

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Receiving School: Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission
(Huntowski & Meridian Academy)

Counties: Monmouth & Ocean

Monitoring Dates: March 24, 2003-Meridian Academy
March 25, 2003-Huntowski Academy

Monitoring Team: Georgianna Pilesky, Sandy Gogerty, Denise Wilkens, Elaine Lerner and Carmen Fanucci

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission (Huntowski and Meridian Academy) conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Huntowski and Meridian Academy 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. The Huntowski and Meridian Academy developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and to determine the progress in implementing the plan.

During the monitoring process, the monitoring team reviewed Huntowski and Meridian Academy's 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 Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers and related service personnel.

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Receiving School Monitoring**

School Strengths:

The Meridian Academy is commended for their Workplace-Readiness-Based Behavioral Management System which is based on those qualities necessary to seek and keep a job. By reinforcing these qualities throughout the day, students strengthen their job related skills. In addition, the school also provides the students with a banking system which allows them to maintain a school checking account with personalized checks. For each point that they earn during a class period, the student is credited one cent in "Meridian money" into their account. They are able to draw on the account to purchase dress-down passes, items from the school store, and gifts at the annual Holiday Boutique. When the students make their purchases, they fill out their checks just as adults do to pay bills. The students balance their checking accounts each week in class, which reinforces important life skills.

The Huntowski Academy is commended for participating in The Outward Bound Educational Facility. This program challenges students both physically and mentally. The students participate cooperatively in completing obstacle courses and rope climbing. By working together, the students learn how to think critically and problem solve. In addition, they are able to utilize skills such as task analysis, teamwork and leadership skills.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions and Facility Requirements were determined to be areas of compliance by the Meridian Academy during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

General Provisions was determined to be an area of compliance by the Huntowski Academy during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Huntowski and Meridian Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of length of school day/year, physical education, services at no cost to parents, extended school year, observation of programs and provision of related services.

During the self-assessment process, the Huntowski and Meridian Academy identified a concern in the area of hearing aid checks. The schools developed improvement plans that are sufficient to address this area of need. Implementation of the improvement plans were verified through record review during the on-site visit.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

Section III: Staff Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, Huntowski and Meridian Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of certified/licensed staff, private school dual

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

employment, job descriptions of paraprofessionals and having an approved professional development plan.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit at Huntowski and Meridian Academy regarding criminal history review.

Area of Need:

Criminal History- During the on-site visit, it was determined through a review of staff lists and criminal history documentation that the schools do not maintain verification of the criminal history check for all staff members employed by the schools.

- **The schools will immediately revise their improvement plans to include procedures to ensure that all staff members are fingerprinted for criminal history review. The plans must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, Huntowski Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of programs provided in approved facilities, certificate of occupancy and fire drills.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit at the Huntowski Academy regarding fire inspection.

Areas of Need:

Fire Inspection- During the on-site visit, it was determined through a review of records that the fire inspection was not conducted within the required timeline.

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that fire inspections are conducted annually. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, Huntowski and Meridian Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of signatures present on IEPs, IEP accessibility, teacher responsibility, timely implementation of IEPs, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, Huntowski and Meridian Academy identified concerns in the areas of representative for transition services at IEP meetings, IEPs conducted annually, current IEPs, observation of proposed placement and communication to sending districts regarding missing components. The schools have developed improvement plans that are sufficient to address these areas of need.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Implementation of the improvement plan was verified through record review during the on-site visit.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

Section VI: Discipline

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment, Huntowski and Meridian Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of standard disciplinary procedures, changes to program/placement, suspensions, interim alternative educational setting and termination of placement.

During the self-assessment process, Huntowski and Meridian Academy identified concerns in the areas of written procedures for the use of time out rooms, aversive therapies or restraints. The schools have developed improvement plans that are sufficient to address these areas of need. Implementation of the improvement plan was verified through record review during the on-site visit.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit at Huntowski Academy regarding removal of students.

Area of Need:

Removal of Students- During the on-site visit, it was determined through interview and a review of records that the receiving school unilaterally implements the removal of students from the program without input from the sending district as required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14-7.6 (c)and(d).

- **The school will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all disciplinary actions are made in conjunction with the sending district. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures.**

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, Huntowski and Meridian Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size/age ranges, description of special class programs, special classes serving student with similar educational needs, core curriculum content standards, nursing services and the dispensing of medication.

During the self-assessment process, Huntowski and Meridian Academy identified a concern in the area of home instruction. The schools have developed improvement plans that are sufficient to address this area of need. Implementation of the improvement plan was verified through record review during the on-site visit.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

**New Jersey Department of Education
Special Education Receiving School Monitoring**

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment Huntowski and Meridian Academy accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access sheets, daily attendance, tardiness/absences and student health records.

During the self-assessment process, Huntowski and Meridian Academy identified concerns in the areas of conformance to pupil record code, return of records, access to records, location of records and written notice of attendance. The schools have developed improvement plans that are sufficient to address the areas of access to records, location of records and written notice of attendance. **The academy has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address the areas of conformance to pupil record code and return of records because they lack an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures.** The plan must be revised to include this component.

No additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission (Huntowski and Meridian Academy) on March 24 and 25, 2003. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review their improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Huntowski and Meridian Academy during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, staff development, annual reports, amendments, nonsectarian instruction, length of school day/year, physical education, services provided at no cost to parents, extended school year, observation of programs, provision of related services, certified/licensed staff, private school dual employment, job descriptions of paraprofessionals, professional development, approved facilities, certificate of occupancy, fire drills, signatures present on IEPs, IEP accessibility, teacher responsibility, timely implementation of IEPs, statewide testing, implementation of IEP components, progress reports, standard disciplinary procedures, changes to program/placement, suspensions, interim alternative educational setting, termination of student, class size/age ranges, description of special class programs, special classes implementing IEP, core curriculum content standards, nursing services, dispensing medication, access sheets, daily attendance, tardiness/absences and student health records.

During the self-assessment process, the Huntowski and Meridian Academy identified areas of need regarding hearing aid checks, representative for transition services at IEP meetings, IEP meetings conducted annually, current IEPs, observation of proposed placement, communication to sending districts regarding missing IEP components, written procedures for the use of time out rooms, aversive therapies or restraints, home instruction, access to records, location of records, written notice of attendance, conformance with pupil records code and return of records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding criminal history reviews, fire inspections and removal of students.

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 Huntowski and Meridian Academy will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.