

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

School: Special Children's School – Sussex County Educational Services Commission (SCESC)

County: Sussex

Monitoring Dates: 9/30/02-10/1/02

Monitoring Team: Jennifer DeSaye and Theresa Schiffenhaus

Background Information:

During the 2001– 2002 school year, the Special Children's School – SCESC, consisting of two campuses, the Hackettstown campus and the Sparta Campus, conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Special Children's School - SCESC 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 Special Children's School - SCESC 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 Special Children's School - SCESC 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 Special Children's School - SCESC's special education administrators, building principals, special education teachers and related service personnel.

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School Strengths:

The Special Children's School - SCESC is commended for the many programs that they are involved with both within their school and with community groups. The school supports a Boy Scout Troop program that meets weekly. They also participate in many of the county wide programs with other troops. The School also participates in Read Across America and the Statewide Kindness Awareness Campaign. The Special Children's School - SCESC provides Physiatry Evaluations – Developmental Pediatric Clinics given at the school by doctors from Children's Specialized Hospital and Wheelchair Equipment Clinics given by various wheelchair providers for the children and their parents.

The Special Children's School - SCESC also provides numerous programs within the school such as weekly sing-alongs, Chinese New Year's Celebrations, creation of holiday center pieces, Easter Bonnet Parade in which they make their own hats, Carnival Week, Beach Week water activities, various field trips, and therapy dogs that come to the school. The school also supports a strong interdisciplinary multisensory program. During the Statewide Kindness Awareness Campaign of 2002, The Special Children's School – SCESC won the Mission: Kindness International, Inc. Heart of Gold Award for being one of the “kindest schools in New Jersey”. One of the Special Children's School – SCESC students received a second place award for a story he wrote for the Kindness Awareness Campaign. His story was selected from over 2,000 entries from all over the State of New Jersey.

The Hackettstown Campus of Special Children's School - SCESC offers the students opportunities to work within the community at the Hackettstown High School, the Senior Citizen's Nutrition Center, Knights of Columbus Christmas Luncheon, and contracted work with the local Century 21 Real Estate Agency. The students at the Hackettstown Campus are also afforded the opportunity to be out in the community and learn about different businesses and recreational activities since they can walk to most sites. The students regularly go to the town library, police department, fire department, Oakwood bowling lanes, the park, the hospital and local stores like the bakery, delicatessens, the bank, pet store, dry cleaners, and teacher's store.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

FAPE, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Discipline and Programs and Services were determined to be areas of compliance by the Special Children's School - SCESC during self-assessment and by the NJDOE during the on-site visit.

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Section I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Special Children's School - SCESC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of annual reports, amendments, and program and services provided to students in nonsectarian settings.

During the self-assessment process, the Special Children's School - SCESC identified concerns in the area of policies and procedures relating to their termination policy and staff development for paraprofessionals and parents. The improvement plan activities are insufficient to address these areas of need. In addition, the Special Children's School – SCESC will revise its improvement plan for termination policy to include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding staff development for teachers and therapists concerning teacher knowledge of Core Curriculum Content Standards/Core Curriculum Content Standards for Students with Severe Disabilities (CCCS/CCCSSSD) and IEP components.

Area of Need:

Staff Development – During the on-site visit, staff interviews and a review of records indicated that classroom teachers have insufficient knowledge of the CCCS/CCCSSSD and IEP components.

- **The Special Children's School - SCESC will revise its improvement plan to ensure that teachers receive training in CCCS/CCCSSSD and IEP components. The plan must also include a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent implementation of these areas.**

Section V: Individualized Education Plan/Annual Review

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Special Children's School - SCESC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of IEP meetings conducted annually, IEP participants, signatures on IEPs, current IEP, communication to sending district regarding missing components, IEP accessibility, teachers/providers informed of IEP responsibilities, no delay in implementation, observation of proposed placement, statewide testing and implementation of IEP components and progress reports.

During the self-assessment process, the Special Children's School - SCESC identified concerns in the area of transition. The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address this area of need because it lacks procedures regarding the school's transition services responsibilities and plans, implementation of transition services and plans, in-service training for administration and staff, a mechanism to determine the effectiveness of the training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.

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

Section VIII: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the Special Children's School - SCESC accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of conformance to pupil record code, return of records, and access to records.

During the self-assessment process, the Special Children's School - SCESC identified concerns in the areas of procedures for habitual tardiness/extended absences and timely arrival of mandated student records from sending districts. The school's improvement plan is insufficient to address the area of tardiness/extended absences because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure consistent implementation of the procedures. The school has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to ensure that mandated records are received from sending districts in a timely manner.

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

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Summary

The receiving school is commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the receiving school was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The receiving school is further commended for the many areas determined by the receiving school and verified by the Department of Education as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Special Children's School - SCESC on September 30 and October 1, 2002. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the Special Children's School - SCESC's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the Special Children's School - SCESC's improvement plan.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the Special Children's School - SCESC during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included FAPE, Staff Requirements, Facility Requirements, Discipline, and Programs/Services.

During the self-assessment process, the Special Children's School - SCESC identified areas of need regarding policies and procedures, staff development, transition services/programs and mandated student records.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding staff development.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Special Children's School - SCESC will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address those areas that require revisions.