

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

District: Hudson County Schools of Technology

County: Hudson

Monitoring Dates: April 28, 29 and 30, 2003

Monitoring Team: Jenifer Tucci, Tracey Pettiford – Bugg, Damen Cooper,
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Background Information:

During the 2001–2002 school year, the Hudson County Schools of Technology conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Hudson County Schools of Technology 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 Hudson County Schools of Technology 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 County Prep High School, on April 14, 2003. 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 Jersey City and North Hudson campuses provide vocational and educational settings during the traditional school day as well as in an alternative manner. These alternative programs, Career Academy Program in Jersey City and Knowledge and Advanced Skill Program in North Hudson, offer services to students, including students

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with disabilities, who are currently functioning two years below grade level, have been referred by the Family Court, or weren't successful in the traditional school environment. One component of the Career Academy and Knowledge and Advanced Skills Programs is the opportunity for students who are parents to bring their children to school for placement in the day-care program while they are in classes. In addition, this program offers an alternate schedule. It operates from approximately 1:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and assists students in selecting vocations while providing a curriculum that is suited entirely to their needs.

The district is commended for the liaisons developed with New Jersey City University and Hudson County Community College. Students interested in programs within these secondary education settings are exposed to the programs through classes and hands-on experiences. For example, a grant funded program, "Two + Two Workforce Program," enables the Culinary Arts students to attend the Hudson County Community College for classes on Fridays.

One goal of the district is to provide all students with job experiences prior to graduation. Through the Work-Based Learning Experience and the Schools to Careers Programs, an internship is provided for all students. Work experiences, both in and out of the schools, are offered to students to foster responsibility and establish a connection with the real world.

The district is also commended for its willingness to transport students to and from internship experiences, evening performances or extra-curricular activities. The district encourages strong family involvement and will provide transportation to parents or guardians to IEP meetings or other school related activities.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance With All Standards:

FAPE, Procedural Safeguards, Location Referral and Identification, Evaluation, Reevaluation, Eligibility, Discipline, Statewide Assessment, Graduation, Programs and Services and Student Records 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 area of professional and parent development. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Section VIII: Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participants, goals and objectives aligned with core curriculum content standards, age of majority, annual review and ninety-day timelines.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns in the areas of considerations and required statements, implementation dates and teacher access and responsibility. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address these areas. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interview indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific 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 individualized decision-making, Oberti factors, considerations and required statements, supplemental aids and services, regular education access and nonacademic and extracurricular participation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of continuum. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interviews indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests and age sixteen needed transition services and student invitation.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern in the area of agency invitation. The district's improvement plan is sufficient to address this area. During the on-site visit, a review of records and staff interview indicated that the district has appropriately implemented specific activities to bring about correction in this area.

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

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Hudson County Schools of Technology School District on April 28, 29 and 30, 2003. 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 that review the district was able to identify 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 Office of Special Education Programs as compliant with federal and state statutes and regulations as well as the implementation of activities to bring about correction in those few areas identified as noncompliant during the self-assessment process.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with many of the district's programs and services. Parents expressed their appreciation for the special and general education staff's dedication to their children. In addition, parents are very pleased with the level of education and training their children are receiving at the school which they believe will enhance future success in post-secondary settings. Further, parents are more than satisfied with the individualized internship programs provided to students during the school year and throughout the summer months. However, many parents expressed a concern with the transition from the sending school district to the Hudson County Schools of Technology. Parents expressed a desire for a more comprehensive and collaborative transition process with increased involvement by appropriate school personnel during the students' eighth grade year.

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, related services, length of day and year, transfer students, facilities, certifications, surrogate parents, consent, notices of meetings, written notices, meetings, native language, independent evaluations, Child Find, referral process and pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, vision and hearing screenings, summer referrals, identification meetings, identification timelines, identification participants, multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, functional assessments, written reports, bilingual evaluations, acceptance and rejection of reports, reevaluation timelines, planning meetings, participants, eligibility meeting, participants, criteria, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents, IEP participants, goals and objectives aligned with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, age of majority, annual and ninety day timelines, individualized decision-making, Oberti LRE statement, considerations and required statements, supplementary aids and services, regular education access and extracurricular participation, age fourteen transition service needs, courses, preferences and interests, age sixteen needed transition services, student invitation, discipline procedures, documentation to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavior assessment, behavior improvement plan, manifestation determinations, interim alternate educational setting, procedural safeguards, statewide assessment participation, approved accommodations and modifications, IEP documentation, alternate assessment, graduation requirements, choice of diploma, written notice of graduation, class size waiver, age range waiver, group sizes for speech, home instruction, access to student records, access sheets, maintenance and destruction of records and documentation of other locations.

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During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding professional and parent development, IEP considerations and required statements, implementation dates, teacher access and responsibility, continuum and agency invitation.

The on-site monitoring visit did not identify any additional areas of need.