



LAKWOOD SCHOOL DISTRICT  
1771 Madison Ave. Ste. B  
Lakewood, NJ 08701

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SURVEY FOR DELIVERY OF SERVICES

SCHOOL NAME TASHBAR OF LAKEWOOD DATE 4-12-11

ADMINISTRATOR MEIR HERTZ, DEAN

PREFERENCE OF SERVICE DELIVERY:

- Multi vendor
- Single vendor
- District Operated

COMMENTS:

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED PAGES ④

PRESENT VENDOR: TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

COMMENTS: PLEASE SEE ATTACHED PAGES ④

By: MEIR N. HERTZ - [Signature]  
DEAN, TASHBAR OF LAKEWOOD

Please complete and return to Neva Musella by fax at (732) 905-3689

# Preliminary Response to the Lakewood School District Survey for Delivery of Special Education and Related Services to Lakewood's NonPublic Schools (NPS)

April 12, 2011

***Based on Tashbar's experience, the following are the pros and cons of the September, 2010 switch from single-source to multivendor method for delivering special education and related services to NonPublic Schools in the Lakewood School District. Far from being an exhaustive list, listed below are some of the salient Pros and Cons:***

## **A. ADVANTAGES:**

### **1. Quantity of Services:**

(a) Our current Title 1 and NJ Chapter 192/193 provider (Tree of Knowledge, "TOK") prices their services by applying an across the board 30% mark-up above teachers' salaries. Before multivendor competition was introduced, our previous vendor (Catapult Learning) charged a 70% mark-up. As a result, we now receive significantly more hours of Special Ed services.

(b) For many years, before multivendor competition was introduced, special education services routinely started about a week after the Sukkos holidays, i.e., at the end of October, shaving 2 months of services off the school year. Another month (June) was shaved-off due to early termination of services; basically ending at the end of May, instead of at the end of June. Taking into consideration that the school year has approximately a month of holidays (Sukkos, Passover, High Holidays, Purim, Chanukah, etc.), the 10-months' school year, is actually comprised of 9 actual months of school. Reducing this further by 3 months due to late start and early termination of services, deprives the students of 1/3 (or 33.3%) of their entitled services, ***with no corresponding reduction in vendor compensation***. This represents a 66.67% overpayment to the single-source vendor, which received payment for 10 months, while providing services only 6 months, ( $40/60=66.67$ ).

Due to the introduction of multivendor competition, this loss of services stopped.

(c) Teachers employed by our previous provider used 20% of their classroom "instructional time" for completing administrative paperwork. Our current provider uses 0% of classroom instructional time for non-instructional tasks.

### **2. Quality of Services:**

(a) Performance – As a result of the introduction of the multivendor system, we finally (after more than two decades) finally have objective criteria and academic standards for measuring student progress and achievement. The efficacy of the services under our prior provider was measured by such unscientific, subjective criteria as "parental satisfaction". No real metrics were ever utilized to monitor and gauge student progress and instructional efficacy. Due to the

competition, objective monitoring and comparison modes, such as Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM), were finally introduced.

While some educators (correctly) complain that some of the monitoring methods used are too onerous and disruptive, and that effective monitoring can be accomplished with far less intrusive methods, nevertheless, the difference between operating with or without standardized progress monitoring is the difference between night and day.

(b) Quality of teachers - Our current provider involves the principal and curriculum coordinator in the teacher selection process. We are no longer confronted with a “take it or leave it” attitude, nor does “the squeaky wheel gets the oil” rule govern any longer, with the resulting high teacher turnover. Further, smaller schools such as Tashbar are no longer disadvantaged by getting the short end of the stick. In short, vendor profits no longer drive the entire process.

(c) Other Services: Switching Tashbar’s provider of Nursing Services from Catapult to Bayada Nursing, and our Evaluations and Determinations (E&Ds) provider from Catapult to Psych Ed, has resulted in excellent outcomes. Both of these programs are now professionally administered, efficient, responsive and effective. Far superior to the corresponding services we received from Catapult.

3. **Elimination of Conflict:** Multivendor system eliminates the inherent conflict in having the same vendor which does the evaluations provide the IEP/ISP services. The NJ Department of Education has forbidden use of the same vendor for both the evaluations and the provision of prescribed services, but this practice persists in Lakewood, apparently in defiance of the NJ DoEd.
4. **Transparency:** Another major difference between our previous and our current provider is the transparency of the process. With our previous provider we were always in the dark. How many 407-1 forms are being generated by the students? Generating how much money? Are the teachers being paid for their administrative paperwork time separately and in addition to their teaching time, and then, perhaps, using their teaching time for paperwork?

With our current provider, not only is everything laid out clearly on the table, but services are flexibly tailored to each individual school’s needs. The principal knows the exact amount of money generated by the 192/193 funds, and can thus make an informed decision how best to utilize the funds. If a school chooses to have a less experienced speech therapist, who is paid less, they can then choose to have more hours, instead of the savings going towards the vendor's profits. If a school selects a more experienced teacher, and is willing to earmark a higher compensation, that option is also available.

The same 30% markup for vendor overhead and profit applies across the board to the 192/3 funds and to the Title I funds, making the whole package simpler, clearer and cleaner. We never had that with our prior provider.

5. **Greater Responsiveness** – A significant improvement in breaking up the previous monopoly, aside from reduced prices and increased quality of services, is that the 2 current vendors must actually compete for client schools. They are far more responsive and cooperative.
6. **Rent** (for School Facilities Used for the Provision of Special Education and Related Services).

Before the introduction of multivendors, one vendor had a lock on virtually all facilities, which were grossly inferior (ancient modulars). Moreover, said vendor was paid an exorbitant rental amount (reportedly \$800,000 per year) for these modulars. No Appraisals, Bids, RFPS, nor even any token Comparative Market Analysis' (CMAs) were ever undertaken by the District to justify these exorbitant rents. In addition to the inferior facilities, significant funds were siphoned from the federal and State special education programs to pay for these facilities.

The introduction of Multivendors put a stop to all that. Schools can now use adequate facilities, in their own buildings, many of them newer facilities, at rents that are reasonable and competitive with comparable prevailing rents. However, the District is still blocking payment of rent to our mosdos (NPS), marshaling one flimsy excuse after another. None of these excuses were ever an issue when the prior provider received \$Millions in rent.

**B. Disadvantages:**

1. Some Duplication of Administrative Resources, vendor office space and supervisory personnel. Administrative Offices, Teachers' Resource Library, etc., as well as District personnel having to deal with more than one vendor.
2. Additional start-up costs for educational materials (e.g. leveled reading series, math programs, Kriah reading materials, etc.) and educational supplies, (Boards, markers, manipulatives, incentive charts, etc.).
3. For those vendors who do not meet the requirements and qualifications for providing the full range of services funded under NJ Chapters 192/193, Title 1 and IDEA, there is the additional disadvantage of having to switch vendors, and sometimes teachers, for instructional services under different programs. This was not a factor in Tashbar's experience with its current vendor. It is anticipated that this will not become a factor in the future, as vendors partner to consolidate their respective strengths and areas of specialization. Nevertheless this is a potential weakness.

**GENERAL NOTES:**

1. The above is a partial list of Pros and Cons, hence only a Preliminary Response. We will research this issue further, especially by drawing on the experience of other Lakewood NPS, as well as other Districts, such as the NYC School District, to learn why they abandoned in-house operation of the Title 1 Program, in favor of the Multivendor method for delivery of special Ed services to NPS. This initial response is largely limited to the direct experience of the school in which I serve, Tashbar of Lakewood.
2. Missing Money? At a recent meeting of the leaders of some of Lakewood's NPS, held on Thursday April 7, at Yeshiva K'tana, Lakewood, one of the Presentors asserted that the Multivendors system is at a disadvantage because it resulted in loss of some program funding, due to the fact that somehow "The two parts do not equal the Whole".

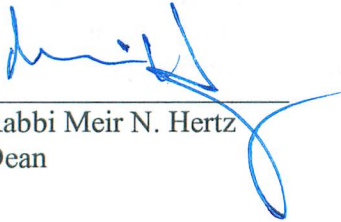
Intrigued, I followed up, and in a conversation on Sunday, April 10, when pressed for specifics, this Presentor acknowledged that she has no personal knowledge of this, but was told this "fact", which she readily admitted she had no way of independently verifying.

3. In November of 2009, a letter signed by approximately 40 leaders of Lakewood NPS unanimously expressed strong support for the Multivendor method. The letter was forwarded to the Lakewood School District, and was widely circulated. The only response we heard was the preposterous District claim that some of the signatures were forged(?). So far, not a single person came forwarded to say his or her signature was forged. The District largely ignored that letter, and via the instant "Survey" disingenuously seeks to overturn what it adamantly and continuously has refused to accept.
4. No IDEIA funding was allocated to any school which hired TOK as its provider. Coincidence? Are these schools being singled-OUT? We will await the District's explanation.
5. It is a verified, well known fact that ALL the start-up difficulties in launching the current multivendor method—including limiting the competition through the elimination of some of the most qualified and credible vendors—was due entirely to the Lakewood District's deliberate delay in issuing, (and widely circulating) an appropriate, timely RFP for Title 1 and similar services. The instant "Survey" is merely the latest dilatory ploy. As the saying goes, "Delay is the deadliest form of denial".

In conclusion, from the limited competition which the District has begrudgingly allowed so far, and based on Tashbar's own, albeit limited experience, Lakewood's NPS students have already gained more and better Special Ed services. Expanding the competition—without further delay—to at least 4 or 5 qualified providers, will commensurately increase these benefits for our children with special needs.

Sincerely,

**Tashbar of Lakewood**



Rabbi Meir N. Hertz  
Dean