

Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: Hawthorne School District

County: Passaic

Monitoring Dates: February 27, 2006

Monitoring Team: Michelle Fenwick and Tracy Pettiford-Bugg

Background Information:

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

During the on-site 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 and parent intake information 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.

Data Summary:

Based on a review of the data, the district educated 35.4% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day during the 2005-2006 school year. This rate was lower than the state average of 42% for that same year. The district educated 3.6% (3 of 55) of students with disabilities ages 3-5 in general education for all or part of their school day for the 2005-2006 school year. This number is significantly below the state average of 26.6% for the same year. The data indicates a classification rate of 16.44% for the 2005-2006 school year, excluding students classified

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as eligible for speech-language services, which is slightly above the state rate for that same year.

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 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
- Transition to Preschool
- Statewide Assessment
- Graduation
- Programs and Services

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas, within the 15 sections reviewed, were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education 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
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation • Extended school year • Transfer procedures
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral process • Pre-referral interventions • Direct referrals • Health summary • Vision and hearing screenings • Identification meeting participants
Reevaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reevaluation is conducted when a change of eligibility is considered • Planning meeting participants (ESERS) • Timelines • Reevaluations prior to age 5 • Procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained • Documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility meeting participants • Eligibility criteria • Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale • Statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability) • Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS)
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants • Implementation dates • IEP provided to parent prior to implementation • Annual reviews are completed by June 30 • Teachers are informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access) • 90 day timelines
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs • Continuum of programs • Placement decisions based on students' individual needs
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs" • 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
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notification of removal forwarded to case manager • Suspension tracking system • Discipline procedures employed equitably for all students • Procedures for determining change of 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 determined the extent of services to be provided • Interim alternative educational settings • Manifestation determinations

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Areas of Noncompliance - Improvement Plan Review

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. During the on-site monitoring visit, the NJDOE verified that improvement plan activities in these areas had been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance.

Section	Area	Compliance Review
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of programs – The district has not been successful in documenting and ensuring proper functioning level for hearing aid devices. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of related services – IEPs do not consistently include goals and objectives for counseling. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
LRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find ages 3-21 – The district's child find activities did not include the migrant and homeless population and were only conducted annually. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings – The district does not consistently invite students to IEP meetings for transition planning. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP required considerations and components – IEPs do not include all the required components. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEP team meeting for first removal beyond 10 days – Although the district holds an IEP meeting when required, parents are not invited to participate. 	The district demonstrated compliance in this area.

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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 NJDOE, during the on-site monitoring.

Section	Area	Activity
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	Identification meeting timelines - Referrals are not date stamped and are not consistently maintained in student files. As a result, compliance with identification meeting timelines could not be verified.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that original referral documentation is maintained and that identification meetings are held within 20 days of receipt of a request for evaluation. These activities must include documenting the date of receipt of referral by any staff member in the district. The district must provide in-service and conduct administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Reevaluation	Planning meeting participants (ESLS) – Required participants do not attend reevaluation planning meetings for ESLS students.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that required participants attend reevaluation planning meetings. The district must provide in-service and conduct administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Eligibility	Copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) – Speech-language evaluation reports are not provided to parents ten days prior to the eligibility meeting.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that evaluation reports are provided to parents at least ten days prior to the eligibility meeting. The district must provide in-service and conduct administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Individualized Education Program (IEP)	Meetings held annually or more often, if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP – Meetings are not consistently held when revisions to the IEP are necessary.	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that IEP meetings are held with the required participants when revisions to the IEP are necessary. The district must provide in-service and conduct administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.
Least Restrictive Environment	Documentation of LRE decisions – IEPs do not specify	The district is directed to implement improvement activities to ensure that the IEP specifies the supplemental aids and services that were considered

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Section	Area	Activity
(LRE)	the supplemental aids and services that were considered and an explanation as to why they were rejected.	and an explanation as to why those aids and services were rejected The district must provide in-service and conduct administrative oversight to ensure correction and ongoing compliance.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Hawthorne School District on February 27, 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 and develop an improvement plan that will bring about systemic change. 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.

Based on a review of the data, the district educated 35.4% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day during the 2005-2006 school year. This rate was lower than the state average of 42% for that same year. The district educated 3.6% (3 of 55) of students with disabilities ages 3-5 in general education for all or part of their school day for the 2005-2006 school year. This number is significantly below the state average of 26.6% for the same year. The data indicates a classification rate of 16.44% for the 2005-2006 school year, excluding students classified as eligible for speech-language services, which is slightly above the state rate for that same year.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff.

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

- General Provisions
- Procedural Safeguards
- Evaluation
- Transition to Preschool
- Statewide Assessment
- Graduation
- Programs and Services

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation, extended school year, transfer procedures, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screening, referral process, pre-referral interventions, identification meeting participants, reevaluation is conducted when a change of eligibility is considered, planning meeting participants (ESERS), reevaluation timelines, reevaluations prior to age 5, procedures when parental consent cannot be obtained, documentation of efforts to obtain parental consent, eligibility meeting participants, eligibility criteria, statement of eligibility (Specific Learning Disability), copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESERS), signatures of agreement and disagreement, IEP provided to parent prior to implementation, annual reviews completed by June 30, teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge of and/or access to IEPs), IEP implementation dates, IEP meeting participants, 90 day timelines, notification of and participation in non-academic and extracurricular activities, opportunity for all students with disabilities to access general education programs, continuum of programs, placement decisions based on students' individual needs, beginning at age 14, IEP

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statement of “transition services needs”, identification of post-secondary liaison, beginning at age 16, IEP statement of “needed transition services”, activities, annual goals and benchmarks related to student’s desired outcomes, notification of removal forwarded to case manager, suspension tracking system, discipline procedures employed equitably for all students, procedures for determining change of 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 determined the extent of services to be provided, interim alternative educational settings and manifestation determinations.

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE included provision of programs, provision of related services, Child Find ages 3-21, IEP required considerations and components, student and agency invitations to IEP meetings and IEP meeting for first removal beyond 10 days.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need, including identification meeting timelines, planning meeting participants (ESLS), copy of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS), meetings held annually or more often, if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP and documentation of least restrictive environment (LRE) decisions.

The district is expected to implement the activities described in the monitoring report to achieve compliance in all areas of need identified during the on-site visit within six months of the date of this report. Verification of compliance will be conducted by the County Office of Education.