

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

District: Haledon Public School District

County: Passaic

Monitoring Dates: October 21, 22 and 23, 2002

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller and Damen Cooper

Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Haledon Public School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Haledon Public School District 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 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 Haledon Public School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) 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.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) held a focus group meeting for parents and community members at the Haledon Public School on October 15, 2002. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site visit, the NJDOE team reviewed district documents, including district policies and procedures, student count information, master student lists, class lists, schedules of students, teachers, related service personnel, and other relevant information, including a representative sample of student records. Interviews were conducted with the district's special education administrators, building principals, general education and special education teachers, speech therapists and child study team members.

District Strengths:

The district is commended for their implementation of the Lightspan educational program that provides curriculum based educational software and internet products and services used in school and at home. The program is interactive and is designed to increase

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student achievement in language arts, reading and mathematics. This program is aligned with core curriculum content standards and promotes productive interaction among teachers, students and families.

The district provides in-service workshops for their general and special education teachers in Orton Gillingham reading techniques. The incorporation of these strategies is designed to address reading literacy and meet individual student needs within the general and special education population.

The district also provides many academic and non-academic enrichment programs including morning and afternoon homework support. The district has also been awarded a grant from Nike for its science curriculum. Additionally, a staff member was granted a teacher of the year award.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

General Provisions, FAPE, Discipline, Graduation and Statewide Assessment were determined to be areas of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of procedural safeguards for students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS).

During the self assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of notices of meetings and written notices for students eligible for speech and language services (ESLS). The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section IV: Location, Referral and Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals and identification meetings-timelines/participants.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding health summary and vision and hearing screenings.

Area(s) of Need:

Health Summary and Vision and Hearing Screenings - During the on-site visit, interviews and review of records indicated that health summaries and vision and hearing screenings are not conducted unless the referral is submitted by the school based intervention committee.

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- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the school nurse summarizes health information and conducts vision and hearing screenings and provides this information to the child study team whenever a student is referred for an initial evaluation. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the consistent, compliant implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Protection in Evaluation and Evaluation Procedures

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of evaluation for students determined eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of written reports for students determined eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of reevaluation for students determined eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment the district identified concerns in the area of timelines and planning meeting/participants for students determined eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility for students determined eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns in the area of eligibility meeting/participants, criteria and the provision of copies of evaluation reports to parents/adult students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, consideration/required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety-day timeline and teacher access/responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of goals and objectives aligned to core curriculum content standards and timelines for students eligible for speech and language services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access and nonacademic and extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of continuum. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, interviews and record review indicated that the district has implemented specific activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of student and agency invitations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, courses of study and interests and preferences. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section X: Transition to Preschool

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of pre-school transition planning conference.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of early intervention to pre-school disabled by age three. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of class size waivers, age range waivers, group sizes and home instruction.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of common planning time. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, staff interviews and schedules indicated that the district has implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of access/requests, access sheets, maintenance/destruction of records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of other locations.

Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations - During the on-site visit record review indicated that the district does not identify the location of other records in the central file.

- **The district will revise its improvement plan to include procedures to ensure it documents the location of other records maintained by the district in the central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Haledon Public School District on October 21, 22 and 23, 2002. 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 commended for the exceptionally comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of that review the district was able to identify nearly all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision will bring about systemic change. The district is further commended for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. The parents who attended the focus group meeting indicated that they were involved in meetings and that their children were being provided with a high quality education.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included general provisions, FAPE, procedural safeguards, Child Find, referral processes, direct referrals, identification meetings and timelines and participants, evaluations, IEP participants, considerations/required statements, age of majority, implementation dates, annual review timelines, ninety-day timelines, teacher access/knowledge, individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access, discipline, statewide assessments, graduation requirements, class size, age range and group size waivers, home instruction, access requests, access sheets, and maintenance and destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding goals and objectives relating to core curriculum content standards, continuum, pre-school transition, age fourteen transition service needs, courses and preferences, common planning time, notices of meetings and written notices, written reports, reevaluation timelines and planning meetings, participants, eligibility meetings and participants and copy of evaluation reports to parents ten days prior to meetings.

The on-site visit identified three additional areas of need within the various standards regarding vision and hearing screenings, health summaries and documentation of other locations.

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