

New Jersey Department of Education Special Education Monitoring

District: North Hanover Township School District

County: Burlington

Monitoring Dates: October 20 and 21, 2005

Monitoring Team: Patricia Fair, Julia Harmlin

Background Information:

During the 2004-2005 school year, the North Hanover Township 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 Hanover Township 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 Hanover Township 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-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 63.9% of students with disabilities in the general education setting more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. The district's classification rate is 16.93% which is slightly higher than the state average of 16.57%.

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Sections Demonstrating Compliance with All Standards

These sections were identified by the district during self-assessment and the NJDOE during the monitoring process as compliant: **General Provisions, Free, Appropriate, Public Education (FAPE), Reevaluation, Eligibility, Least Restrictive Environment, Transition, Discipline, Statewide Assessments and Graduation Requirements.**

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
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"> ▪ Consent ▪ Implementation without undue delay ▪ Provision of notice of meeting ▪ Meetings ▪ Provision of written notice ▪ Content of written notice ▪ Notices in native language ▪ Interpreters at meetings ▪ Independent evaluations
Location, Referral and Identification (LRI) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child Find Ages 3-21 ▪ Referral process ▪ Pre-referral interventions ▪ Direct Referrals ▪ Health summary ▪ Identification meeting timelines
Evaluation- For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educational impact statement (ESLS) ▪ Standardized Assessments ▪ Bilingual evaluations ▪ Written reports prepared by evaluators
Individualized Education Program (IEP) - For students who may be ESLS or ESERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 of and/or access to IEPS) ▪ 90-day timelines
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	Improvement Plan Review		
		Sufficient	Needs Revision	Implemented and the district has demonstrated compliance
IEP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meeting Participants – Meetings are not always held with all members of the required IEP team. 			X
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ IEP required considerations and components – When developing the IEP, the IEP team does not include all the appropriate considerations. 			X
Programs and Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Common Planning Time - Resource program teachers do not always have time for consultation with appropriate general education teaching staff to discuss student needs and progress. 	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	Content of notice of a meeting - Notice of a meeting does not include a statement informing parents that they may invite others with expertise to a meeting.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that notice of a meeting includes a statement informing parents of their rights to invite others with expertise to a meeting. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure that notice of a meeting includes all required components. The district is advised to use the notices developed by the NJDOE available on the web at www.state.nj.us/education .
Location Referral and Identification	<p>Vision and hearing screenings are not consistently completed prior to the identification meeting for students referred for special education and related services by their parents.</p> <p>Identification meetings are not held when the parent does not attend the meeting and multiple attempts have been attempted to involve the parent in the meeting.</p>	<p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that vision and hearing screenings for students referred for special education and related services are conducted prior to the identification meeting. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.</p> <p>The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that identification meetings are held and written notice is provided to the parent in situations when the parent does not attend the meeting and multiple attempts to involve the parent in the meeting have been attempted. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.</p>

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Section	Area	Activity
Evaluation	Multi-disciplinary evaluations for preschool initial evaluations do not include the minimum required number of child study team assessments. The district is considering the speech-language assessment as one of the two minimum required, when in fact it must be considered an additional assessment.	The district is directed to revise the improvement plan to include activities to ensure that a minimum of two child study team assessments are conducted for preschool initial evaluations. These activities must include procedures, in-service training and oversight to ensure consistent implementation of the plan.

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Summary

On-site special education monitoring was conducted in the North Hanover Township School District on October 20 and 21, 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 63.9% of students with disabilities in the general education setting more than 80% of the school day. This rate is significantly higher than the state average of 41.9% for that year. The district's classification rate is 16.93% which is slightly higher than the state average of 16.57%.

During interviews conducted with parents by phone, many parents expressed their satisfaction with the district's programs and services. All parents interviewed reported communication between the child study team and teachers is excellent. Parents felt they were well informed and part of the decision making process regarding their children's placement and progress.

Standards identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included free appropriate public education, reevaluation, eligibility, transition, discipline, statewide assessments and graduation requirements.

Areas identified as consistently compliant by the district during self-assessment and verified during the on-site monitoring visit included consent, implementation without undue delay, provision of notice of a meeting, meetings, written notice, notice in native language, interpreters at meetings, independent evaluations, child find, referral process, pre-referral interventions, direct referrals, health summary, identification meeting timelines, educational impact statements, standardized assessments, bilingual evaluations, written reports, copy of IEP to parents prior to implementation, implementation dates, annual reviews, knowledge/access to IEPs, 90-day timelines, class size, age range and group size.

Areas of need originally identified by the district but determined to have been corrected prior to the on-site monitoring visit by the NJDOE include IEP meeting participants and IEP required consideration and statements.

During the self-assessment process, the district identified areas of need regarding common planning time for general and special education teachers.

The on-site visit identified additional areas of need within the various standards, regarding content of notice of a meeting, vision and hearing screenings, identification meetings and multi-disciplinary evaluations.

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Within 45 days of receipt of the monitoring report, the North Hanover Township School District will revise the improvement plan to address the additional areas of need and submit the revisions to the OSEP.