

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

District: Hanover Township School District

County: Morris

Monitoring Dates: October 18, 2005

Monitoring Team: Barbara J. Tucker

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Hanover Township 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 Township 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 Hanover Township School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) conducted phone interviews with parents, a comprehensive review of student files and district policies and procedures, and interviewed the director, child study team members and speech therapists to verify the self-assessment findings, to assess the appropriateness of the improvement plan and to determine the progress in implementing the plan. Based on these activities, a determination was made by staff from the Office of Special Education Programs that the district had conducted a thorough review during the self-assessment process and developed a plan that will appropriately address all areas of need identified during that process.

Data Summary:

Data show that the district has been making strides in reducing the number of students in need of special education. The district's classification rate for students ages 6-21 was 9.97% during the 2002-2003 school year. The rate has dropped to 8.96% for the 2005-2006 school year which is well below the state average. The data also indicate that the district has educated over 80% of students with disabilities in general education classes for more than 80% of their day for the past four years. This rate is also well above state averages.

A review of the district's data for the school years of 2002-2004 indicated that all of the district's preschoolers with disabilities were educated in the district's self-contained program compared to the state average of 64.8% during that same period of time. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

The self-assessment process required the district to review implementation of federal and state regulations categorized into 15 sections. Within each section, a number of areas were reviewed. The on-site monitoring process involved verification that the sections and areas identified as compliant by the district in their self-assessment were compliant with regulations. **General Provisions, Free Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Programs and Services** were identified by the district during self-assessment and the New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Special Education Program during the monitoring process as compliant.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant. The areas were reviewed for both students eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and students eligible for speech-language services (ELSL). Areas compliant for only one group of students are noted.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
III. Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting • Content of notice of a meeting • Meetings • Provision of written notice • Content of written notice • Interpreters at meeting • Independent evaluations
IV. Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral process • Direct referrals • Health summary • Vision and hearing screenings • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants
V. Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-disciplinary evaluations • Written reports prepared by evaluators • Standardized assessments • Functional assessments • Bilingual evaluations
VII. Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Eligibility Criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability)
IX. Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of LRE decisions • Notification and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
X. Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of “needed transition services• Identification of post-secondary liaison• Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student’s desired outcomes

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

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were originally identified by the district's self-assessment committee as non-compliant but were determined to have been correct prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the New Jersey Department of Education:

Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
Procedural Safeguards	Notices in Native Language- The district does not provide notices to parents in the parents' native language.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
Location, Referral and Identification	Pre-referral Interventions - The district does not document in student files, the pre-referral interventions attempted by the general education teacher.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
Evaluation	Educational impact statement- Speech therapists do not obtain the educational impact statement from the classroom teacher.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
Eligibility	Copy of Reports to Parents- The district does not send copies of reports to parents at least 10-days prior to the eligibility meeting.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
Transition to Post School	Student and Agency Invitation to IEP Meetings- When transition will be discussed, the district does not invite the student to an IEP meeting.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.
Transition to Post School	Statement of Transition Service Needs- The district does not include transition activities in the IEPs of students age 14 or older.	The district has demonstrated compliance in this area with an administrative oversight mechanism in place to identify and correct any noncompliance in the future.

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

The following area was identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant and the accompanying improvement plan was determined by the Office of Special Education Programs to be sufficient:

Section	Area of Non-Compliance	Compliance Review
LRE	Continuum and Opportunity to Access General Education Programs - The district does not always consider placement in general education programs as the first option for preschoolers.	The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient.

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process.

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

Special education monitoring was conducted in the Hanover Township School District on October 18, 2005. The purpose 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 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. The district was able to identify all areas of need and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change.

Data show that the district has been making strides in reducing the number of students in need of special education. The district's classification rate for students ages 6-21 was 9.97% during the 2002-2003 school year. The rate has dropped to 8.96% for the 2005-2006 school year which is well below the state average. The data also indicate that the district has educated over 80% of students with disabilities in general education classes for more than 80% of their day for the past four years. This rate is also well above state averages.

A review of the district's data for the school years of 2002-2004 indicated that all of the district's preschoolers with disabilities were educated in the district's self-contained program compared to the state average of 64.8% during that same period of time. The district has developed an improvement plan that is sufficient to address this area of need.

Of the parents who were interviewed, most expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and enjoy the communication with staff. They were especially pleased with their level of involvement in the IEP process and receptiveness of the special services staff to their input.

General Provisions, Free Appropriate Public Education, Reevaluation, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation and Programs and Services are the standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the monitoring visit included consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, content of notice of a meeting, meetings, provision of written notice, content of written notice, interpreters at meeting, independent evaluations, Child Find ages 3-21, referral process, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, identification meeting timelines, identification meeting participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility, documentation of LRE decisions, notification and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, placement decisions based on student's individual need, beginning at age 16 statement of "needed transition services", identification of post-secondary liaison and activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes.

Areas of need originally identified by the district, but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the New Jersey Department of Education, were notices in native language, pre-referral interventions, educational impact statement, copies of reports to parents, statement of needed transition services, and student invitation to IEP meetings.

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

No additional areas of need were identified during the monitoring process. The improvement plan submitted to the Office of Special Education Programs in June, 2005 will be reviewed for final approval. Verification of compliance with the continuum of placement options for preschool students with disabilities will be conducted by the County Office of Education.