

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Hasbrouck Heights School District

County: Bergen

Monitoring Dates: February 1 and 2, 2006

Monitoring Team: Gladys Miller and Tracey Pettiford-Bugg

Background Information:

During the 2004–2005 school year, the Hasbrouck Heights School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Hasbrouck Heights 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 Hasbrouck Heights 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 during the onsite visit.

Data Summary:

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district's overall classification rate, not including students eligible for speech and language services, was 12.66 % which was lower than the state average of 14.6% for that year. During the same year, the district educated 29.1% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate was lower than the state average of 39.2% for that year.

With regard to preschool, the district has placed the majority of 3 and 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities in restrictive settings, such as private special

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

education schools, or in the district’s self-contained special education program for preschoolers. However, the district did provide itinerant services to 37.5% of preschool students with disabilities. The district must ensure that general education placement is discussed as the first option for placement during IEP meetings and ensure that a full continuum of placements is available for all students with disabilities.

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 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
- Procedural Safeguards
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Eligibility
- Transition to Preschool
- Statewide Assessments
- 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).

| Section | Areas Demonstrating Compliance |
|---|---|
| General Provisions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Training |
| Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation • Provision of programs • Provision of related services • Transfer procedures |
| Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Identification meeting timelines • Identification meeting participants • Health summary • Vision and hearing screenings |
| Individualized Education Program (IEP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP required considerations and components • Implementation dates • IEP provided to parents prior to implementation • Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP • Annual reviews completed by June 30 • 90 day timelines |

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

| Section | Areas Demonstrating Compliance |
|--------------------------|--|
| 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 related to student's desired outcomes |
| 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 in placement • Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment 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 |
| Graduation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP requirements • Out of district student participation |
| Programs and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Size • Group Size • Age Range |

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

Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The district has implemented improvement activities to achieve compliance in all but two areas, as indicated in the chart below.

| Section | Area | Plan Is Sufficient | Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance |
|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| General Provisions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional development | | X |
| LRI | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Referral process ▪ Pre-referral interventions ▪ Direct Referral from parents | X | X X |
| IEP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting participants ▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs) | X | X |
| LRE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district | | X |
| Transition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of transition service needs • Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings | | X X |
| Discipline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of removal forwarded to case manager | | X |
| Programs and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common planning time | | X |

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

Additional Areas of Need

The following areas were originally identified by the district’s self-assessment committee as compliant but were found to be noncompliant by the New Jersey Department of Education during the onsite monitoring.

| Section | Area | Improvement Activity |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| FAPE | Extended school year (ESY) – The need for ESY services is not consistently discussed and documented in student IEPs. | The district is directed to conduct improvement activities to ensure that extended school year is discussed and documented in student IEPs. The district must implement an oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance. |
| Least Restrictive Environment | Documentation of LRE decisions - opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs, continuum of programs and placement decisions based on students’ individual needs | The district is directed to ensure that general education options are considered first for all students with disabilities, including preschoolers. In addition, the district is directed to ensure that these considerations and determinations are documented in the student IEPs. The district is advised to review the sample IEP form developed by the NJDOE and available at www.state.nj.us/education . The district must also implement an oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance. |
| Graduation | Written notice of graduation – written notice is not provided to parents and/or adult students when a determination is made that a student will graduate from high school. | The district must conduct improvement plan activities to ensure that graduating seniors are provided with written notice of graduation. The district must implement an oversight mechanism to ensure correction and ongoing compliance. |

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Summary

Onsite special education monitoring was conducted in the Hasbrouck Heights School District on February 1 and 2, 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 nearly all areas of need. The district is further acknowledged 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.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicated that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated 29.1% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate was lower than the state average of 39.2% for that year. The district's overall classification rate, not including students eligible for speech and language services, was 12.66 % which was lower than the state average of 14.6%. The district has placed a majority of 3 and 4-year-old preschool students with disabilities in restrictive settings such as private special education schools or in the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers. However, the district did provide itinerant services to 37.5% of preschool students with disabilities. The district needs to address all options when determining the placement for pre-school students with disabilities and establish relationships with community preschools to provide opportunities for educating preschoolers with disabilities with their typical peers.

During interviews conducted with parents during the onsite visit, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. Individual parent comments praised the special services department for their collaborative and helpful handling of their child's needs and program. Some parents expressed concern regarding the continuum of programs for students with language disabilities at the middle school. Additionally, parents raised concerns regarding extended school year programs. This issue was identified as noncompliant and the district will conduct improvement activities to address this area of need.

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

- Procedural Safeguards
- Evaluation
- Reevaluation
- Eligibility
- Transition to Preschool
- Statewide Assessments

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

- Parent training
- Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation
- Provision of programs
- Provision of related services
- Transfer procedures
- Child Find ages 3-21
- Health summary
- Vision and hearing screenings
- Identification meeting timelines
- Identification meeting participants
- IEP required considerations and components

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- 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
- 90-day timelines
- Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of “needed transition services”
- Identification of post-secondary liaison
- Activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to the student's desired outcomes
- Suspension tracking system
- Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students
- IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days
- Procedures for determination of change in placement
- Procedures for conducting functional behavioral assessment 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
- IEP requirements for graduation
- Out-of-district student participation in graduation exercises
- Class size
- Age range
- Group size

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

- Professional development
- Referral process
- Pre-referral interventions
- IEP meeting participants
- Notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated outside of the district
- Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of transition service needs
- Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings
- Notification of removal forwarded to case manager
- Common planning time

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

- Direct referrals
- Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs)

Improvement activities were developed to address these areas of need.

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

- Extended school year
- Documentation of LRE decisions
- Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs
- Continuum of programs

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

- Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
- Written notice of graduation

The improvement plan submitted to the OSEP has been approved. The district is expected to implement the improvement activities described in the report to achieve compliance in all of the areas identified during self-assessment, and areas of need identified during the onsite visit, within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.