

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

**District:** Ho-Ho-Kus School District

**County:** Bergen

**Monitoring Dates:** September 29 and 30, 2005

**Monitoring Team:** Jenifer Spear, Michelle Fenwick and Tracey Pettiford-Bugg

### ***Background Information:***

During the 2004-2005 school year, the Ho-Ho-Kus School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Ho-Ho-Kus 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 Ho-Ho-Kus 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) 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. 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 therapists and child study team members. Parents of students with disabilities were interviewed by phone.

### **Data Summary:**

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated over 70% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. A three year review of this data shows consistent positive strides. In 2003, 70.2% of students were educated in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day and in 2002, the percentage was 66.1. Additionally, the district's classification rate is 13.35% which includes students eligible for speech and language services as well as special education and related services. This rate is lower than the state rate of 16.575%. The district's data for educating preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting was consistently low in the past three years (0% in 2004, 0% in 2003 and 10% in 2002).

## New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

Since identifying preschool continuum as an area of need in the self-assessment, the district has implemented an integrated preschool program within the school building and all preschool students with disabilities are educated in the general education setting for the entire school day.

### 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; Reevaluation; Discipline; Statewide Assessment and Programs and Services.

### Areas Demonstrating Compliance

**The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant.**

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Oversight of individualized education program (IEP) implementation</li> <li>▪ Extended school year</li> <li>▪ Provision of programs</li> <li>▪ Provision of related services</li> </ul>
Procedural Safeguards— For students who may be eligible for speech and language services (ESLS) or eligible for special education and related services (ESERS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation without undue delay</li> <li>▪ Provision of notice of a meeting</li> <li>▪ Meetings</li> <li>▪ Notices in native language</li> <li>▪ Interpreters at meeting</li> <li>▪ Independent evaluations</li> </ul>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Direct Referrals</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting timelines</li> <li>▪ Identification meeting participants</li> </ul>
Evaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-disciplinary evaluations</li> <li>▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS)</li> <li>▪ Standardized Assessments</li> <li>▪ Bilingual evaluations</li> <li>▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators</li> </ul>
Eligibility- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting participants</li> <li>▪ Eligibility Criteria</li> <li>▪ Signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale</li> <li>▪ Statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability)</li> <li>▪ Copy of evaluation reports to parents for ESERS</li> </ul>
Individualized Education Program (IEP) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting participants</li> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components for ESERS</li> <li>▪ Implementation dates</li> </ul>

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

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP provided to parent prior to implementation</li> <li>▪ Meetings held annually, or more often if necessary, to review and/or revise the IEP</li> <li>▪ Annual reviews completed by June 30</li> <li>▪ Teachers informed of their responsibilities (knowledge and/or access)</li> <li>▪ 90-day timelines</li> </ul>
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Documentation of LRE decisions</li> <li>▪ Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs</li> <li>▪ Continuum of programs for students 6-21</li> <li>▪ Placement decisions based on students' individual needs</li> </ul>
Transition to Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEPs for preschool students with disabilities implemented no later than age 3</li> </ul>
Transition to Adult Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Beginning at age 14, IEP statement of "transition service needs"</li> <li>▪ Beginning at age 16, IEP statement of "needed transition services"</li> <li>▪ Identification of post-secondary liaison</li> <li>▪ Student and agency invitation to IEP meetings</li> <li>▪ Activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes</li> </ul>
Graduation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Out-of-district student participation</li> <li>▪ Written notice of graduation</li> </ul>

**Areas of Noncompliance – Improvement Plan Review**

The following areas were identified by the district's self-assessment committee as noncompliant. The district must revise the improvement plan for any area where there is an 'X' in the 'Needs Revision' column.

Section	Area	Improvement Plan		Improvement plan has been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
		Sufficient	Needs Revision	
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consent for additional assessments – case managers are not securing consent when additional assessments are required</li> </ul>	X		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Content of Notice of meeting - Notice does not indicate purpose of meeting or that</li> </ul>	X		X

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

Section	Area	Improvement Plan		Improvement plan has been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
		Sufficient	Needs Revision	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PRISE is provided</li> <li>▪ Provision of Written Notice - Written notices are not provided when additional assessments are required</li> <li>▪ Content of Written Notice- Written notice does not indicate that additional assessments are required</li> </ul>	X		X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Child Find 3-21 procedures do not address migrant and homeless students</li> <li>▪ Referral Process – district personnel requested additional training on ESLs and ESERS referrals</li> <li>▪ Pre-referral Interventions – information is not forwarded to CST when a child is referred from I&amp;RS to the CST</li> <li>▪ Health Summary – there is no procedure to ensure that a health summary is provided prior to identification meetings</li> <li>▪ Hearing and Vision Screening - there is no procedure to ensure that hearing and vision screenings are conducted prior to identification meetings</li> </ul>	X		X
LRI		X		X
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Functional assessments – speech evaluations do not contain all required components</li> </ul>	X		X
Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Copy of Evaluation Reports to Parents for ESLs – Speech Language Specialists (SLS) are not documenting the provision of reports to parents</li> </ul>	X		X
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ IEP required considerations and components for ESLs</li> </ul>	X		X
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Notification and Participation in Nonacademic and Extracurricular Activities – there is no procedure to ensure that</li> </ul>	X		X

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

Section	Area	Improvement Plan		Improvement plan has been implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
		Sufficient	Needs Revision	
	students in out-of-district programs are notified of nonacademic and extracurricular activities			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continuum of Programs for preschool students - there is a need to consider more general education options for preschoolers with disabilities</li> </ul>	X		X

***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
FAPE	Transfer Students – there is no procedure to document review of records and provision of program	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that transfer procedures are developed. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that students transferring into the district have records reviewed so that a program can be provided through the IEP as written, through an interim IEP or through a newly developed IEP.
FAPE	Length of School Day – a self-contained program operates on a shorter day than the day for typical peers.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all programs operate on the same school schedule and that variations in length of school day are made on an individual basis. These activities will ensure that students are provided a program that is designed to meet their individual needs.
Transition to Preschool	Preschool Transition Planning Conference - team members	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that team members are in contact with local case managers for students currently enrolled in Early Intervention Programs (EIP). These activities will facilitate a smooth transition from EIP to

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

<b>Section</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Activity</b>
	are not participating in preschool transition planning conferences arranged by the Department of Health and Senior Services.	preschool.
Graduation Requirements	IEP Requirements at Age 14 – IEPs do not contain graduation requirements for the IEP covering the year in which the student will turn 14.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that IEPs for students beginning at age 14 include graduation requirements. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that the IEPs include all required graduation requirements.

# New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

## *Summary*

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Ho-Ho-Kus School District on September 29 and 30, 2005. 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 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 commended for the many areas determined by the district and verified by the OSEP as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations.

A review of the district's data for students with disabilities indicates that during the 2004-2005 school year, the district educated over 70% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. A three year review of this data shows consistent positive strides. For example, in 2003, 70.2% of students were educated in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day and in 2002, the percentage was 66.1. Additionally, the district's classification rate is 13.35% which includes students eligible for speech and language services as well as special education and related services. This rate is significantly lower than the state rate of 16.575%. The district's data for educating preschool students with disabilities in the general education setting was consistently low in the past three years (0% in 2004, 0% in 2003 and 10% in 2002). Since identifying preschool continuum as an area of need in the self-assessment, the district has implemented an integrated preschool within the school building and all preschool students with disabilities are educated in the general education setting for the entire school day.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services. Additionally, parents indicated that case managers are easily accessible and are focused on the best interest of their children. Parents are especially pleased with the implementation of the integrated preschool which began in September of 2005 which provides for full inclusion in the general education setting.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included General Provisions, Re-evaluation, Discipline, Statewide Assessments and 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, provision of programs, provision of related services, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, conducting meetings, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, direct referrals, identification meetings timelines, Identification meetings participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, educational impact statement (ESLS), standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports prepared by evaluators, meeting participants, eligibility criteria, signature of agreement and/or disagreement and rationale, statement of eligibility (Severe Learning Disability), copy of evaluation reports to parents for ESERS, meeting participants, IEP required considerations and components for ESERS, 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, teachers informed of their

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

responsibilities (knowledge and/or access), 90-day timelines, documentation of LRE decisions, opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs, continuum of programs for students 6-21, placement decisions based on students' individual needs, IEPs for preschool students with disabilities implemented no later than age 3, 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, student and agency invitation to IEP meetings, activities, annual goals and benchmarks relative to the student's desired outcomes, out-of-district student participation and written notice of graduation.

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE are consent for additional assessments, content of notice of meeting, provision of written notice, content of written notice, Child Find 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, functional assessments for ESLs, copy of evaluation reports to parents for ESLs, IEP required considerations and components for ESLs, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities and continuum of programs for preschool students.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding consent for additional assessments, content of notice of meeting, provision of written notice, content of written notice, Child Find 3-21, referral process, pre-referral interventions, health summary, hearing and vision screening, functional assessments for ESLs, copy of evaluation reports to parents for ESLs, IEP required considerations and components for ESLs, notification and participation in nonacademic and extracurricular activities and continuum of programs for preschool students.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards regarding transfer students, length of school day, preschool transition planning conference and IEP requirements at age 14.

Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the Ho-Ho-Kus School District will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the OSEP to address those areas that require revisions.