

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: East Hanover School District

County: Morris

Monitoring Date: April 5, 2006

Monitoring Team: Robert Schweitzer and Deborah Masarsky

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the East Hanover School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the East Hanover School District with an opportunity to evaluate 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 protection of procedural safeguards for students and their families;
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures resulting in procedural compliance; and
- The organization and delivery of programs and services resulting in positive student outcomes.

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 East Hanover School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted an onsite 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 onsite visit, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) monitoring team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers and related service personnel and other relevant information. A representative sample of student records was also reviewed. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech-language specialists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district had a classification rate of 14.6%, which was below the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The district educated 76% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day, a rate that was significantly higher than the state average of 42% for the same year. A total of 13% of students with disabilities attended school in separate private or public special education schools compared to the state average of 9.6%.

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With regard to placement of preschool students with disabilities, 8.3% (2 out of 24) were educated in a general education setting, during the 2005-2006 school year, while 70.8% (17 out of 24) were educated in a special education setting. The district has indicated that a positive relationship with the area community-based preschool programs has been developed in order to meet the needs of preschool children with disabilities when placement there is identified as appropriate.

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

The self-assessment process required the school to review implementation of federal and state regulations categorized into 15 sections. Within each section, a number of areas were reviewed. The onsite monitoring visit involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the district in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant:

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Statewide Assessments
- Graduation
- Programs and Services

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the remaining sections reviewed, were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee, and by the NJDOE, as compliant. These areas were reviewed for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Content of written notice • Provision of written notice • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meetings • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral process • Identification meeting participants
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations • Standardized assessments (ESERS) • Functional assessments (ESERS) • Bilingual evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESERS)

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Eligibility criteria (ESERS) • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation dates • IEP provided to parent prior to implementation • Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP • Annual reviews completed by June 30 for students with disabilities exiting preschool and students transitioning from elementary to secondary programs • Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suspension tracking system • Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students • IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days • Procedures for determination of change of placement • Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessments and development of behavior intervention plan • Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement • Short-term removals that are not a change in placement-school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided • Interim alternative educational settings • Manifestation determinations

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Areas of Noncompliance – Compliance Review

The table below lists areas identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The third column lists the results of the review of the improvement plan submitted by the district and identifies those areas where compliance was achieved prior to the onsite monitoring visit:

Section	Areas of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Extended School Year (ESY)- Case managers were not discussing ESY for each student during the IEP meeting.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with administrative oversight in place to ensure ongoing compliance.
	Provision of programs-Speech-language services for preschool students with disabilities were often delayed due to scheduling difficulties.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Transfer procedures-Transfer students were not placed in programs without undue delay.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Location, Referral and Location (LRI)	Child Find Ages 3-21 - Child Find activities were not implemented throughout the district.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with administrative oversight in place to ensure ongoing compliance.
	Identification meeting timelines- Identification meetings were not consistently conducted within the required 20-day timeline.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Evaluation	Standardized assessments (ESLS)- Speech-language specialists do not select assessments that will provide enough relevant information in order to make appropriate decisions regarding eligibility.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESLS)-Written reports prepared by speech-language specialists did not include all required information.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
Eligibility	Eligibility Criteria (ESLS) – Determination of eligibility for speech-language services was not based on prescribed criteria according to N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.6.	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Copy of evaluation reports to parents - Copies of evaluation reports were not provided to the parents 10 days prior to the eligibility meeting.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with administrative oversight in place to ensure ongoing compliance.

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Section	Areas of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
IEP	Meeting participants- Participation at meetings was not documented.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with administrative oversight in place to ensure ongoing compliance.
	90 day timelines-Initial evaluations were not conducted within 90 days of receipt of parental consent to evaluate.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with administrative oversight in place to ensure ongoing compliance.
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<p>Documentation of LRE decisions - Specific supplementary aids and services were not considered prior to removing students from general education.</p> <p>The areas of “opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs” and “placement decisions based on student’s individual needs” will be reviewed when documentation of decision making is found to be compliant.</p>	The improvement plan is sufficient.
	Continuum of programs - A full continuum of program options was not available to meet individual student needs.	The improvement plan is sufficient.

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Additional Areas of Need

The following areas, originally identified by the district's self-assessment committee as compliant, were found to be noncompliant by the NJDOE during the onsite monitoring visit for students eligible for special education and related services and students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS):

Section	Area	Improvement Activity
Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation-There was no procedure to ensure appropriate implementation of students' IEPs.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that there is an oversight mechanism to monitor implementation of IEPs.
Procedural Safeguards	Content of Notice of a Meeting- The district's notice of a meeting did not contain all required components.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that notices of meetings contain all required components. The district is advised to review the notice of a meeting developed by the Office of Special Education Programs available at www.state.nj.us/education . The improvement activities must include administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	Pre-referral interventions- The Intervention and Referral Services (I&RS) committee did not document interventions attempted by classroom teachers or the effectiveness of the interventions.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the I&RS committee documents interventions attempted by classroom teachers and the effectiveness of the interventions. The district must also document the nature, frequency and duration of interventions as required by N.J.A.C.6A:14-3.3 (b and c).The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Direct referrals-Although referrals to the child study team (CST) are made by parents, all referrals made by teachers must first go through the I&RS committee.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that teachers may make direct referrals to the CST for evaluation when it can be documented that the nature of the student's education problem(s) is such that evaluation is warranted. The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Health summary and vision and hearing screenings - Health summaries and vision and hearing screenings were not conducted on a consistent basis for students referred for initial evaluation.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are conducted by the school nurse and results are provided to the case manager prior to the identification meeting. The improvement activities must include administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Section	Area	Improvement Activity
Evaluation	Educational impact statement (ESLS)- Reports written by the speech-language specialists did not include the educational impact statement.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the speech-language evaluation report contains the educational impact statement developed by the teacher to document the impact of the suspected speech problem on learning. The district is advised to review the speech-language evaluation report template available at www.state.nj.us/education . The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
	Functional assessments (ESLS)- Reports written by the speech-language specialists did not consistently include all components of the functional assessment in reports.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that written reports prepared by the speech-language specialist include all components of the functional assessment. The district is advised to review the sample template for speech-language evaluations available at www.state.nj.us/education . The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Eligibility	Statement of Eligibility on Specific Learning Disability (SLD) -Statements of eligibility for students found eligible for special education and related services under the category of SLD are not developed.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the statement of eligibility for students found eligible for special education and related services under the category of SLD is developed and included in students' files. The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
IEP	IEP required considerations and components - IEPs did not include all required statements and considerations.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the IEP contains all required considerations and components. The district is advised to review the sample IEP forms on the NJDOE website at www.state.nj.us/education . The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
LRE	Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students with disabilities educated outside the district -Students with disabilities who attend schools out-of-district were not consistently notified of non-academic and extra-curricular activities available within the district.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that students with disabilities who attend schools out-of-district are notified of, and have access to, non-academic and extracurricular activities within the district. The improvement activities must include an administrative oversight component to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Discipline	Notification of removal forwarded to case manager-The case manager was not provided written notification of suspension of a student with disabilities.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the case manager is notified when a student with disabilities is suspended. The district must implement administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the East Hanover School District on April 5, 2006. The purpose of the monitoring visit was to verify the district's report of findings resulting from their self-assessment and to review the district's improvement plan. The district is acknowledged for the comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review, the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about compliance.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2005-2006 school year, the district had a classification rate of 14.6%, which was below the state rate for that year of 16.8%. The district educated 76% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day, a rate that was significantly higher than the state average of 42% for the same year. A total of 13% of students with disabilities attended school in separate private or public special education schools compared to the state average of 9.6%.

With regard to preschool students with disabilities, 8.3% (2 out of 24) were educated in a general education setting, while 70.8% (17 out of 24) were educated in a special education setting. The district has indicated that a positive relationship with the area community-based preschool programs has been developed in order to meet the needs of preschool children with disabilities when placement there is identified as appropriate.

Telephone interviews with a sample of district parents indicated satisfaction with the special education administration. However, some parents indicated dissatisfaction with the district's ability to address the specific needs of some students with disabilities.

Sections identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment, and verified during the onsite monitoring visit, included:

- General Provisions
- Reevaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Transition to Adult Life
- Graduation
- Statewide Assessments
- Programs and Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment, and verified during the onsite monitoring visit, included:

- Consent
- Implementation without undue delay
- Provision of notice of a meeting
- Meetings
- Content of written notice
- Provision of written notice
- Notices in native language
- Interpreters at meetings
- Independent evaluations
- Referral process
- Identification meeting participants
- Multi-disciplinary evaluations
- Standardized assessments (ESERS)
- Functional assessments (ESERS)
- Bilingual evaluations
- Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESERS)
- Eligibility meeting participants
- Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale
- Eligibility criteria (ESLS)
- IEP implementation dates
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- IEP meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP
- Annual reviews completed by June 30 for students with disabilities exiting preschool
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)
- Suspension tracking system
- Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students
- IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days
- Procedures for determination of change of placement
- Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessments and development of behavior intervention plan
- Short-term removals resulting in a change of placement
- Short-term removals that are not a change in placement-school personnel determining the extent of services to be provided
- Interim alternative educational settings
- Manifestation determinations

Areas of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the onsite monitoring visit by the NJDOE, included:

- Extended school year
- Child Find ages 3-21
- IEP meeting participants
- 90-day timelines

During the self-assessment process, the district identified other areas of need regarding:

- Provision of programs
- Transfer procedures
- Identification meeting timelines
- Standardized assessments (ESLS)
- Written reports prepared by evaluators (ESLS)
- Reevaluation timelines
- Eligibility criteria (ESLS)
- Copy of evaluation reports to parents
- Documentation of placement in the least restrictive environment
- Continuum of programs

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The onsite visit identified additional areas of need, within the various standards, regarding:

- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Provision of related services
- Content of a notice of a meeting
- Pre-referral interventions
- Direct referrals
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Educational impact statement (ESLS)
- Functional assessments (ESLS)
- Statement of Eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
- IEP required considerations and components
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside the district
- Notification of removal forwarded to case manager

The district is directed to implement improvement activities to correct all areas of non-compliance identified through the self-assessment process, and during the onsite monitoring visit, within six (6) months of receipt of this report. The district must also implement administrative oversight to ensure ongoing compliance. The verification of correction of non-compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education and/or monitors from the Office of Special Education Programs. .