The district uploads all documentation required for completing the ASP.
4. The budget totals align to the school-level allocation as listed on the Eligibility Step 4 subtab in the ESEA Consolidated Subgrant Application.

Recommended Action(s):

To further enhance knowledge regarding the completion of the ASP, it is recommended the district’s administrators and staff review the [ASP Resources page](#) in NJ Homeroom.

Finding 3:

The district did not provide evidence of a school-level parent and family engagement policy for each Title I-funded school, or that each policy was widely distributed to parents and families. In addition, the district did not provide evidence to show how it actively engaged parents and families in the development of each school-level parent and family engagement policy.

Pursuant to ESEA legislation, parents and families must be involved in the development of the written school-level parent and family engagement policy, as well as be informed of the ways in

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which they can further participate in the academic performance and achievement of their children. The district currently has one school-level policy covering all schools.

Citation(s):

ESEA §1116(b)(1) Parent and Family Engagement: School Parent and Family Engagement Policy

Required Action(s):

The district must ensure that each Title I-funded school has a written school-level parent and family engagement policy that is developed and reviewed with the active engagement of parents and families, as well as be widely distributed to parents and families on an annual basis. In this way, parents and families are afforded opportunities to become effective partners in the district's ongoing parent involvement process. As part of the submission of its CAP, the district must submit copies of school-level parent and family engagement policies for each Title I-funded school.

Title I SIA

The review of the district's 2023-2024 Title I SIA programs yielded no programmatic findings or fiscal findings.

Title II-A

The review of the district's 2023-2024 Title II-A programs yielded no programmatic or fiscal findings.

Title III

The review of the district's 2023-2024 Title III programs yielded the following programmatic finding and no fiscal findings.

Finding 1:

The district did not have a monitoring process for newly exited students from multilingual learner status. Title III requires that LEAs monitor, for two years, the progress made by newly exited students on content and achievement standards to ensure former multilingual learners are supported in their continued language and academic progress.

Citation(s):

ESEA §3121(a)(2) Reporting

Required Action(s):

As part of the submission of its CAP, the district must implement procedures to ensure the programmatic monitoring of students, for two years, who were exited from multilingual learner status. The district must monitor the academic progress of the

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former multilingual learners for two years on the content and achievement standards, as well as the progress toward meeting graduation requirements. The district should:

- develop a monitoring procedure (e.g., create a form in which teachers can provide feedback, [NJDOE sample form](#));
- identify a criterion for reentry of former multilingual learners as per N.J.A.C. 6A:15-1.9, if applicable, into a language instruction educational program (LIEP); and
- train staff, including bilingual/ESL teachers and general education teachers on how to complete the form, “look-fors” to observe in newly exited multilingual learners, and timeframe for these observations.

Recommendation(s):

The LEA should implement a formalized, documented process for evaluating district LIEPs. The formal evaluation should demonstrate how multilingual learners are successfully increasing their English language proficiency, while simultaneously attaining student academic achievement. The district should assess the effectiveness of their LIEPs given changes in student demographics (e.g., country of origin, level of English language development), including multilingual learners assets (e.g., linguistic skill, background experience), and needs (e.g., social and emotional). The district may reference the United States Department of Education’s [English Learner Toolkit](#), Chapter 9.

Title III Immigrant

The review of the district’s 2023-2024 Title III Immigrant programs yielded no programmatic or fiscal findings.

Title IV-A

The review of the district’s 2023-2024 Title IV-A programs yielded no programmatic or fiscal findings.

IDEA

The review of the district’s 2023-2024 IDEA programs yielded no programmatic findings or fiscal findings.

ARP ESSER and Related Subgrants

The review of the district’s 2023-2024 ARP ESSER and related subgrants yielded no findings.

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Administrative Section

Finding 1:

The district submitted board policies for examination which address certain Uniform Grant Guidance provisions. Copies of the requisite written procedures to implement such policies, however, were not provided for review as requested or were inadequate. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- determining the allowability of costs in accordance with Federal cost principles and the terms and conditions of the Federal award; and
- the mandatory disclosure of all violations of Federal criminal law involving fraud (pertinent information relating to fraud follows), bribery, or gratuity violations potentially affecting the Federal award.

Pursuant to ESEA legislation, each recipient of a grant or subgrant under ESEA must display, in a public place, the hotline contact information of the Office of Inspector General of the Department of Education (USDEOIG) so that any individual who observes, detects, or suspects improper use of taxpayer funds can easily report such improper use.

Federal guidance relating to the prevention of fraud is accessible from [USDEOIG Brochures](#); scroll past multiple tables to the Brochures, Flyers & Posters (Download Free) section. Use this link, [For K-12: Preventing Fraud and Corruption in Federal Education \(2021\)](#), to access a video training presentation.

Citation(s):

ESEA §9203 Preventing Improper Use of Taxpayer Funds; Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §200.214 Suspension and debarment, 2 C.F.R. §§200.302(b)(6)-(7) Financial management and 2 C.F.R. §§200.400 – 200.476 Subpart E - Cost Principles; and §200.113 Mandatory disclosures

Required Action(s):

The district must develop, revise, adopt and implement board policies and written procedures which address the requirements of the Uniform Grant Guidance, and include relevant citations and references to current legislation, where appropriate. The district may opt to utilize a vendor for the preparation and revision of the requisite board policies and procedures.

Finding 2:

A number of purchase order voucher packets were selected and examined during monitoring. The district was unable to provide evidence that a bid and multiple quotes were obtained PO numbers 242204 and 240030. These POs exceeded the threshold necessitating bids or quotes in accordance with:

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1. the New Jersey Public School Contracts Law (PSCL) and district policy; or
2. procurement standards under Uniform Grant Guidance.

When the Federal and State legislation and regulations governing procurement are in conflict, the most restrictive prevails. Federal procurement standards do not include all exemptions allowed under the PSCL, specifically, professional services.

Citation(s):

Uniform Grant Guidance, 2 C.F.R. §§200.317 - 327 Procurement Standards and N.J.S.A. 18A:18A-37(a) Award of purchases, contracts, or agreements

Required Action(s):

The district must adhere to the PSCL or applicable provisions of the Uniform Grant Guidance, whichever is most restrictive, when obtaining goods and services.

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

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa D. McCormick via phone at (609) 376-3608 or via email at lisa.mccormick@doe.nj.gov.