

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

District: Hanover Park Regional School District

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: February 2, 2004

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller, Zola Mills, Jenifer Spear and Carol Raff

Background Information:

During the 2002–2003 school year, the Hanover Park Regional School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Hanover Park Regional 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 Hanover Park 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 Whippany Park High School on February 3, 2004. 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 its inclusion of High School Proficiency Assessment preparatory activities in the science, mathematics and social studies classes. For example, social studies classes utilize course specific texts to improve persuasive essay writing and reading comprehension.

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The district provides weekly staffing meetings to review student progress. At these meetings special and general education teachers are able to discuss classroom accommodations and modifications and provide input to child study team members.

The district also provides a special education guidance counselor at each school, an assigned teacher-parent liaison for each classified student and peer buddy and student assistant programs.

Part One Data Summary

The Hanover Park Regional School District reported a classification rate of 13% for the 2002-2003 school year, which is below the state average. 52.2% of the classified students are in general education for greater than 80% of the day. This percentage exceeds the state average of 41.6%. The district also educates 28.7% of their students in general education for 40-80% of their day and 10.1% spend less than 40% of their school day in general education. Additional data regarding the statistics of the 2002 High School Proficiency Assessment indicated that 39.4% scored in the advanced or proficient range on all three sections of the test. Post High School plans for special education students were reported by the district for the class of 2003. Hanover Park High School reported that 60% went to four year colleges, 20% went to two year colleges, and 20% were employed. Whippany Park High School indicated that 38% went to four year colleges, 44% went to two year colleges, 13% attended vocational school and 5% were employed.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Transition, Statewide Assessments, Graduation Requirements and Programs and Services 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 I: General Provisions

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of policies and procedures and dissemination of IDEA information.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of professional and parent training. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area.

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

Section II: Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of extended school year, length of school day and year, facilities and certifications.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of provision of related services including goals and objectives and transfer students. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of consent, written notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings and independent evaluations.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of surrogate parents, content and provision of notices of meetings and parent participation at meetings. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, record review and staff interviews indicated that the district has implemented activities to bring about correction in the area of notices of meetings.

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 direct referrals, vision and hearing screenings and timelines and participants at identification meetings.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions and health summary. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas.

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

Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of present levels of educational performance, age of majority, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, ninety day timelines, and teacher access and responsibility.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards and implementation dates. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit a review

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of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has implemented activities to bring about correction in 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 decision making process, regular education access in district, notification and participation of out of district students in extracurricular and nonacademic activities and continuum of programs.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of least restrictive environment documentation and supplementary aids and services. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has implemented activities to bring about correction in these areas.

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

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting and procedural safeguards.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the area of documentation to case manager. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit staff interviews indicated that the district has implemented 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 and requests, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

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

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Area(s) of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined through interviews and record review that central files do not identify the location of other records maintained by the district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure central files identify the location of other records maintained by the district.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Hanover Park Regional School District on February 2, 2004. 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 this review the district 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 district 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, some of those identified areas were corrected prior to the on-site visit. Additionally, the district is commended for the many areas that were 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 during the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Overall, parents indicated that they felt that their children were receiving a high quality education with access to general education programs. Parents also expressed that they would like to see expanded opportunities for vocational training and more transition activities.

A review of Part One data indicated that the district reported a classification rate that is below the state average. Over 50% of the classified students participate in general education for greater than 80% of the day which exceeds the state average. Additional data regarding the High School Proficiency Assessment indicated that 39.4% of classified students scored in the proficient or advanced proficient range. Post secondary data indicated that all graduates were either continuing their education in four year, two year or vocational settings or were employed.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included policies and procedures, dissemination of IDEA information, extended school year, length of school day and year, facilities, certifications, consent, written notices, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referrals, vision and hearing screenings, timelines and participants at identification meetings, all areas of evaluation, reevaluation and eligibility, present levels of educational performance, age of majority, annual review timelines, IEPs to parents, ninety day timelines, teacher access and responsibility, decision making process, regular education access in district, notification and participation of out of district students in extracurricular and nonacademic activities, continuum of programs, all areas of transition, statewide assessments, graduation requirements and programs and services, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessment, behavior intervention plan, manifestation determination, interim alternative educational setting, procedural safeguards, access and requests for student records, access sheets and maintenance and destruction of records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent and professional training, provision of related services including goals and objectives, transfer students, surrogate parents, content and provision of notices of meetings, parent participation at meetings, Child Find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summary, meetings and participants, considerations and required statements, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards,

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implementation dates, least restrictive environment documentation, supplementary aids and services and documentation of discipline to case manager.

The on-site visit identified an additional area of need within the various standards regarding documentation of other locations of student records.

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