

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

Receiving School: Holmstead School

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: January 24 – 25, 2005

Monitoring Team: Ann Marie Bruder, Janet Wright and Diane Mari

Background Information:

During the 2003–2004 school year, the Holmstead School conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Holmstead School 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 Holmstead School 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 receiving school 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 receiving school's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers, parents and related service personnel.

School Strengths:

The Holmstead School provides a supportive educational and therapeutic atmosphere emphasizing a productive academic program for adolescents. The Holmstead School has students with learning problems, school phobia, defiance, and those who have a history of other behavior management concerns.

The school encourages parent communication through weekly contract feedback forms discussing the students' progress in academic, social and emotional areas. This allows parents to be continually informed about their child's achievements. Parents are also encouraged to attend evening parent-teacher meetings through out the school year to become acquainted with transition services, college services, alumni, and other valuable resources for both the parents and students.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Receiving School Monitoring

The Holmstead School provides counseling and crisis management by an emergency team responsible for coordinating support and information during and after traumatic events or crises situations. Ridgewood Police Department collaborates with the Holmstead staff to facilitate student safety education. There is also a resource officer working as a liaison between community activities and the schools students.

The Holmstead School is commended for its course offerings which include opportunities for students to take honors classes, advanced placement courses, and on-line independent study high school courses. The classes offer special activities designed to promote the generalization of skills. Some examples include: role playing to reinforce the role of the president and congress in the United States economy, an economics workshop that brings banking representatives in to speak to the students, a stock market game to teach students about investing, bridge building in physics, physics day, specialized drawing classes, local cultural events, culinary arts activities, a recycling program, community service activities and music lessons.

Holmstead School also incorporates a great degree of technology within their school curriculum. The school has a website to feature announcements, events and information.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE, Staff Requirements, IEP/Annual Review, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Holmstead School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Section IV: Facility Requirements

Summary of Findings:

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

During the self-assessment process, the Holmstead School identified concerns in the areas regarding fire drills. The receiving school's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding educational facilities.

Area of Need:

Facilities - During the on-site visit during a tour of the school it was noted that two classroom doors did not open out into the corridor as per the Guide for Educational Facilities Standards described in 6A:26-6.3.

- **The receiving school must revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all facilities are in compliance with Facility code. The procedures must include a mechanism to ensure that all changes are**

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

submitted to the Bergen County Office of Education for review and approval.

Section VII: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment, the Holmstead School accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas regarding class size and age range, exceptions for class size and age range, special class program descriptions maintained at county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar educational needs, collaboration for home instruction, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services, and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the Holmstead School identified concerns in the areas regarding teachers being trained in Core Curriculum Content Standards (CCCS), and dispensing of medication when the full time school certified nurse is absent. The school's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas of need. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the receiving school has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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 Holmstead School on January 24 – 25, 2005. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Holmstead School's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the receiving school's improvement plan.

The receiving school is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the receiving school was able to identify all but one area of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further commended for the prompt implementation of corrective action to address the areas of need identified during the self-assessment process. As a result, all of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally the receiving school is commended for the many areas that were determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

General Provisions, FAPE, Staff Requirements, IEP/Annual Review, Discipline and Student Records were determined to be areas of compliance by the Holmstead School during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

Additional areas identified as consistently compliant by the Holmstead School during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included programs provided in approved facilities, certificates of occupancy and Inspections, class size/age range exceptions, special education program descriptions maintained in the county office, certifications for specialized populations, special classes serving students with similar education needs, collaboration for home instruction, policies and procedures relating to school functions and services and medical exams for sport teams.

During the self-assessment process, the Holmstead School identified areas of need regarding fire drills and teachers being trained in the core curriculum content standards and dispensing of medication when the full time school certified nurse is absent.

The on-site visit identified one additional area of need within the various standards regarding facilities.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Holmstead School will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the county office of education and to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.