

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

District: Hunterdon Central Regional High School **County:** Hunterdon

Monitoring Dates: September 25,26,28, 2001

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Background Information

During the 2000-2001 school year, the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self- assessment component of the monitoring process provided the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District 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 Hunterdon Central Regional High School District developed an improvement plan to address identified areas of need.

The Office of Special Education Programs conducted an on-site monitoring to verify the self-assessment findings, determine the appropriateness of the improvement plan, and determine the progress in implementing the plan.

As the first step in the on-site monitoring process, the NJDOE held a focus group meeting for parents and community members on September 5, 2001. Information obtained from that meeting was used to direct the focus of the monitoring visit.

During the on-site, 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, and child study team members.

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Area Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards:

General Provisions was determined to be an area of compliance by the district during self-assessment and by the Office of Special Education Programs during the on-site visit.

Section II: F.A.P.E.

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of provision of related services, length of school day and year, transfer students and facilities.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with goals and objectives for related services. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures and an administrative oversight component to bring about required changes. The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.

An additional area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding extended school year.

Areas of Need:

Extended School Year – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that extended school year was not discussed and considered for all students at IEP meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that extended school year is discussed and considered for all students at IEP meetings. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section III: Procedural Safeguards

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of parental consent, provision of notices, native language and independent evaluations.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding notice of a meeting, written notice and surrogate parents.

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Areas of Need:

Notices- During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's notice of a meeting and written notices do not contain required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to ensure its notices include the required components and statements. It is recommended that the district use notices developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The improvement plan must also include staff development and an administrative oversight component to ensure the proper use of the revised notices.**

Surrogate Parents – During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not have procedures to select and train surrogate parents.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures for the selection and training of surrogate parents.**

Section IV: Location, Referral, Identification

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of referral process, timelines for referrals, identification meetings for students eligible for special education and related services, summer referrals and vision and hearing screenings.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding Child Find, health summary and identification meetings for students eligible for speech/language services.

Area of Need:

Child Find Activities - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district's Child Find activities are not sufficient to identify students between the ages of 13 and 21 who are potentially disabled because information is not disseminated widely enough throughout the community, because activities do not continue through the summer months and because activities are not extended to the homeless and migrant population.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that Child Find activities to locate and refer potentially disabled students between the ages of 13-21 are conducted, that activities continue throughout the summer months and are extended to the homeless and migrant population.**

Health Summary - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not review and summarize the student's available health history.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that upon receipt of a referral to the child study team, the school nurse reviews and summarizes available health and medical information regarding the student and transmits the summary to the child study team.**

Identification Meetings for Students Referred for Speech and Language Services Only/20-day Timeline/ Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not convene an identification meeting for students referred for speech and language services only.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that identification meetings for students referred for speech/language services only are convened within 20-days of receipt of the referral and that all required participants attend the meetings. The improvement plan must also include in-service and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section V: Evaluation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of multi-disciplinary evaluations, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, signed reports, functional assessments and acceptance and rejection of reports for students eligible for special education and related services.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified concerns with the multi-disciplinary team evaluations and functional assessments for students eligible for speech-language services. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure procedures are consistently implemented. The plan must be revised to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding written reports and speech evaluations.

Area of Need:

Written Reports for Students Eligible for Speech and Language Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that written reports are not developed for students eligible for speech and language services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports for students determined eligible for speech and language services are developed, signed, dated and provided to parents. The improvement plan must also include an in-service component and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

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Written Report for Students Eligible for Special Education and Related Services - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although written reports are developed and signed for students eligible for special education and related services, the reports are not dated.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that written reports are dated. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Speech Evaluations - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that though an identification meeting is conducted and the nature and scope of the evaluation includes a speech/language assessment, the speech therapist conducts a screening, instead, and unilaterally decides, based on the screening results, whether a speech/language assessment is actually needed.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when the parent consents to the nature and scope of the evaluation and the evaluation includes a speech/language assessment, the speech/language therapist conducts that assessment, not a screening. The plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure compliance with these procedures.**

Section VI: Reevaluation

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of reevaluation planning meetings.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring visit regarding three-year timelines for reevaluations and participants at planning meetings.

Area of Need:

Three-year Timeline for Reevaluations - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district did not meet the three-year timeline for reevaluations.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that reevaluations are conducted every three years or sooner if conditions warrant. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.**

Participants at the Reevaluation Planning Meeting - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that although reevaluation planning meetings are conducted, the regular and special education teachers inconsistently attend these planning meetings.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all required participants attend reevaluation planning meetings.**

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The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of these procedures.

Section VII: Eligibility

Summary of Finding:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of eligibility meetings, establishing eligibility criteria and provision of evaluation reports to parents for students eligible for special education and related services.

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

Section VIII: IEP

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of meetings, 90-day timeline, implementation dates, IEP access and annual review timelines.

During the self-assessment process the district identified concerns with goals and objectives aligned to the core content curriculum standards, documentation of frequency and amount of instructional time for in-class support, considerations and required statements, the PLEP statement and age of majority for students eligible for special education and related services. The district's improvement plan does not sufficiently address these areas of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of these procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs since it contains all of the required components.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site regarding IEPs for students eligible for speech and language services and participants.

Areas of Need:

Speech and Language IEPs - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that speech and language IEPs do not contain the required components and statements.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that speech and language IEPs contain the required components and statements. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures. It is recommended that the district use the IEP format developed by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs since it contains all of the required components.**

Eligibility / IEP Meeting Participants - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although Child Study Team members, parents, students and guidance counselors attend eligibility/IEP meetings, regular and special education teachers inconsistently

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attend these meetings. As a result of this lack of participation, the IEP team does not have the ability to fully discuss all of the required considerations and statements contained in the IEP.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that both regular education and special education teachers attend eligibility/IEP meetings to ensure a full discussion of all required considerations and statements contained in the IEP. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section IX: Least Restrictive Environment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of a full continuum of program options, regular education access and nonacademic/extracurricular participation.

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

Section X: Transition to Post-School

Summary of Findings:

During the self-assessment process, the district identified a concern with agency participation. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks procedures to ensure that the district takes other steps to obtain agency participation in the planning of any transition services as well as an administrative oversight component. The district will revise the improvement plan to include these procedures and the oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district further identified a concern regarding community-based partnerships. The district has developed an improvement plan that does not sufficiently address this area of need because it lacks an administrative oversight component to ensure implementation of the procedures. The district will revise the improvement plan to include this component.

Additional areas of need were identified during the on-site monitoring regarding invitations to students and documentation of post-secondary transition.

Areas of Need:

Student Invitation - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although students attend transition meetings, the district does not provide a written invitation.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students are provided with a written invitation to transition meetings. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

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Post-Secondary Transition- During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district provides transition services for students at all levels, the district does not document post-secondary transition services in IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the post-secondary transition section of the IEP is completed. The improvement plan must also include staff training and an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section XI: Discipline

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of discipline procedures, notification to case manager, suspension tracking, functional behavioral assessments, behavioral intervention plans, manifestation determinations, interim alternative educational settings and procedural safeguards regarding discipline.

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

Section XII: Statewide Assessment

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the area of participation.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of approved accommodations and modifications and alternate assessment.

Area of Need:

Accommodations/Modifications - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that although the district provides students with approved accommodations/modifications for statewide assessment, it does not consistently document these accommodations in students' IEPs.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when determined appropriate by the IEP team, IEPs contain approved accommodations and modifications for statewide assessment. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Alternate Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that students do not participate in alternative assessment when they are exempted from participating in the statewide assessment program.

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- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that students who are exempted from participating in the statewide assessment program participate in the alternate assessment program (APA) as indicated in the August 1, 2001 memo issued by the Office of Special Education Programs. District personnel must identify, as soon as possible, students who have been exempt from participating in the HSPA, provide in-service training and begin the assessment process in November.**

Section XIII: Graduation

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of participation.

Areas of need were identified during on-site monitoring regarding written notice of graduation, diplomas and documentation of the rationale for exemption from passing statewide assessments.

Area of Need:

Notification of Graduation - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not provide Notice of Graduation to students both in and out of district.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that all graduating students are provided with Notice of Graduation and that the provision is documented in their files. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Diplomas - During the on-site monitoring, it was determined that the district does not notify graduating out-of-district students that they have a choice of receiving a diploma from the out-of district school or from their district school.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that graduating out-of-district students are notified of the choice to receive a diploma from the out-of district school or from their district school. The improvement plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Rationale for Exemption from Passing Statewide Assessment - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that IEPs did not contain a statement of why students were exempted from passing a statewide assessment.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure IEPs contain a statement of why students are exempted from passing a statewide assessment.**

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Section XIV: Programs and Services

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of age range, aides, schedules and certifications.

Areas of need were identified during the on-site regarding group size, home instruction and schedules for speech services.

Area of Need:

Group Size - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that group size for in-class support and pull-out-replacement resource exceeds code limits.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that group size for resource room programs are within code requirements. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Home Instruction - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that when a student is considered for home instruction, the district does not convene an IEP meeting, does not revise the IEP, and does not request or obtain approval from the county office.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that when a student is considered for home instruction, the district revises the IEP and requests and receives approval from the county office. The improvement plan must also include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Schedules/Attendance - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the speech therapist does not maintain documentation of the provision of speech services.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure the speech therapist maintains documentation of the provision of speech services. The plan must include an administrative oversight component to ensure the implementation of the procedures.**

Section XV: Student Records

Summary of Findings:

During self-assessment the district accurately identified themselves compliant in the areas of documentation of access to student records, access sheets and procedures for maintenance and destruction of pupil records.

An area of need was identified during the on-site visit regarding documentation of other locations of student files.

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Area of Need:

Documentation of Other Locations of Student Files - During the on-site monitoring it was determined that the district does not identify the location of other records in the central file.

- **The district will revise the improvement plan to include procedures to ensure that the location of other records is identified in the student's central file.**

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the Hunterdon Central Regional High School District on September 25,26,28, 2001. 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 thorough and comprehensive review conducted during the self-assessment process. As a result of this review the district was able to identify areas of need and develop an improvement plan that with some revision, will be sufficient to bring about systemic change. The district is further commended 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.

At a focus group meeting held prior to the monitoring visit, parents expressed their satisfaction with some of the district's programs and services. Parents expressed concerns regarding communication with case managers, transition to post-secondary resources and services, role of the in-class teacher in regular education programs and the lack of information regarding graduation requirements.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included staff development, provision of related services, consent, independent evaluations, summer referrals, referral process, meetings, assessments for students eligible for special education and related services, 20 and 90-day timelines, annual review timelines, continuum of programs, provision of post-secondary transition services, discipline procedures, participation in statewide assessment, participation in graduation exercises/activities, student record access and maintenance/destruction of student records.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding speech evaluations, goals and objectives related to the core curriculum content standards, considerations and required statements in IEPs, age of majority, agency participation and community partnerships in transition.

The on-site visit identified areas of need for students eligible for special education and related services within the various standards regarding extended school year, notices, surrogate parents, Child Find activities, health summaries, three-year timelines, participants at meetings, individualized decision-making process, student invitation to transition meetings, documentation of post-secondary transition services, issues related to statewide assessments, alternate assessments, notice of graduation, diplomas, group sizes, home instruction and documentation of other locations of student files.

Additionally, the on-site visit identified areas of need for students eligible for speech and language services within the various standards regarding the process of identifying students, meetings within timelines with required participants, evaluations, development and provision of reports to parents/adult students, the decision making process, the required components/statements within IEPs, and documentation of the provision of services.

Within forty-five days of receipt of the monitoring report, the district will revise and resubmit the improvement plan to the Office of Special Education Programs to address

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the areas of need identified during the on-site visit and those areas that require revisions to the improvement plan.