

**New Jersey Department of Education  
Special Education Hunterdon Learning Center Monitoring**

**Receiving School:** Hunterdon Learning Center

**County:** Hunterdon

**Monitoring Dates:** February 3 and 4, 2003

**Monitoring Team:** Paul Bilik, Denise Wilkens, Sandra Gogerty

**Background Information:**

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Hunterdon Learning Center conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Hunterdon Learning Center 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. Hunterdon Learning Center did not identify any areas of need during the self- assessment process. The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed Hunterdon Learning Center 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 Hunterdon Learning Center's special education administrators, building principal, special education teachers and related service personnel.

**School Strengths:**

The Hunterdon Learning Center is commended for the consistency it has achieved in maintaining its staff for a significant number of years. Several staff members reported that they have been employed at the school for more than fifteen years. In addition, teachers communicate with each parent on a weekly or, if needed, daily basis.

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**Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:**

**General Provisions, FAPE, Discipline, Programs and Services and Student Records** were determined to be areas of compliance by the Hunterdon Learning Center during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

**Section III: Staff Requirements**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of use of physical therapy assistants (PTAs) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTAs), private school dual employment, job description of paraprofessionals and criminal history verification and having an approved professional development plan.

During the on-site visit, an area of need was identified regarding certified/licensed staff.

**Area of Need:**

**Certified/Licensed Staff-** During the on-site visit through record reviews and administrative interviews, it was determined that two instructional staff employees did not have the required teacher of the handicapped certifications.

- **The receiving school must develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all staff members are appropriately certified. The teachers must immediately apply for emergency certification through the Hunterdon County Office of Education and must enroll in a program that will lead to permanent certification. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Section IV: Facility Requirements**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment, the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of programs provided in approved facilities and certificates of occupancy and inspections.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding frequency of fire drills.

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**Area of Need:**

During the on-site visit, through staff interviews, a review of fire drill logs, it was determined that the school does not conduct at least two fire drills per month.

- **The school must develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that fire drills are conducted at least twice a month. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of the procedures.**

**Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review**

**Summary of Findings:**

During self-assessment the school accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, current IEPs, IEP accessibility, inform teachers/providers of IEP responsibilities, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, statewide assessment, implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

**Area of Need:**

**Communication to Sending Districts Regarding Missing IEP Components-** During the on-site visit through staff interviews and record reviews it was determined that the school does not communicate with sending districts when signatures of IEP meeting participants, and frequency, location and duration of related services are missing from IEPs. It was also determined that staff members develop related service schedules independently without contacting the sending district.

- **The school must develop an improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that they communicate with sending districts when signatures of IEP meeting participants, and frequency, location and duration of related services are missing from IEPs. The plan must include staff training, and an administrative oversight component to bring about the required changes.**

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**Summary**

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Hunterdon Learning Center on February 3 and 4, 2003. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Hunterdon Learning Center's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the Hunterdon Learning Center's improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Hunterdon Learning Center during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, amendments, provision of programs in nonsectarian settings, length of day/ year, physical education, hearing aids, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, observations of programs, provision of services as per IEP, physical therapy assistants (PTAs) and certified occupational therapy assistants (COTAs), private school dual employment, job description of paraprofessionals and criminal history verification, professional development plan, programs provided in approved facilities and certificates of occupancy and inspections, IEP meetings conducted at least annually, IEP conducted with appropriate participants, current IEPs, IEP accessibility, inform teachers/ providers of IEP responsibilities, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, statewide assessment, implementation of IEP components and progress reports, class size/age range, exceptions, description of special class programs, special classes implementing IEP, core curriculum content standards, home instruction, dispensing medication/nursing services, and medical exams for sport teams, conformance to pupil record code, return of records, access to records, access sheets, location of records, daily attendance, tardiness/absences, written notice of attendance, student health records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding certified/licensed staff, frequency of fire drills, and communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components.

This report identifies one area of non-compliance that requires immediate action by the school administration. Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Hunterdon Learning Center will develop and submit an improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs and to the county office of education to address those remaining areas that require revisions.