

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

District: North Haledon

County: Passaic

Monitoring Dates: September 26 & 27, 2005

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

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the North Haledon School District conducted a self-assessment of policies, procedures, programs, services, and student outcomes. This self-assessment component of the monitoring process provided the North Haledon 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 North Haledon 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, 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 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 60% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.6% for that year. Additionally, the district reported a classification rate of 12.83% which is lower than New Jersey's classification rate of 14.6%. However, the district has placed nearly all 3 and 4 year old preschool students

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with disabilities in restrictive settings such as the district’s self-contained special education program for preschoolers. The district has identified continuum of alternative placements for preschoolers as an area of concern. The district plans to develop in-district programs or establish contractual arrangements with community preschools to provide opportunities for educating preschoolers with disabilities with their typical peers.

Areas Not Reviewed

The area of age 16 transition services was not reviewed by the NJDOE because the district does not serve a population of students who would require these services.

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 school 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: Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Graduation.

Areas Demonstrating Compliance

The following areas were identified by the district’s self-assessment committee and by the Department of Education as compliant. The areas were reviewed for students who are eligible for special education and related services (ESERS) and for students eligible for speech-language services (ESLS). The table indicates where the district was compliant in relation to one classification only.

Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
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
Procedural Safeguards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consent (ESERS) • Implementation without undue delay • Provision of notice of a meeting (ESERS) • Content of notice of a meeting (ESERS) • Meetings (ESERS) • Provision of written notice (ESERS) • Content of written notice (ESERS) • Notices in native language • Interpreters at meeting • Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Find Ages 3-21 • Referral process (ESERS) • Pre-referral interventions • Direct Referrals

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Section	Areas Demonstrating Compliance
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health summary • Vision and hearing screenings • Identification meeting timelines (ESERS) • Identification meeting participants (ESERS)
Eligibility - For students who may be ESL/ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting participants (ESERS) • 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 • IEP required considerations and components • 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 responsibilities (knowledge and/or access) • 90 day timelines
Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for all students with disabilities to access all general education programs (ages 6-21) • Continuum of programs (ages 6-21) • Placement decisions based on students' individual needs (ages 6-21)
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class size • Age range • Group size

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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	Plan Is Sufficient	Plan Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
General Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent training- Parent training that addresses identified needs of parents of students with disabilities is insufficient. 	X		
FAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Extended school year – Rationales are not documented when ESY is not warranted. ESY is not considered for students receiving speech and language services. District identified this area of need in Section VIII of the self-assessment. 	X		
LRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Notification of non-academic/extracurricular activities-Out of District students with disabilities are not informed of extracurricular and nonacademic activities offered by the district. 	X		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preschool options to access general education–The district does not consider general education as the first placement option for preschoolers. 	X		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuum of programs-The continuum of placements for preschoolers with disabilities is limited. 	X		
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common planning time – Special education teachers and general education teachers do not have opportunities within daily schedules to meet for common planning. 	X		

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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
Procedural Safeguards	<p>Consent (ESLS) – Speech Language Specialists do not obtain consent prior to conducting speech and language evaluations.</p> <p>Provision/Content of Notice of Meeting (ESLS)- Notice of meeting is not provided to parents and adult students.</p> <p>Written Notice (Provision/Content) (ESLS)-A written description of the action proposed or denied by the district is not included.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that consent is obtained and documented in the files of students evaluated for speech and language problems. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that consent is obtained as required.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of meetings is provided to parents early enough to ensure that the parent has the opportunity to participate. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to provide opportunities for parents to participate in decision making regarding their children.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that written notice is provided to parents no later than 15 calendar days after making a determination. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that written notice following meetings is provided to parents. The district is encouraged to adapt the notice forms developed by the NJDOE.</p>
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI)	Referrals (ESLS)- All referrals were formally typed by speech-language specialist and inconsistently include direct referral dates.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that all original referrals are maintained in student files. Additionally, date of receipt of all referrals will be maintained. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that direct referrals including date received by speech/language specialist are maintained.

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Section	Area	Activity
	<p>Identification meetings & participants (ESLS) – Identification meetings are not held within required timelines and general education teachers are not in attendance at meetings.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that identification meetings are held within 20 days of receipt of written referrals. Additionally, the district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that general education teachers are present at identification meetings. These activities must include procedures and oversight to ensure that identification meetings are held within the mandated timelines and general education teachers have the opportunity to provide input.</p>
<p>Eligibility</p>	<p>Meeting Participants (ESLS) – General Education teachers are not in attendance at meetings.</p> <p>Copies of evaluation reports to parents (ESLS) – Speech and language reports are not sent to parents 10 days prior to eligibility meeting.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that general education teachers are present during eligibility meetings. These activities must include procedures and oversight to ensure that a general education teacher who is knowledgeable about the student’s educational performance participates in eligibility meetings.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that speech/language reports are sent to parents 10 days prior to meetings. These activities must include procedures and oversight to ensure that parents have the opportunity to review reports prior to the meetings.</p>

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the North Haledon School District on September 26 & 27, 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 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 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 60% of students with disabilities in the general education setting for more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.6% for that year. Additionally, the district reported a classification rate of 12.83% which is lower than New Jersey's classification rate of 14.6%. However, the district has placed nearly all 3 and 4 year old preschool students with disabilities in restrictive settings such as the district's self-contained special education program for preschoolers. The district has identified continuum of alternative placements for preschoolers as an area of concern. The district plans to develop in-district programs or establish contractual arrangements with community preschools to provide opportunities for educating preschoolers with disabilities with their typical peers.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services and staff. However, a few parents expressed their concern with the administrator having a dual role as both the school principal and director of special services. A parent also expressed frustration when attempting to gain knowledge of district resources for students with disabilities.

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 school 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: Reevaluation, Transition to Preschool, Discipline, Statewide Assessment and Graduation.

Areas within the remaining sections, identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit, included oversight of IEP implementation, provision of programs, provision of related services, transfer procedures, consent for students eligible for special education and related services, implementing without undue delay, meetings and the provision and content of notice of meetings and written notice for students eligible for special education and related services, notices in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary and vision and hearing screening, identification meeting timelines and participants for students eligible for special education and related services, eligibility meetings and participants for students eligible for special education and related services, criteria, signature of agreement and disagreement, statement of eligibility, copy of evaluation reports to parents of students eligible for special education and related services, IEP meeting participants, required considerations and statements, copy of IEP

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to parents, implementation dates, annual reviews, annual reviews completed by June 30th, knowledge and access to IEPs, ninety day timelines, documentation of least restrictive environment (ages 6 to 21) statements, decisions based on individual need (ages 6 to 21), class size, age range and group size for speech therapy.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding parent training, extended school year, notification of non-academic and extracurricular activities for students educated out of district, opportunities to access general education for preschool students, continuum for preschoolers and common planning time.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding consent for students eligible for speech and language services, notice of meeting for students eligible for speech and language services (provision and content), meetings for students eligible for speech and language services, written notice for students eligible for speech and language services (provision and content), referrals for students eligible for speech and language services, identification meeting timelines and participants for students eligible for speech and language services, eligibility meeting participants for students eligible for speech and language services, statement of eligibility for students eligible for speech and language services and provision of a copy of evaluation reports to parents of students eligible for speech and language services.

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